

Meet Tournament Golf's New 'Angel'— Peter M. Wellman

By LAWRENCE M. STOLLE

In less than two years P. M. Wellman has become one of game's biggest promoters—and boosters



Peter M. Wellman

TOURNAMENT golf has a new promoter—a one-man tornado who bubbles over with showmanship! His career is as colorful as an Easter egg; he's as democratic as free speech; as peppy as a colt; is a "sucker" for charities with a heart as big as the Atlantic.

Who?—Peter M. Wellman, theater owner, southpaw golfer who might shoot a 75 for nine holes and enjoy it; and owner, sponsor and what not of the \$5,000 Mahoning Open, the second edition of which will be staged June 26-27-28 at the Mahoning Country Club, Girard, Ohio.

Two years ago there wasn't a "big name" professional in the country who knew him. Now try and find one who doesn't swear by "Pete" or has listened to the tales of the fabulous feats of Wellman in those locker-room hot-air sessions.

He Likes the Writers

The sports writers dubbed him "angel" when he personally posted the \$5,000 for his initial venture. He thinks the Fourth Estate is composed of the best guys that ever wore shoe leather. And he bends over backwards trying to prove it. When the rains came—in torrents—throughout his 1941 tournament, Pete had so endeared himself to the typewriter pounders in the press tent that they looked as though their own world had fallen in. They were sorry for Pete; sorry to see a "one-in-a million" guy take a financial licking. But they were amazed, too, at the sportsman who, with a familiar shrug of his shoulders, laughed it off with "Well the downpour might do the crops some good."

Wellman is a 40-year-old bundle of restless energy who looks as though he just hit 30. He brought "big time" golf back to the Youngstown district where it hasn't been since 1925, the year the Western Open was staged at Youngstown Country Club. Golf tournaments are a new sideline

for him. The theater is his game. He owns two theaters—side by side—in Girard, Ohio. He also owns an entire business block plus property in other cities. He's building a big theater in Youngstown, Ohio. But he's out to cut a wide swath in golf.

He thrives on work. Maybe when the prizes are awarded June 28, he'll have a screwdriver sticking out of his pocket. He probably just repaired part of the press tent. Or that sheaf of papers tucked under his arm contains new ideas for double \$1,500 bank nights. He ups the "kitty" at the bank night whenever in the mood. And the turnstiles click merrily.

"He's a master showman, a boost to any game or business he tries" Fred Corcoran, PGA tournament director declared last year. "He kills you with kindness, amazes you with his ability to spot angles. And while surrounding towns were flooded, it didn't rain hard enough in the spot designated to get his rain insurance, cutting the crowd to 4,000 on the final day but Pete never sang the blues," he added.

Came to America at 14

He's always been resourceful. In Horatio Alger fashion the family property in Lendina, Greece—near Sparta—was mortgaged so 14-year-old Pete could come to America. It was the midst of World War I. The steamer—St. Guglielmo was jammed. It traveled under blackout rules. Seasickness was prevalent. So Pete bought fruit from the purser and made a cabin-to-cabin canvass. His profits were exceptional. So he bribed the cook to give him first class meals, although he was traveling third class. And prior to this arrangement he hadn't been getting enough to

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eat. But he never missed a trick. He parked at the head of the table, got his "rations", and then sped to the foot and got another helping.

Because his American guardianship wasn't clear at first; because Pete was only 14, immigration authorities at first decided to ship him back to Greece. Then he put on his version of Dale Carnegie tactics. The black-haired boy with a tear-stained face pleaded eloquently—"Greek" to all but the interpreter—that he finally won them over. He was placed in the care of an uncle in Greensburg, Pa.

Likes The Theater

Because the theater was his first love he got a job in a restaurant and worked for nothing in the movie houses to "learn the ropes". He saved money until in a fashion typical of his countrymen, he got a restaurant. Then he struck up a friendship with Michael Manos, who had a chain of theaters. Soon he had one of his own. Then another. He started show spots in several Pennsylvania towns. Then he settled at Girard, Ohio. Financiers said a five-and-ten store wouldn't click. But he tried it—and it's doing a \$100,000 per year business. He modernized his small-town theaters, against advice of other business men. They're gold mines. The Midas touch worked like a charm.

He didn't have time for golf. Then he bought the Mahoning Country Club—with its beautiful clubhouse and 110 acres of rolling, verdant fairways. He wanted it for a country estate.

Golf—what is that?—he would have asked a few years ago. He probably thought a "birdie" was part of an entrance exam for the Audubon Society. But Girard citizens wanted a golf course. So Pete figured it should have a big premiere. He decided to stage a \$5,000 tournament—but the PGA schedule appeared full; no room for new events.

