

Turf Roundup of 1947

By FRED V. GRAU

Director, USGA Green Section, Beltsville, Maryland

The 1947 season was a tough one in turf management. The season offered the greatest extremes of rainfall, temperature and humidity experienced for many years. In general, turf got a poor start with a long, cold, wet spring which was just right for *Poa annua* and weeds but just wrong for many turf grasses. Nature's overwatering in the spring developed shallow root systems just the same as when it is done accidentally or on purpose with the hose and sprinkler. Drought periods and high temperatures with high humidity, came along and a lot of turf simply "cooked" and gave up the ghost. As a result there have been endless reports of clover and crabgrass everywhere with few exceptions—and the exceptions are extremely interesting and highly significant.

This has been a year when many turf grasses displayed inherent weaknesses which often are hidden behind a screen of skillful management. This year many of those weaknesses came out of hiding where they could be recognized for what they are. Likewise, the trouble that was built into the course as part of the original design rattles the bones of the skeleton in the closet until finally the door swings open and the "secret" is out.

PUTTING GREENS

The "secret" of putting greens that came through August and September with flying colors is **drainage**. Drainage is not a simple

thing but consists of at least three distinct phases.

1. Surface drainage. Excess surface water must be removed rapidly in at least two directions. Scald develops where all the surface water from a 6,000 square foot green is taken to one outlet—usually the approach. Water moves slowly through a dense turf increasing the necessity of making it travel the shortest distance to get off the green.

2. Internal drainage. This is by far the most important phase of the drainage problem. Where nature, or inexperienced or careless help, consistently keep the turf overwatered and the soil saturated, it is highly important to carry the excess soil water downward and away from the roots of the grass. To accomplish internal drainage there must be (1) tile under the green to carry the water away or (2) a porous bed of sand or gravel to serve the same purpose. In heavy clay soils tile is absolutely necessary. Where the subsoil is sand or gravel, tile is not necessary. As soil water is carried downward, air moves into the soil to fill the pore spaces. It is the air that gives grass roots a new lease on life.

3. Air drainage. Most greenkeepers are conscious of the need for air drainage. A putting green set into a "hotspot" or "pocket" three-quarters surrounded by trees and brush usually does a fade-out in



Diagonal view of Quonset building at Maple Lane GC, Detroit, which provides Clarence Wolfram, grnknpr., with spacious work shed and ample storage facilities.

August. The axe and chain saw work wonders in reviving the green by allowing nature to sweep away the stagnant air which breeds disease.

On this subject of **Drainage** we invite the attention of the architects and the construction engineers to the wholesale slaughter of good turf on otherwise artistically-designed courses, under capable maintenance, which could have been avoided by proper construction. Even the best greenkeeper can not do the impossible when the skies open up and loose torrents of water onto soil that already is saturated. The "secret" of a perfect putting green is not surface drainage; it is not artistic contours; it is not the strain of grass; nor fertilization practices, nor mowing procedure; it is a combination of all of these things, superimposed upon a soil with **perfect internal drainage**. It has taken years to develop the conditions which finally add up to partial or total loss of turf in a bad season. Sadly enough, golf courses are being built today on impervious clay soils with **no internal drainage** being planned or built into the greens. It will be only a question of time until these greens go bad and the management will say, "What's wrong with the greenkeeper?"

The only known method of achieving perfect internal drainage in a green is to use enough sand in the top-mix so that the water will go **through** the soil into the tile or gravel in the base of the green. Hundreds of golf courses are **rebuilding** their greens because they were poorly constructed without adequate drainage and because it has been impossible to maintain satisfactory turf. This is costly procedure as club management has learned. Our best advice to architects and construction engineers is to either be a greenkeeper for 10 years on a poorly built course or to maintain on their staff competent greenkeepers who know the true relationship between construction and maintenance.

Golf courses today have access to a number of superior putting green grasses. If a green is poor because of the grass, the sod should be replaced. Turf nurseries are again in style on many courses for this express purpose. Emphasis is on **natural** disease resistance and **natural** resistance to weed invasion.

Too many greens are poor from the playing standpoint (the only one we can consider) because the grass is not cut closely enough. The best height of cut is 3/16" to 1/4". Higher cut tends to form a "mat" which encourages disease and "scald" and which interferes with the "trueness" of the putting surface.

Too many greens are watered in the evening which keeps the grass wet all night

and encourages disease. The best plan is to water in early morning and use the **least water possible** and still grow good grass. A "dry" green, built with good soil, with a dense turf, will hold a properly-hit shot as well as a soggy green. Less footprinting will result and less topdressing will be needed.

