

# Smart Sportsmanship Can Save Clubs from Dumb Business

By JOE ROSEMAN

IT'S A BUYER'S market in golf club memberships and too many private clubs blunder into making this market one that sells them out, broke.

Some of the private clubs have believed that when they let down the bars and go daily fee they are on the way toward the solution of their problems. They haven't realized that when they go daily fee it is going to take a lot of individual fee play to equal the income from one private club member's annual dues, nor have they realized that when a private club goes daily fee it means that at least 1,000 prospective members for a private club are converted into intermittent patrons of the course when operated on a daily fee basis. I make this conservative estimate of 1,000 after reviewing the experiences of clubs in metropolitan districts over the last three years.

The private clubs that, due to excessive overhead or casual executive management, are in unhappy condition should realize that their plight is not going to be relieved by a change to a condition in which they expect customers will flock to them. The customers won't swarm in. Fee course operation requires selling, just as does private club memberships. The private club that gets busy and keeps busy selling its memberships will not get into such shape that a switch to fee course operation seems the only way out.

## Dual Operation Unsatisfactory

Clubs have tried to operate half private and half fee. It doesn't work. The fee player gets his golf cheaper and gets the same clubhouse and social privileges as the private member, at lower cost. Consequently the private member will not continue to pay the premium for playing with a carefully selected membership or for the enjoyment of clubhouse privileges that, on a fee basis, become about as exclusive as the Union Station.

Failure of some private clubs to insist on restriction of the number of times a guest can play during the year has played

havoc with their membership prospects. Strict insistence on the guest restrictions and a return of the green fees to the 1929 basis will do a lot toward bettering the membership solicitation results and standing of a large number of clubs. If a man plays more than five times a year at a private club, he should become a member, or the club is not being operated properly as a private club. Certainly none but the chiselers would expect guest privileges more than five times a year, and the persistent presence of chiselers at any club does it no good, either now or in the future.

Letting down the bars to trade tournaments has made membership at some private clubs highly undesirable to those members who expect, and are paying for, private club operation. The regular member pays the cost and the guest, with no responsibility toward the club, rides practically free, so where do the officials of clubs that are mobbed with trade tournaments discharge their duties toward the men who have taken private memberships?

Let me tell you of a case in which two large private clubs competed for a trade tournament that was plainly an event for a fee course. There were 750 players in this tournament. The private clubs started bidding at \$4.50 for all day golf, lunch and dinner. The first competitive slash was to \$4.00, then to \$3.50, and the club that got the tournament finally offered \$2.75. I have had private and daily fee experience from 1904 and at this writing am interested in both types of club. I can tell you, with some authority, that when a club takes a tournament for two meals and all day golf at \$2.75 it is either being gypped financially or is compelled to handle the tournament in a way that does the club's reputation harm.

In Chicago we have 51 open daily fee courses. Every Tom, Dick and Harry got the idea that the sure road to riches was through a daily fee course. From a mutually satisfactory basis of \$2.00 week

days, \$2.50 Saturdays and \$3.00 Sundays and holidays, the depression and rate war has cut down prices until golf is being sold week days as low as 25c. The rate war hasn't been confined to fee clubs; so-called private clubs entered the competition and spread the ruination. The worst of it is that volume of play has steadily fallen off and the membership prospects of those so-called private clubs have been vanishing.

### Minimum Rates the Hope

In territory like the Chicago district a minimum of \$1.00 week days and a maximum of \$1.75, up to a Sunday and holiday minimum of \$2.00 and maximum of \$3.00 would allow the courses to operate with a chance for a profit, pay their help living wages and still provide golf facilities of good character at a reasonable cost.

As long as human beings retain their shortcomings we probably will have those who figure that they can outsmart and undercut the other fellow and are willing to do that, even though the minimums suggested would permit the fellows with lower operating costs to make more money. These lower costs would overcome whatever disadvantages of location the courses with reduced overhead and operating charges might have.

In the meanwhile, unless the course owners can get together and honestly adhere to a price scale that will prevent serious damage to the business, there is going to be a clamor for a strict government code that undoubtedly will be harder on the fellows who now think they have a chiseling advantage than on the men who desire to operate fee course plants on an intelligent business basis.