But Pete was determined to have a tournament. He sped to St. Petersburg, Fla. There his earnestness, his persuasive manner got him another booster—Fred Corcoran. The Ohio and Pennsylvania professionals liked him pronto. They rallied to his support. So the tournament was staged. If the weatherman had been kind he would have cleared \$5,000. Clayton Heafner won the tournament with 276; Pete won thousands of friends.

He couldn't do enough for the pros. He made them so comfortable that his

name became synonymous with "a right guy". The golfers didn't forget.

When a Craig Wood-Vic Ghezzi "unofficial world's championship" match was suggested, Wood insisted on giving Pete first chance. He snapped it up, posting a \$2,500 purse. Hadn't Pete been the first to guarantee Wood \$500 because he figured a National Open champion deserved it? Hadn't he set Wood up in a swanky hotel suite because golfing royalty should love such surroundings? Wood beat Ghezzi in a red-hot match. But the crowd was a sparse 1,500. Pete dropped more than a "grand". But he's back for more. And remembering his friends in war-torn Greece, where his father is a colonel in the now conquered Greek army, he's offering 50 per cent of the 1942 Mahoning Open profits to the Red Cross. And that from a guy who took it on the chin twice! He's determined to make tournament golf in Girard a success. And you know he'll do it!

He has five children and they're all wrapped up in the war effort. The Wellman family conducted a campaign of its own for Greek relief. And when the war ends, he aims to send a shipload of food to his home town.

If you ever have a proposition for Pete, come on Friday. That's his lucky day. On Friday he arrived in the United States; married Bessie George of Greensburg, Pa.; started his first theater, bought his theater in Farrell; purchased the two Girard show places; and the Mahoning Country Club. He starts his tournaments on Friday.

Limited Membership Plan Attracts Defense Workers

THE Country Club of Greenfield, Mass., has established a new class of membership, mainly for workers in defense industries. Those admitted to the new limited memberships must start play before 10:30 a. m. or after 5:30 p. m. week days. On Sundays and holidays, by payment of a \$1 green fee, holders of limited memberships may start play at any time. The new plan costs \$15 for initiation and \$15 for dues and can be paid in \$7.50 installments in April, May, June and July.

The Greenfield Club was founded in 1896. It has an excellent 18-hole course. Mac Sennett is its pro. He says the limited membership plan is proving to be highly attractive to those who have felt the need of golf as a health and pep insurance on war production effort.



A typical turnout at Hardt's range along about dusk. Glare of floodlights can be seen in background.

'Country Club Atmosphere' Makes Hardt's Range Big Money-maker

By MEL LARSON

WHEN you drive into Otto Hardt's 40-tee range located just on the outskirts of Minneapolis you think you're arriving at a country club. The range is set a bit back from the main highway, and on the roof of a cozy-looking club-and-shack house is a big, soft-looking neon sign, "GOLF." Each letter is 44 inches high.

There are 40 tees, all with automatic teeing devices. Which means that all you need do when you buy your pail of balls is pour all of them into a long, funnel-like container, adjust the tee to the height you want, and go to it.

Off to one side of the tees Hardt has erected a huge air-conditioning device. He got a propeller from an airplane and attached it to a high-powered motor. Now golfers are never bothered with mosquitoes, and when the Minnesota sultry heat waves hit in the summer, the big propeller "keeps them cool while they drive."

When the driving tee bug first bit, most of the fields on which they were erected were just what the word implies—fields. But taking a look at the grass in front of the tees at Hardt's place of business makes you want to take it home for your front yard.

There are 15 acres of Kentucky bluegrass in front of the tees, and, as Hardt

admitted, "not a single dandelion in all 15." They cover four city blocks, and an underground watering system keeps it green all of the time. A five-unit mower is used to keep grass short.

Over near the clubhouse is his latest addition. It's a regulation 9-hole putting course, and after being put in last summer was found to be almost as popular as the tees.

Trees are planted all over the place, and regular patrons at the tee last spring became more interested in a family of robins which had made their home in a newly-planted Colorado blue spruce just four feet off the ground, than their golf games. The password then was not "How ya hittin' 'em." It became, "How are the robins doing?"

No overhead wires bother the golfers as all lighting connections are underground. The 24 lights burn 24,000 watts an hour, and golfers sometimes stay there until 1 a.m. straightening out faults.

The clubhouse has two spacious rest rooms, a screened-in terrace which will seat up to 30 people plus a well-equipped kitchen to serve any need expressed. There are plenty of lounging chairs, and behind each tee there is an umbrella-chair-and-table combination.

The middle of the summer finds the tee



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 its functions are
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 capably all arms of the
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 on the fighting fronts.

L. B. Jolly
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in constant use. The record for one day is 468 pails of balls used, with 36 balls in each pail.

Hardt believes in promoting golf at all times. A professional himself, he arranges for Twin City pros such as Gunard Johnson and Joe Coria to give free lesson tips, various nights of the week. And a highlight of the entire season's golf program in the Twin Cities last year was a

Hardt-sponsored demonstration given by Johnny Bulla and attended by close to 2,000 fans.