An unsolved problem on greens is the oriental earthworm or stinkworm.

Another unsolved problem is how to keep Bermuda grass out of bent putting greens. This will be of increasing importance as more winter-hardy strains of Bermuda grass push the frontier northward.

Reduction in amounts and frequency of topdressing on greens generally is being practiced. During the war when most clubs could not topdress they found that they could produce good putting greens without topdressing—if the drainage was good!

Top spot for fungicides goes to **cadmium** preparations for dollarspot control. (They have not been satisfactory for brownpatch.) Carbide & Carbon's 531 and Gallowhur's Puratized 177 apparently share the honors. New ones are being tested. Du Pont's Tersan is favored for brownpatch control because it does so much less damage to bent turf than the inorganic mercury compounds.

Good (3 way) drainage, a good strain of grass, morning watering, minimum water, and adequate balanced feeding—all combined—have been outstanding in disease control.

Chlordane controls **all** ants according to independent reports from Rhode Island and Connecticut.

COLLARS AND APPROACHES

On many courses the poorest turf is immediately adjacent to the putting green where it should be the best. A well-hit ball landing 12 inches outside the putting surface (pin-high) may be 50 yards beyond the green. Had it been 12 inches closer to the pin the player would have a possible putt for a par. The answer to this is not simple. Much more study must be given this important area. Approaches should have turf so good that a player, if he so elects, could approach with a putter. Too often the approach is a mass of clover, goosegrass, knotweeds or just bare ground. The soil usually is dense and compact as a result of the repeated turning of fairway equipment in that small area. The soil usually is wetter than the fairway because it is watered when the green is watered and this extra watering tends to increase compaction and drown the grass. The answer may lie in the selection of grass species which can thrive under these conditions or it may be that periodic cultivation

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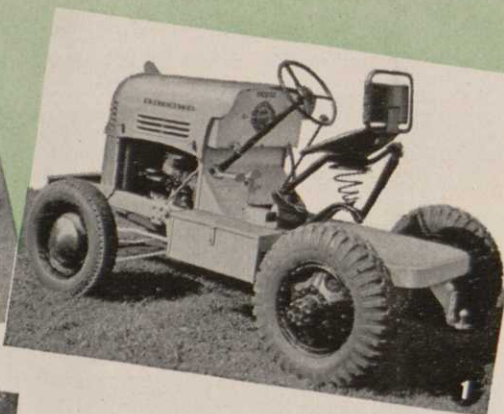
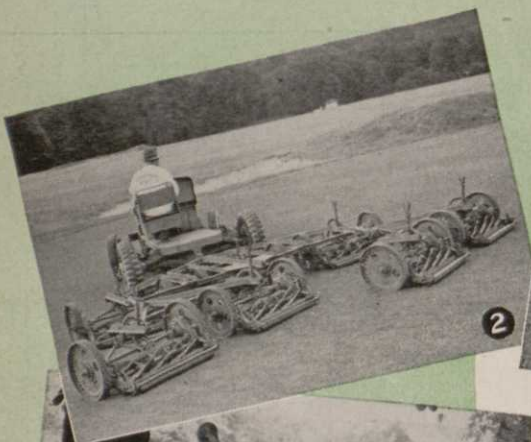
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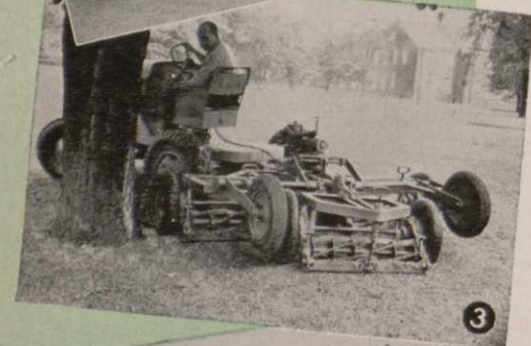


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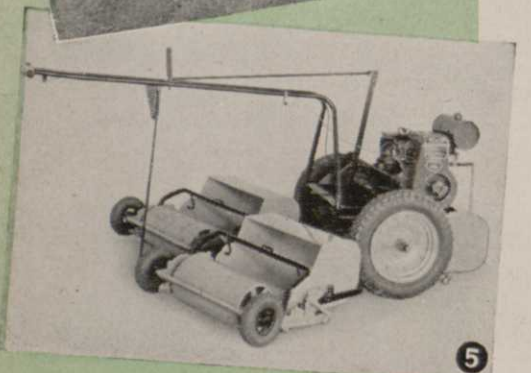
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of the soil will remedy the situation. More likely, it will be a combination of the two.