The smaller-town clubs are backbones of the social lives of their communities. They are definitely civic assets. Along comes some farmer with the idea that his pasture should be a golf course and by sticking in some holes, mowing the grass and putting up a sign that undersells the small-town country club, he gets by. The fact that he is able to operate because he does not pay his help enough to enable them to live, reflects on his value as a community benefactor, but the same criticism, unfortunately, must be applied to a number of private clubs in metropolitan districts, whose directors howl against paying living wages for seasonal work to men who have families to support in the community.

If we will sit down and figure the golf

business out on a basis of real sportsmanship in business rather than on the short-sighted and mercenary basis that we make the mistake of considering good business, many of the troubles of both private and fee courses will disappear.

## Block Faucet Valves Open; Don't Remove Handles

**D**URING the winter it is necessary to open the valves on many outside water lines and leave them open to prevent bursting of either line or valve. Opening the valve and removing the handle and screw to prevent accidental or ignorant

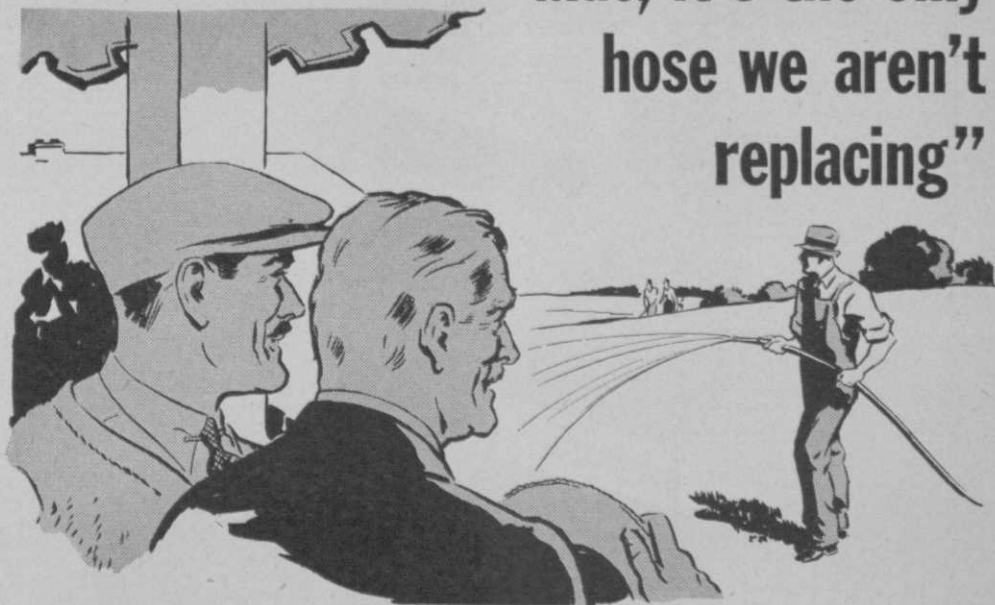


closing of the valve is of course commonly done, but that is the way a good many handles and holding screws become lost and misplaced when badly needed later on. The photo shows a simple way to block a tap open, proof against everything but maliciousness.

Cut off one end of a spool so that the remainder will just slip in between the top of the packing nut and bottom of the handle when the valve is wide open. Whittle out the grooves in each half a bit if necessary to get them to hug the spindle of the valve and tie the halves of the spool in place with stout cord.

You cannot shut the valve, yet if necessary the guards can be quickly removed with most any kind of a handy tool, even a key, to break the cord.

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● Rather comforting to an otherwise worried greens committee to look out and see the hose they bought last season — or two years ago, three years ago — still on the job.

