



THE ONE-MAN TRIO

In the last few years we have mentioned or have heard others mention that the golf professional "wears many hats." He is a teacher, a public relations expert and businessman, if he performs in the professional manner expected of him. The successful professional realizes that these are the standards to which he must adhere. But throughout all of our discussions on the role of the golf professional, we usually discuss only one guy—that guy who works specifically as a golf professional. Very little, if any, attention is focused on the "pilings" of the golf business. Webster defines pilings as those supports which provide the base for a solid foundation. In our definition of pilings, we include those men who work as a combination golf professional, superintendent and manager. These are the men who fight all the problems daily, year after year.

He wears three hats—professional, manager and superintendent—and often it is difficult to balance them. He plays an important role, yet is virtually unrecognized by the industry

by PATRICK D. WILLIAMS

It goes without saying that the view of the public is askew as far as the profession of golf is concerned. With the exception of numerous club officials who work with the business quite closely, the profession is ranked as follows: 1) tournament players; 2) very successful club professionals; 3) successful club professionals; 4) club professionals; 5) assistant professionals, and 6) the unsung heroes. This type of thinking is natural and

is a product of the manner we use in deciding what goes in the limelight. What we need to do, sometimes, is put a little of the limelight on some of the areas that are always in the dark.

We are not inferring that those men listed above the unsung heroes are unimportant. They have earned the accolades they have received. It is a simple proposition related to objectives. To accomplish any objective requires the same amount of time and effort if we view everything on a relative basis. Simply stated, the unsung heroes warrant more attention than they have received.

The Professional Golfers' Assn. of America is continually striving to define, strengthen and structure its membership classification. It must change because the golf business is dynamic, and change is mandatory. The role played by the golf professional 20 to 30 years ago

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does not fit today. Whether we like it or not, this role has been greatly expanded by the growth of the golf business. Likewise, this growth has created the need for the unsung heroes' category which we have been discussing. Because golf has long since been removed from the ranks of the wealthy and elite, the unsung heroes become increasingly more important. Without them golf would not be what it is today. From Garner, N.C., to Chickasha, Okla., to Red Hole, Calif., these are the professionals that bring golf to the masses. Without them we would not have the other 7,500 golf courses dotting the countryside—we would have only the 2,500 plus affluent-type golf operations.

Some people will argue that these men are not in fact golf professionals, golf course superintendents or club managers. Some consider them to be hybrids, who have limited expertise in each of the three functional areas. I consider them as representing many of the vertebra that make up the backbone of golf.

Now where do these guys fit in? You can find them in big towns and little towns. But invariably one finds them in situations in which the circumstances permit only one guy to do all of the work. Naturally, a man working under these conditions does not have the time at his disposal to become highly pro-

DUNLOP REDUCES GOLF BALL PRICE

Dunlop Tire and Rubber Corp. reduced the professional price of Maxfli golf balls 25 cents a dozen, effective March 15.

According to Paul MacDonald, vice president, Dunlop Sports Div., the price change reflects cost reductions achieved from increases in sales volume and improved manufacturing techniques, plus a modernized distribution system. "In addition," MacDonald says, "Dunlop's action is consistent with the objectives of the Federal government's Phase II Program."

In line with normal Dunlop policy, price protection for professionals is in force for the 30-day period prior to March 15.

ficient in each of the three functional areas of the golf business. He has to do the best he can or his golfers are not going to be able to participate in the game, period. The game is built on the interest of the masses, and not just the luster of a select few.

A case in point. The unsung hero I have selected as an example is Tony Doudican, the "golf professional" at Seminole Municipal GC, Seminole, Okla., population 8,500. The words golf professional were put in quotes because in the eyes of some, Doudican is not a golf professional officially until he is a member of the PGA. But rest assured that in the eyes of Tony's boss, Don Bown, Seminole's city manager, he is one of the best in the country. And if you lunch with the park board, which is made up of Hulett Edgmon, Jim Austin, Jim Myers, Jimmy Lynn Austin and Jim Whitt, there's no question in anybody's mind that Doudican is Mr. Golf in Seminole. And if you are a big city golfer don't think, "Big deal, what's Seminole, Oklahoma," Think about the thousands of small cities through the country that have similar situations. To be redundant, think about that backbone of golf.