The most encouraging trend in fairway management is the growing practice of cutting the grass to suit the game of the majority of the golfers rather than to suit the requirements of any particular grass.

TEES

A grass that will grow on the clay tees of a public golf course represents close to the ultimate in hardiness. It should repair itself, resist weed invasion, and hold a green color with little or no irrigation. The perennial grass that comes closest to this goal is Bermuda grass. Goose grass (*Eleusine indica*), also called silver crab, or crowfoot, thrives on compact clay soils yet, on tees in Washington, D. C., where Bermuda grass has been introduced, the goosegrass is crowded out, the turf is weedfree, it withstands close (1/2") cutting, divots heal rapidly, and it stays green without irrigation. The Zoysia grasses fulfill all requirements except that of rapid healing of divots. The Green Section believes that a northward extension of Bermuda grass for use on tees is long overdue and is willing to risk the wrath of those who are prejudiced against it. We know of no other grass that has the inherent capacity to take abuse under nearly impossible conditions. Rigid selection of fine-leaved, winter-hardy strains will be necessary.

FAIRWAYS

Crabgrass is still the No. 1 pest on fairways over a large part of the United States. This is true because we have failed in one way or another to cope with nature and to grow a turf which is stronger than crabgrass at the same time that crabgrass is at its peak. Bluegrass, fescue and bent grow naturally in the cool months of the year but, except under unusually good management, these turf grasses are unable to hold crabgrass in check during a season like 1947. Crabgrass even invades Bermuda turf except where the Bermuda is fertilized adequately.

Washington, D. C. is one of the recognized "hot spots" for crabgrass. Lawns and fairways a week after a hard frost bear mute testimony to this fact. It must be placed on record, however, that virtually the only crabgrass-free (and clover-free) turf on close-cut fairways in the open sun in the Washington and Baltimore district are those areas where Bermuda grass has become established. Zoysia grasses enjoy the same freedom from crabgrass and clover. The virtue of these grasses is that they stay green during the growing season without irrigation and they can be cut closely without injury.

The "secret" of crabgrass control is to

keep the soil shaded with turf so dense that the seedlings of crabgrass are smothered and shaded to death before they can get started. To accomplish this on fairways that are mowed closely enough to make it **FUN** to play golf is little less than an art. On a few courses one sees bluegrass and bentgrass mixtures which are crabgrass-free. They are the exceptions.

Clover in fairway turf is an expression of lack of aggressiveness of the turf grass being grown. Since the brilliant work of Robinson and Sprague of State College, Pennsylvania has been published, let no greenkeeper or green chairman who depends upon straight bluegrass turf under irrigation, labor under the delusion that clover can be kept out by nitrogen fertilization at a fairway height of cut. The heaviest clover in irrigated bluegrass turf was produced at the highest rates of nitrogen fertilization.

Another encouraging trend is for more judicious use of irrigation systems on fairways. There is a growing tendency to divert the cost of excess irrigation of turf into more fertilizer.

ROUGHS

Many roughs are maintained so as to produce the greatest possible quantities of weed seeds to infest the fairways. Any weed control program should start in the roughs! Few roughs are seeded to those grasses which are able naturally to control weeds. For low-cost maintenance in the dim future when this item may be extremely important, this factor should be considered seriously. One of the worst "weeds" of the south is Dallis grass. Another is "sand spurs." In the north it is crabgrass. (Note—broad-leaved weeds are no longer considered a problem since 2,4-D has come into general use.)

An outstanding, naturally weed-free area of rough on a golf course is at Philadelphia Country Club, Spring Mill Course. It is a *Zoysia japonica*—bluegrass combination. A 10' x 10' plot was seeded in 1930 to common Japanese lawngrass in the old Green Section Demonstration Garden bordering No. 6 fairway. In 17 years it has spread 75 feet crowding out every weed in its path. Bluegrass has remained and, each fall when the Zoysia turns brown, the bluegrass, not in evidence through the summer, comes through to give the area a green winter color. The height of cut on this area may be varied to suit any class of golfers and yet remain weed-free. Sadly, no seed is available and plantings must be vegetative at present.