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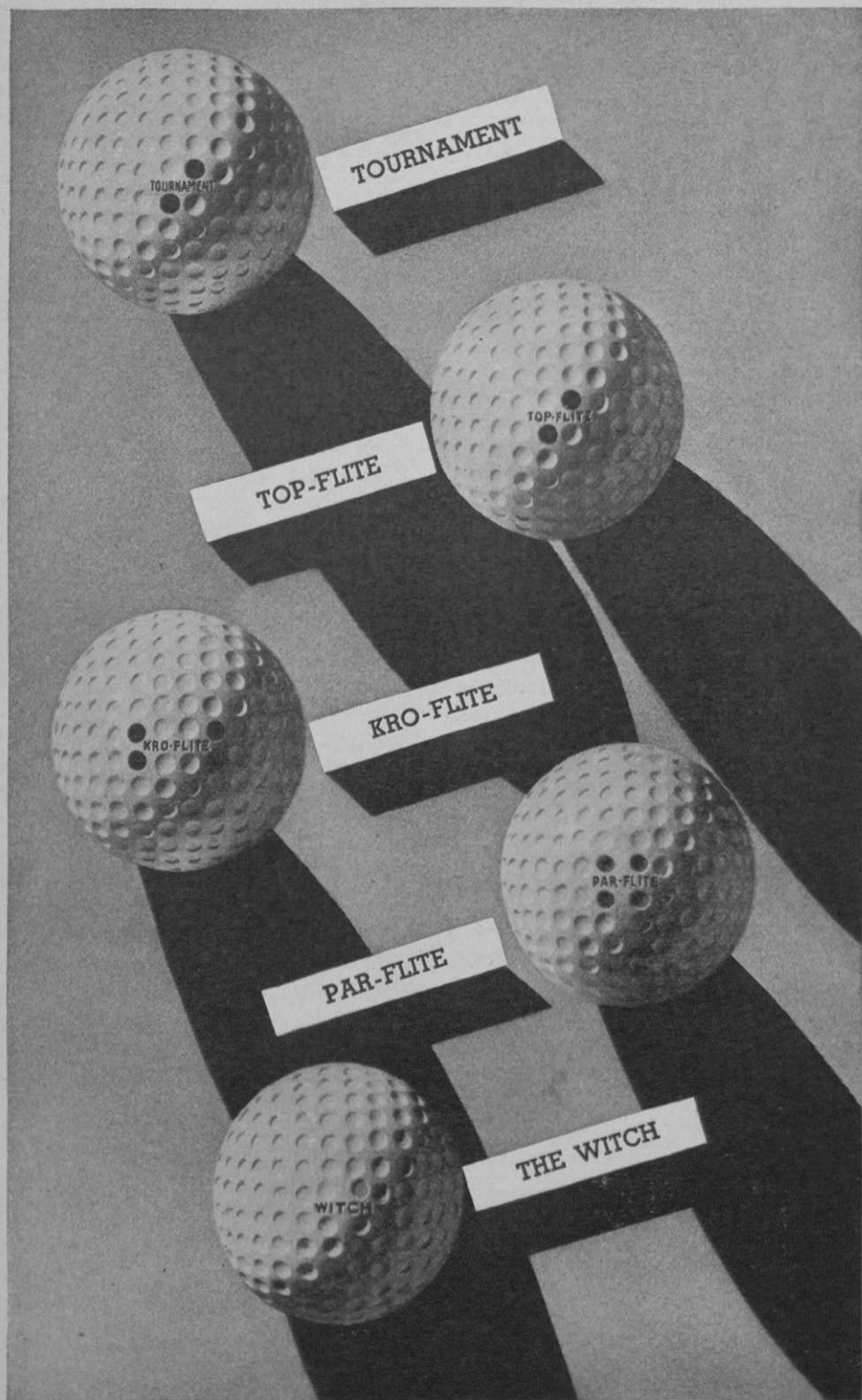
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**2. THE TOP-FLITE**—For 1934, Spalding

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# Finds Fee Course Profit Answer— It's Not Cut-Price

By TOM WALSH

General Manager, Westgate Valley G. C.

**D**AILY FEE COURSES have been complaining about the absence of profits.

They have tried a lot of things, but almost everything they have tried is price-cutting in one guise or another.