Prior to the Doudican Days of golf in Seminole, one could easily assume that golf for that city operation was not too profitable or likewise very enjoyable to the players. They had a need and they filled it. Golf is now booming in Seminole.

Doudican's qualifications for becoming a golf professional were similar to those of most men who want to become professionals. He loved the game, played it decently and had a desire to become a part of it. Obviously, he knew very little about being a professional, much less that of maintaining a golf course or managing the entire facility. He did have a considerable amount of expertise in men's wear merchandising—a plus for him with respect to the golf shop merchandising program. And Seminole, like many golf operations, could not afford the freight for a separate professional, superintendent and manager. The city realized it was taking a gamble; however, they are the type of people who look for desire first and

knowledge second. So 34 months ago, they hired Tony Doudican.

I asked Tony about his excitement when he knew he was in the golf business. He said that it was great until he realized that at 5 a.m. the next morning he had to go out and mow nine greens and tees. The fact that he had never mowed a tee or green before would put fear into the bravest soul.

It is not necessary to go through all the trials and tribulations, the good times and the bad that this unsung hero has been through. Common sense implies all sorts of headaches associated with inexperience, limited budgets, less activity or whatever. The point here is that by hook or crook things are turning out the way they should at the Seminole Municipal GC. A few facts that substantiate this point:

- About 18,000 rounds were played at the course in 1968. In 1971, 40,000 rounds were played;
- The income to the city from the operation has more than doubled;
- The city just approved a bond issue to build a new clubhouse.
- Design drawings are being prepared to expand the course to 18 holes in the very near future.

Tony Doudican does not openly take any credit for this progress. Even though everyone is aware that he deserves a great deal of the credit, there is still a need for co-operation from everybody. Should we say we need a lot of people supporting golf regardless of whom or where they may be? So our case illustrates that a basic desire by a lot of people can make golf successful under any circumstances.

It is interesting how Doudican became at least somewhat knowledgeable about his business. He is the first to admit that he now knows only 10 per cent to 15 per cent of what he needs to know. He has acquired his knowledge through day to day experience, coupled with a lot of late night studying of every book, article or whatever that has been written on the facets of his golf business.

After several lengthy discussions, the real reason for the success attained at the Seminole Municipal GC became readily apparent. We have mentioned that everyone had the desire and interest. Couple this

with Doudican's philosophy on golf course operations and you have it made. His philosophy? "I think that the people who play golf at our course deserve the same things, relatively, that the people get at the large prosperous country clubs. This includes a well-stocked clean and modern golf shop, a course that is well-maintained as physically possible and a staff who are interested in providing a real service to their customers."

The few complaints that Doudican had are the same I have heard from many unsung heroes. None of the professional organizations have programs that are geared, even in a small way, to the professional who is also the superintendent and the manager. Then there is the tendency of manufacturers' and suppliers' salesmen to overlook all these little guys or to handle their business by mail or telephone with little to no personal contact or service. And as Doudican so aptly put it, "We don't want them to help us because they feel sorry for us, we want them to help us because we really need it. You never can tell, someday we might become successful."

We adjourned the interview by my asking how he keeps up with everything that is going on and needs doing. He said that he thought at first he was smart enough to keep it all in his head. Now he walks around with a tape recorder on his belt and it keeps track of where he has been and what he needs to do.

So to sum up, this is one example of hundreds of men like Tony Doudican throughout the golf world. If we measure success in terms other than dollars they are right up there with the most successful. I have an opinion about how real their contribution is to golf. If you have never given them too much thought, take a few minutes and formulate your own opinion. □

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