Another grass which offers great possibilities for naturally weed-free roughs, which is capable of thriving over a wide range of climate and soils, which may be

(Continued on page 79)

Service is Key to Successful Pro Shop Operation

By **WM. C. JACKSON**

Pro, Camargo Club, Madeira, O.

"There is nothing new under the sun," is an old adage oftentimes repeated without due consideration to the meaning of the words. Similarly, among those of us who make a livelihood from the business of being a golf pro, there are those who contend, "There is nothing new in this game," or "There isn't anything I don't know about being a pro," or "What is there that is new in this business?" Little or no thought is given to these utterances and the lack of imagination on the part of the pro making such a statement is evidence that there is room for improvement.

Being a successful pro, to my way of thinking, demands being a capable individual with abilities in several specialized fields and whether he measures up or not, the modern pro must be a combination department store manager, salesman, teacher, bookkeeper, good will ambassador and, of course, a good player.

The emphasis on service cannot be too great. It should become the byword of every pro. Put service on a higher plane. Make every phase of operation akin to service.

Proper approach to serving the membership calls for a little imagination. Put yourself in the place of one of your members. It is a week day afternoon and you are in a downtown office sitting at a desk with your feet propped up across the corner. Your thoughts, for a moment, turn away from the work-a-day world, the trials and tribulations of your business, and you start day-dreaming of an afternoon of golf at the club.

What are your thoughts for the moment?" Are you thinking, "Wonder if there are any caddies this afternoon? I need some new socks, should I get them downstairs or will Pud Pro be able to find my size if I wait until I get to the club? I hope he has the handle on my seven iron repaired. . . . said it would be ready the last time out, but I had to borrow Bill's." Are these the thoughts that are running through your head or are you off to a pleasant afternoon of golf with the full assurance that everything will be ready for you when you arrive and that you can get what you want from the shop without any trouble or delay?

Let's get back on the job now, and re-



Wm. C. Jackson, pro, Camargo Club, Madeira, O., center, with his champion caddies, Jerry Purdy (left) winner, Cincinnati Caddie Championship, and Darrel Reed, Co-medalist, National Caddie Championship.

member — that business man whose place you assumed momentarily, is coming out for an afternoon of relaxation and pleasure. Your job of service starts with his arrival at the clubhouse. Every human being likes to be or feel important. Your every move, every word, from the time you first see him must be pointed toward making him feel that he is the most important man in the world as far as you are concerned. When he walks into the shop, give him a greeting and a smile that makes him know you are glad he has come out to play. His golf bag, clubs cleaned and in repair, with an efficient caddie are ready and waiting on the first tee. Any essentials which he might need or have forgotten, such as socks, underwear, shirts, caps, plus complete golf equipment are available in a clean, well arranged shop. If he should want some pointers on his game, be ready. Let him know that you are at his service.

Care of Clubs

Continuing with the above premise in mind, let's follow through with the several phases of pro shop operation. The care of clubs is important. Any pro that fails to give this special attention, who does not adopt some routine for the efficient handling of club needs is handicapping himself. Aside from thorough cleaning, stringing and minor repairs I have followed the practice of stamping the owner's name in small