One of the equipment items at the place is the ball-picking machine. Complete with motor inside of it, it allows an attendant to ride around in the middle of the field and pick up balls without danger of being hurt. It is built like a turtle, and a heavy mesh wire over the contraption protects the driver (of the turtle).



From Chaos To "In The Black"

That's what happened to the Stanislaus Club after Gordon Brunton took over just a year ago.

By D. SCOTT CHISHOLM

THE name of Gordon Brunton has been well and favorably known in California for quite a number of years. A while back he left his comfortable pro job at the Victoria GC, Riverside, Calif., to take over a similar position at the Stanislaus G&CC in central California.

I haven't heard much about this club since back in 1926 when I took Abe Mitchell and George Duncan up there to play an 18-hole exhibition match. When I ran into Brunton during the California Open at Fresno I fired a few questions at him and what he told me opened my optics not a little. Uppermost was what he had to say about his bringing the condition of his club from that of chaos and despondency to one of vigor and power.

Stanislaus Club was organized in 1920 and did O. K. during the boom of the twenties. Came the depression. Mem-

bers resigned right and left. For several years the club tottered on the brink of failure. The wolves of bankruptcy were howling at its doors. The bank sold the mortgage and it changed hands more than once. The club lost money in hunks for each owner. Brunton heard about all this and began to figure what could be done about it. He had friends at St. Stanislaus and he was given a hearing by the powers that were. They offered the Victoria lad a lease with option to purchase. He couldn't afford to buy so he leased it and before he did very much about his bargain he studied conditions in and around and about the club property for months, showing the lad has a good head on his shoulders.

He exercised his option after he thoroughly satisfied himself that there were fine possibilities ahead if the job was gone about in a business-like manner. That's just what he did.

Fifteen years of pro experience at several high-class clubs in California had given him a solid understanding of what was what so he took on the double job of pro-greenkeeper. He had fine experience in turf culture. He started out on his new job by carefully studying operating costs to fit income without sacrificing the standard of upkeep of the course itself and clubhouse.

He went over the records of the club for over three years and obtained the



Gordon Brunton



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View of Stanislaus clubhouse from entrance to club grounds. Note swimming pool in left foreground.

names and addresses of all those who had resigned from the club during that time. Thus fortified, he made a personal call on each and every one of them, either at their places of business or at their homes. Carefully he listed the reasons given for leaving the club together with any criticisms and suggestions for improvements.

In this way he came across some very interesting and rather amazing things—things that would seldom occur to a club manager, or that seemed very trivial. But Brunton concluded that trivial or not, they were keeping potential members away and if they kept members away they must be eliminated pronto.

This later proved to be the best selling point the new membership campaign had because when you removed a man's pet peeve there wasn't much reason left why he shouldn't join up again. This Brunton lad didn't miss any sales angle as he made his calls on former disgruntled ones. He learned that the fact they were to receive personal attention made prospective members feel they were part of the Stanislaus Club and not selected as suppliers of enough money to give the club another start. He outlined a program of much-needed improvements which soon showed very definite results and made a big hit with the members.

While Brunton was putting on his membership drive with marked success, the members themselves suggested they put one on. Imagine that. They insisted they go ahead in this direction but Brunton told them to hold off until the conditions of the golf course, the clubhouse and its service be improved to such an extent that they would be proud to show it to their friends. This was done and when the work was accomplished and the golf course was at its very best old members began to return in a hurry.

During the months of promotional work the importance of the professional to the scheme of things in a golf club that was at low ebb was very forcibly brought home. Most people join a golf club to play golf and that at once puts the golf pro and his shop in focus for reception and service. The impression a new member is accorded by the pro, thinks Brunton, gives him the immediate impression of the whole club and for that reason a club cannot exercise too much care in the selection of its professional representative. The pro's ability to make new friends and make them feel at home, to arrange games for them when it is possible and to see they meet the rest of the membership is just as important to a club as his ability to teach well and play sound tournament golf. His willingness and ability to work with all committees determines to a large extent the enthusiasm with which the committees will function. Fortunately Brunton fully recognized these important factors of success long before he took over Stanislaus.

During all the period of reconstruction the social activities of the club have not been neglected. The regular program of activities in dances, dinners, get-togethers and pitching-and-putting contests has gone on with much enthusiasm, all of which markedly increased the "gate" receipts. Stanislaus has a dining room that no longer is in the red. It's helped in no small degree by the cocktail lounge.

The proof of the soundness of Brunton's theories and his unquestioned ability to carry them out are emphasized by the very results they have produced and ought to interest no little many clubs throughout the country at this momentous time. Less than a year ago when he took over, the membership was exactly 83 in number.