Now I am going to suggest something that may help fee courses to pay dividends. Here it is:

Hire pro golf business men; let them consult with you about management policies, but most of all have them in active and competent contact with your players and prospective players in a way that adds to the service of your course. Cutting prices hasn't helped you to get business, but even in the darkest days of the depression service brought players.

I am primarily a pro. I know what a good pro can do and I also know, from bitter experience, what a fee course owner is up against. Checking both phases of my training and observation, I have come to the firm conclusion that most of the answer to today's problems of the daily fee course owners lies in hiring the right kind of a pro, paying him enough of a salary so he is encouraged to take a vigorous, alert interest in the development of the business, and then putting him on his responsibility.

There are pros and pros, just as there are differences among the real estate men, lawyers, surgeons, doctors, butchers, bakers and candle-stick makers who are owners of majority interests in daily fee courses. But after all, golf is a pro's business and it should be just as far-fetched to expect a pro to operate for a bad gall-bladder as it would be to expect a surgeon to run a daily fee course properly, as one of his several duties.

One of the first things that more business men pros would bring to the daily fee golf business is an absolute insistence on giving the fee-player what he is paying for and trying to get, rather than cutting the price in an attempt to beat out some competitor, and while cutting the price

necessarily reducing the attractions and services of the course.

I'll tell you what the pro golf business man would do to build and keep business at a fee course, and I can tell you because I have done it.

## What the Golfer Wants

First, let me remind you that the average golfer always hopes something will happen to improve his or her game. This rarely happens unless the swing is corrected. The right pro would do that tactfully and expertly and see that every possible opportunity to provide this personal touch was seized. The golfer who has had such advice naturally wants to come back and see how the instruction works. It results, frequently, in the player taking lessons and that always means more play.

Many times discussions concerning rules arise. If the course has a pro the players respect, he will be consulted. His diplomatic and correct decision will prevent unpleasant discussions that have done much to reduce play at some courses.

There are a number of male patrons of fee courses who would like to start their wives and daughters playing golf. A professional in whose ability and character these men had complete confidence would be entrusted with the tuition of these other members of the families. More fee income would be forthcoming from the families.

Expert, interested and pleasant service in the handling of trade and association tournaments is something that is "right down the alley" for the competent pro. His service in conducting such tournaments, starting from the time the event was being planned and ending when the prizes had been awarded and the players were leaving the club, would be an invaluable asset for the fee course that needs business. The right sort of trade tournament handling often induces the group to hold two or more, instead of one, tournaments a year.

# Positively!

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**I**F you had been at the Sporting Goods Distributors' Show in Chicago recently, you would know the talk and comment inspired by the introduction of the new Hagen "Honey Center" Golf Ball.

Many times we were asked, "Is the term 'Honey Center' purely an advertising slogan or does the Hagen actually have a 'Honey Center'?"

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The center of the new Hagen ball is composed of pure honey and for very excellent reasons.

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**First:** Because Honey, being so heavy of itself, we require no weighting element along with it.

Thus there is nothing to shift, settle or otherwise get out of position in your Hagen center. This means an absolutely true, balanced and accurate ball, both off the tee and on the greens.

**Second:** Honey is virtually non-evaporating. This means compression in your ball remains constant at all times—your guarantee of perfect performance at all times. Honey, too, is unaffected by seasonal changes, giving you a lively, on-its-toes golf ball in November as well as in July.

**Third:** Honey is the livest, most elastic and resilient fluid ever discovered, and it retains these qualities indefinitely. This means peppy performance, long life, absolute accuracy, desirable durability and muchly desired distance.

There's honey in the heart of the Hagen ball, and there's gold in the honey for those pros who have them on hand for the customers who are going to ask for them!

*Write for particulars of Hagen representation in your territory*

**THE L. A. YOUNG GOLF COMPANY, DETROIT—Hagen Products**

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## Daily Fee Plants Lack "Spirit"

A competent professional will see to it that a pleasant competitive program is put on at a fee course. He will encourage the posting of handicaps. He will play, when time permits, with influential men and women when they are needful of a playing companion. He won't play with the same men or women so much that he arouses any criticism of favoritism. He has learned to guard against that by his private club experience.