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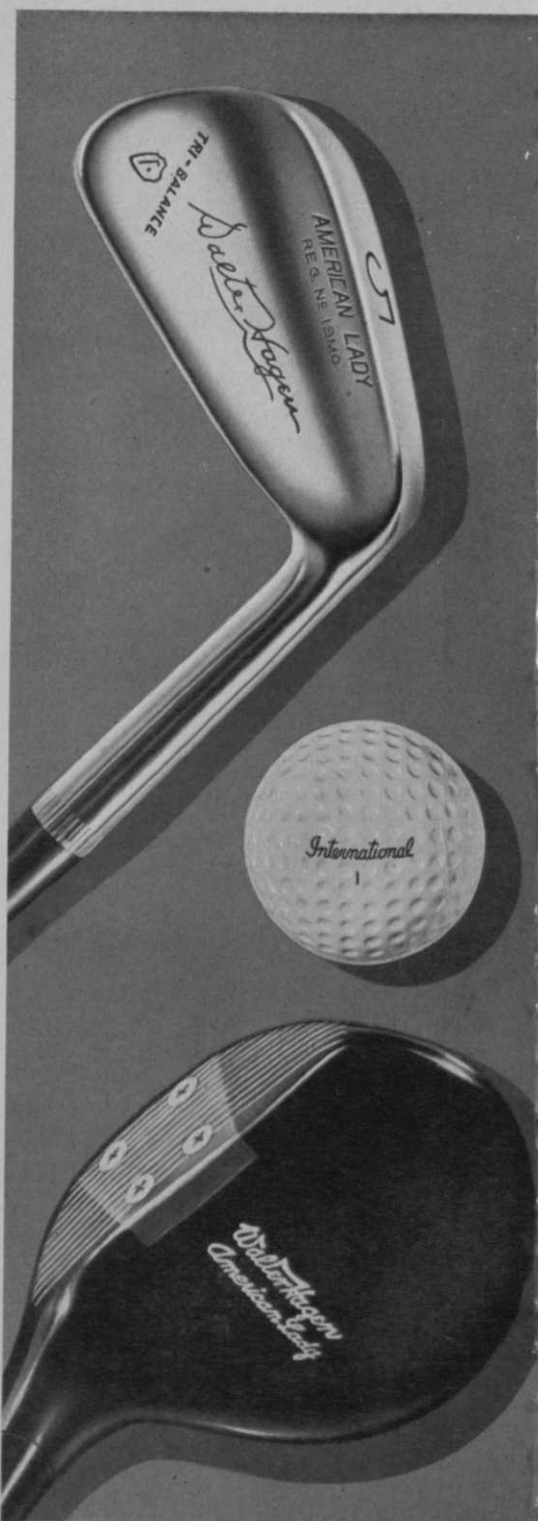
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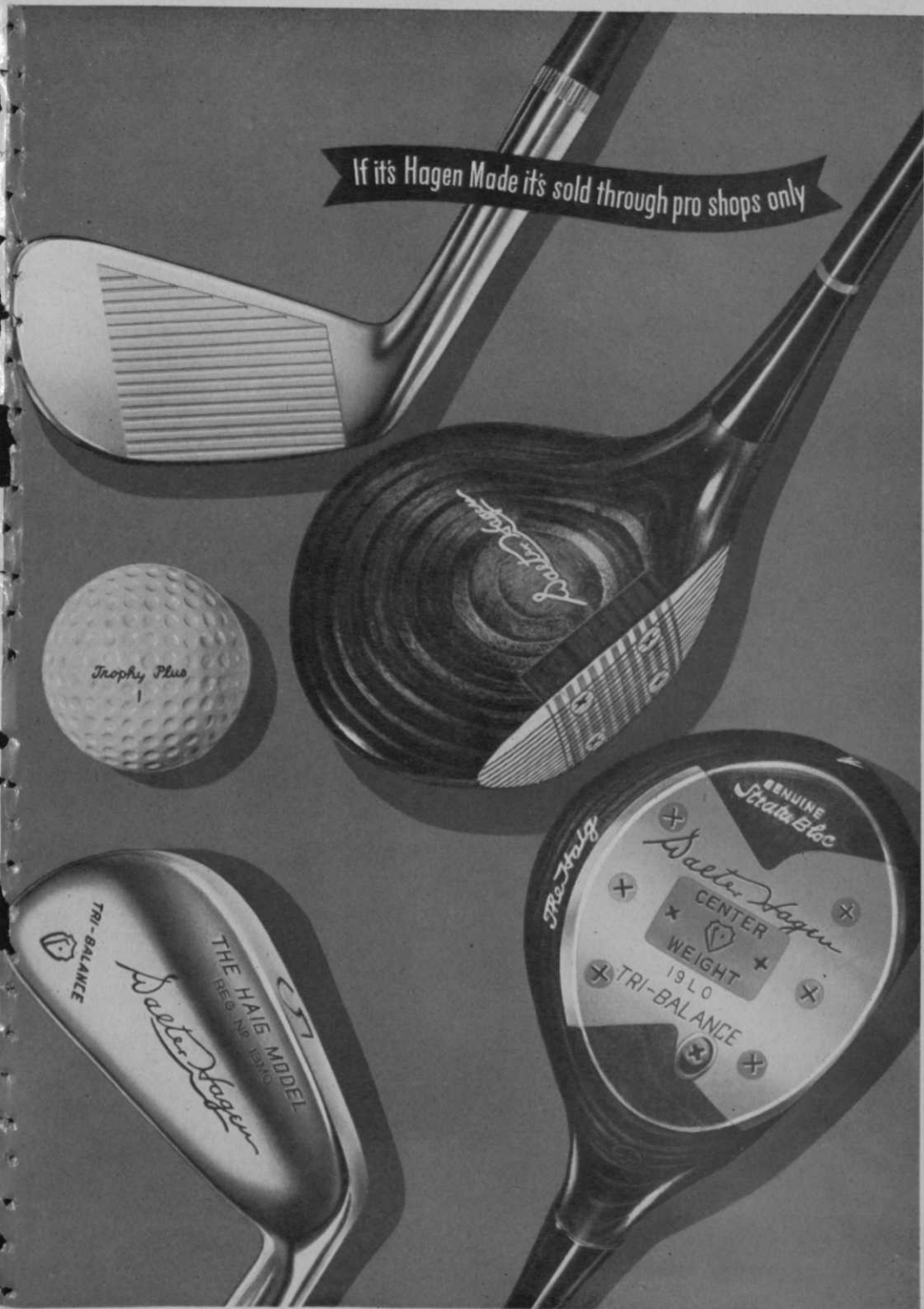
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Too much attention cannot be given the problem of a satisfactory caddie program. It is a long story and it would take a book to cover the subject completely. First of all, one must have a caddie master of high calibre—the right one is an asset and is worth the necessary expenditure. He will pay for himself many times over in improved service. Most clubs overlook this important point, thinking that most anyone can fill the bill. We have a complete program at Camargo. Caddies are provided with games to play in their idle time such as ping-pong, horseshoe pitching, basketball, softball, etc. We also allow them to play golf late in the afternoon after all members have teed off. I give them group instruction and to the six most promising I give individual instruction. This program, I am sure, had much to do with our winning the Greater Cincinnati Caddie Team Championship, the individual championship, and the fact that one of our boys was co-medalist in the National Caddie Championship at Columbus, O. The attention given our caddies and "our living with them" has paid big dividends in courtesy and efficiency in return.

