

by PATRICK D. WILLIAMS

The Professional Approach

PERSPECTIVES, OBJECTIVES AND SUBJECTIVES

Here are some pertinent comments on a host of subjects.

1. Jim Butz's comments on page 34G of the June issue of *GOLFDOM* were very sage. His statement relating to golf professionals "of old" and golf professionals "of new" brings up some interesting points. If you didn't read his comments you should. He said, in or out of context, that it is not really fair to compare the old golf business with the new golf business. He is saying that the golf professional's function was to concentrate on teaching, golf programs and playing. Now, he must perform those tasks as well as the myriad of duties associated with merchandise, golf cars and so on. I feel that the advent of merchandising in the golf shop (granted it is the only way you will make any dough) has misaligned the perspectives of many golf professionals. Today, too many professionals are so wrapped up in the business side of golf that they have forgotten why they were hired as the golf professional.

If you have ever listened to one of Ernie Sabayrac's sermons you have heard him say a thousand times: "You, Mr. Golf Pro, were hired as a professional. You, Mr. Golf Pro, were hired to teach, play and expand the golf activity at your club. You, Mr. Golf Pro, make your living by selling merchandise. Now you tell me how do you do both those things at the same time?" He makes a great deal of sense. Here is a guy in the business of selling you merchandise who is saying, "Do what you know how to do best" and get some other kind of professional to handle your merchandise business. He's saying free yourself to teach, play and expand the golf activity at your club or course.

The point is that you are expected to have many talents. But talent doesn't mean that you personally must be involved in every minute detail of your shop operation. My observations to date of the professional indicate that the best jobs are held by those guys who actively promote the game at their respective clubs. The "business" side of their business is a spin off of their devotion to the game and its players. In other words, they are making their living off of their "side-line" business.

So when someone asks you how much you teach and how much you play and your answer is "none or very little" you had better review the bidding. If you can't or don't like to teach, get someone on your staff who can. If you don't really like to play, get someone on your staff who does. Then and only then are you entitled to concentrate on the "money making" side of golf.

2. I was pleased to see that Gary Wiren had been appointed educational director of the Professional Golfers' Assn. Having held that same job for a day or two, I can see where Wiren can bring expertise and talent to the PGA and its educational efforts. To me, the most viable part of the association's activities is the educational program. It touches every rank and file member, providing concrete assistance to everyone who is smart enough to get involved in its programs. It is that part of the PGA that is aware of the needs and problems of the members. To be effective, Wiren needs to have the opportunity to do "what needs to be done." He may need some guidance and direction from the echelons, but he has the "moxie" to objectively evaluate what the PGA needs to do in its educational efforts. You as a member need to keep abreast of the pro-

grams his department has to offer. These programs, I can assure you, are something concrete that you get for your dues.

3. It's amazing how golf shop operations differ from one section of the country to another. We recently made some trips from one side of Hawaii to the other and we really had our eyes opened on golf shop operations. Resort shops seem to be the same regardless of where they are. Public courses, for the most part, are super strong in all the major cities. The real discrepancies crop up in the country club operations. In some geographical areas, the assistant professional is looked on as just a necessary evil. At others he is the key to a successful operation. Some shops have superior merchandising programs; others are so bad they shouldn't even exist. Some golf professionals teach and play, some do not. Most feel that their particular club and its membership are the opposite of all other clubs and their memberships. Many feel they are overworked and underpaid, and some do not even give a hint as to what is running through their minds. My subjective opinion is that there seems to be a correlation between the professionals' success and the strength of the local PGA Section. Maybe it's just a coincidence that the most successful professionals seem to have good assistant professionals, good merchandising programs, good teaching programs and a good objective viewpoint of their profession. They almost leave you with the impression that they put more into their profession than they take out. Strange, but that seems to be the yardstick for any successful professional businessman. Fortunately in each area we visited there was one, two, or six guys who stood out. □