The pro will see to it that his patrons are introduced; that part of the patron's value out of the course is in pleasant companionship of other socially acceptable golfers as well as in the use of the grounds.

The right sort of a pro at the daily fee course will see to it that the caddie situation is properly handled and that the caddies are well-trained and supervised.

I have outlined in preceding paragraphs some of the things that ought to be done—and are done—by the professional who is properly selected and paid for a job at a daily fee course. Each of these details means more business for the club.

## Fee Course Unknowns

Rarely is the name of any of our leading private clubs mentioned that you do not hear the question, "Who is the professional?" The reason is plain. The professional is an important wheel in the machinery of a well-run private club and regarded as such. In the case of the daily fee club that is supposed to be operated to make money for someone, there seems to be the idea that the operation can get along without much—if any—attention being paid to the pro department.

I am confident that if more of the daily fee courses had, during the past three years, properly qualified professionals and had permitted these men to follow their judgment in constructive effort for holding play, the golfing public would have responded to this service far more than the free beer, free lunches and cut rates of all descriptions. These rate-butcherings stunts simply forced the course owners deeper into the red, and in no instance can it be said that such moves retained or increased business.

## Deficient as Business-Builders

It must be admitted that the daily fee courses have done practically nothing to promote the growth of the game, other

than just being constructed to take out of the game whatever profit might come from the game's spontaneous growth. Now it is time for the fee course owners to appreciate that they must put something into the game if they are to get their business back into earning condition. Competent pro service is the very basis of the value the players have a right to expect from us as fee course owners. How are our patrons to play and enjoy our courses to the happiest degree unless they have been developed as golfers? How can they be developed as golfers unless they are given the benefit of conscientious, able professional efforts?

The Chicago *Tribune*-Chicago Daily Fee Golf School last year was an astonishing eye-opener to those of us in the Chicago district who had not been aware of the public's eagerness to take advantage of pro service. It was so tremendously successful that it is going to be repeated in Chicago this year and will be adopted in several other districts.

The school was the bright spot in a year of headaches that were brought on by a woefully ignorant belief that the lower the price for golf could be cut, the more business. Price-cutting most completely exhibited its futility and foolishness while the appeal of pro service was demonstrating its value as a business-builder for daily fee courses.

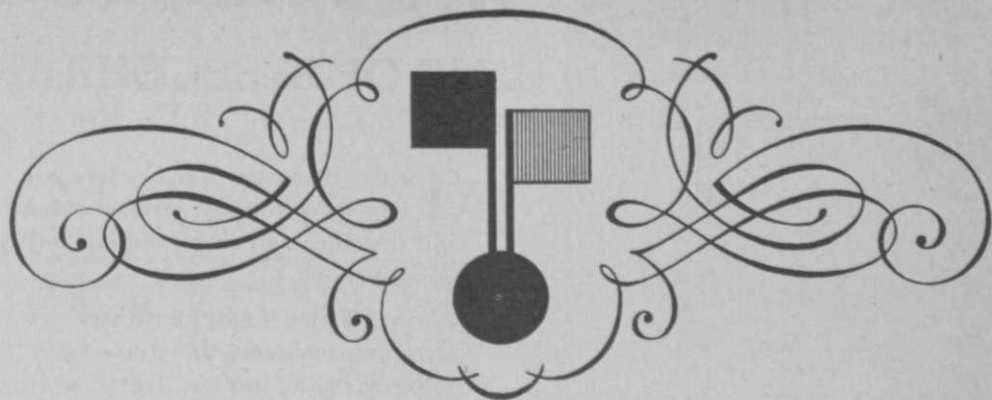
It probably cost the fee courses in the Chicago district around \$100,000 to learn that price-cutting was not the answer to the fee course business problem, and it cost the courses practically nothing, net, to learn that pro service was the right answer.

Now that you know the answer as convincingly set forth by experience in the Chicago district where there is the keenest, crowded, fee course competition in the country, what are you going to do?

Go ahead. Cut prices. It's your money. You can shoot it as long as it holds out, and when the sheriff transfers the course to other hands there will be another sucker who may not learn either. I just wrote this for practice; not to help anybody.

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