Selection of Merchandise.

Successful merchandising is an art and a science. The extra service you give in the selection and presentation of merchandise for your membership may be the difference between a profitable operation and a losing proposition.

Intelligent selection of merchandise for the pro shop varies with each club. It takes at least a year of association with the members to sense their needs and the grade of equipment which will meet their demands. Some clubs are composed of very wealthy individuals which gives the pro a rather exclusive clientele while other club memberships are made up of individuals of the average income group.

Gauge the quality and quantity of purchases accordingly, but never sacrifice quality.

If you use good judgment in buying, two important factors remain upon which you must rely heavily to put yourself in the class of a successful merchandiser. Ingenuity in making attractive and appealing displays and the development of a sales technique in which service to the membership is the underlying motive will go a long way in putting you in the win column.

A letter in the Spring and before Christmas discreetly explaining the shortness of

your season, the value of professional selection adapted to the member's particular requirements, and your appreciation for purchase of gifts from the pro shop will do much to activate your sales and serve as a reminder to them to support the man who has served them throughout the year.

Do not try to sell out your complete stock without replenishing it in the Fall of the year. This is a year-round business with you. It is your livelihood, so don't give the impression you are living from hand to mouth; that it is an in and out proposition with you.

Art of Teaching

Teaching, from your standpoint, is more of a service than a profession even though you need to be well versed in the art. Golf instruction is highly psychological. A deep knowledge of human nature is essential to be good at it. Most pros today know the proper fundamentals and mechanics of the stroke—few know the art of teaching or how to impart knowledge acquired through experience. Personally, I do not stress the mechanics of the swing, but emphasize the feel of it. There is only one book published, in my opinion, that would be of any benefit to a pro learning how to teach and every teaching pro should get it regardless of his playing ability. It is "How to Learn Golf" by Percy Boomer and it should be read and reread until it is thoroughly understood. I think it is by far the most intelligent book on the golf stroke that has been written.

Finally, building up and maintaining general club interest is a "must" if you are to continue a successful operation. It is a service in which you have a definite selfish interest. Briefly, the definition of a club is, "get together." When your club is composed of individual groups or cliques it is on the way to deterioration. You can be the prime mover in "busting up" any tendencies of this nature in many ways such as running a two-man team tournament thru the playing season where each team plays every other team.

Our most successful "get together" at Camargo is a tournament held in the Spring and again in the Fall. It is a Mixed Scotch Foursome, played with selective drives, alternate shots with one-half the combined handicap. Every man and woman in the club who plays golf is entered, regardless of ability. Interest runs high and we have a complete "scrambling" of the membership as the tournament progresses. All of our membership is "together" for another successful season.

I suppose some will say, "There is nothing new in this." Maybe so, but improving on the old has taught me that "in serving others I serve myself."