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# How the Assistant Pro Can Really Assist

By JOE PATELLI

This is my 25th year as assistant to Tommy Harmon — Montclair (N. J.) GC, in the summers and Belleview Biltmore at Clearwater, Fla., in recent winters. It's been an interesting and profitable career for me. The year-around income as an assistant in this case has amounted to more net than a lot of pro jobs where the fellows spend in the winter most of what they are able to earn in the summer.

From Tommy I've learned how to handle a pro job and what is just as important I've learned that handling a pro department at a first class club or resort calls for the most complete and smoothest teamwork you could see in any business. Everybody in a pro department has to think of what the player may want before the player thinks of it. That's No. 1 among all the points about pro department management.

The assistant also has to think about what the pro may want done before the pro himself thinks of it. The pro on a big job has a lot of executive and public relations work to handle before he can get to his teaching and to details of the department. If the assistant has been properly trained, has business judgment himself and is on the ball, he takes care of a lot of the things that might otherwise eat up the pro's time and reduce his earning capacity.

Time certainly is money in a pro job and with many duties that haven't any direct profit and the weather often murdering a chance for lesson and sales income, the competent assistant has to see to it that he saves all of the pro's time that possibly can be saved. That's one of the most important ways an assistant can make money for the pro and for himself.

## Assistant Must Show Profit

What the assistant has to know clearly is that he must do more than earn what he's paid. The assistant has to show a profit on himself just as much as the shop stock must show a net sales profit. Otherwise what would be good business in having an assistant around? The best employee of a company is the employee on which the company makes the most money. That condition isn't any different in golf pro business than it is in general business. The more the company makes, the more the pro makes as a definite result of the assistant's work, thinking and

alertness, the better the income of the employee. Do you think I would stay with Tommy Harmon for 25 years or that Tommy would have me for 25 years if the deal hadn't been mutually profitable?

I think Tommy's the best man I ever saw at handling a pro job and he's one of the finest all-around men I ever met, but admiration and loyalty, as pleasant and essential as they are, wouldn't be complete substitutes for cash.

Tommy got me thinking early that the profitable operation of a pro department depended a whole lot on me. He encouraged in me a sense of responsibility. I saw that I'd have to pattern exactly after Harmon in doing everything possible to make members more than satisfied. He taught me that my own brains had to be on the job instead of depending on Harmon for reminders and instruction on a lot of details.

The same thing goes with the shop manager, Mike Annese. There's never a time when Tommy has to let his eyes rest on something that's out of place or which may not make a favorable effect on the players. At Belleview Biltmore where the shop is small and bag storage space very limited, it's a difficult job to keep things orderly but that's done on an organized basis so no time is lost in supplying a player with his bag. Mike must have eyes in the back and side of his head because he sees guests walking toward the shop and has their bags out for them and caddies jumping.

The kids are very important to pro shop operation. You've got to pay attention to them and have them feeling that you are sincerely interested in having them become good golfers. And let us face it, a kid now and then may be just as much of a nuisance as we probably were when we were kids. But you get them on your team and they'll never be going elsewhere to buy anything they can get in a pro shop. They are old age insurance for a pro.

## Teach the Pro's Way

What is absolutely necessary is that the assistant must learn to teach the same way, fundamentally, that his pro does. Tommy is a fine player and teacher so in my case I am lucky in having the best sort of a model. But in other cases of

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pros and assistants I've seen the assistants teaching one way and the pros another, and the result is that the members have absolutely no confidence in the instruction of either one of them — or golf instruction in general.

When the assistant studies and learns exactly how his pro teaches then the assistant saves the pro a lot of headaches and builds up lesson business. A member may want to take a lesson from the pro whose lesson book is packed and when the member can't get time he may feel slightly miffed at something that's not the pro's fault. But when the assistant's instruction is as close a duplicate of the pro's as it's humanly possible to get the member is satisfied.

When the pro tells the assistant what lesson point should be watched with special care then the instruction coordination between pro and assistant gives the pupil a very good break. What most members need — and about all they can use in a lesson — is just a point or two straightened out, then some supervised practice without too much talking by the teacher.

### Pro's Eyes and Ears

Where the assistant has to be the pro's eyes and ears many times is in club sales. At our shops we encourage players to take new clubs out and play test rounds with them. They don't damage the clubs any and Mike and I can quickly restore the clubs that have been used for the test rounds to absolutely new condition.

Once in a while we'll see cases where players should have thicker than standard grips. Well, it's no job at all to get such cases fitted exactly and if an assistant isn't able to handle that sort of a job properly he's not a fully qualified assistant.

The assistant has to be as discreet as the pro in giving plenty of helpful little tips to players. He can't get the players embarrassed at thinking the pro or assistant is watching everytime the players are swinging, but he has to keep the folks reminded that he's there as a helpful friend.

Watching the handicap cards to see who needs help, helping run the tournaments, helping make the shop look attractive and keeping it that way, helping with the caddy situation — helping everywhere — is the assistant's job. The pro generally is expected to be everywhere at once and when he can't be the assistant must be an acceptable fill-in for the pro. He'll have to get his own playing or practice time before the members start coming out or late in the evening, or — when it doesn't give the pupil the idea the assistant is out for attention to the assistant's own game — during a practice round.

But at all times the assistant has to

keep looking, listening, thinking and moving with one big idea in mind — an assistant's job is to assist. When the pro has to keep paying a lot of attention to seeing that the assistant is on the job, then the pro is the assistant to the assistant, and that's no way to successfully run a pro business.

### Navy and Marine Course Gives Taxpayers a Break

Figures on 1951 operation of the Navy and Marine golf course at Pearl Harbor are additional evidence of how far the mark was missed by congressmen who rapped military golf courses.

Play at the 18-hole course was 73,987 rounds. Green fee income was \$42,886.25. Golf equipment sales out of ship stores and income from range ball use was \$42,856.65. Pro-only club and ball sales and lessons were additional to sales made out of ship stores. Cart rental was \$2,475.28. Club rental (50 cents a set all day) brought in \$5,793.

The course was built in 1947 when Adm. Hall, now in command of the 12th Naval district, was in charge. Construction costs were paid out of recreation fund (canteen and slot machine) profits. It didn't cost the taxpayers a dime. At low rates for use of facilities the course is one of the most popular recreation facilities for enlisted men and officers.

Its maintenance under management of Joe Mayo, formerly in charge of the famed Monterey peninsula courses, is financed by play at the course and money is available for improvement and expansion; again, without expense to taxpayers.

Mayo has the course in fine condition and has built a night-lighted golf range accommodating 60 players. There are four pitching practice greens, an iron practice area, and a 150 ft. sq. putting practice green.

Adm. Hall, a good golfer himself, ordered that officers and enlisted men be on the same club basis at the course and at locker room and bar accommodations. He also insisted that there be no preferred starting times for officers. No reservations can be made more than 48 hours in advance. Every fourth starting time is reserved for men from ships of the fleet that come in overnight.

The Navy and Marine course is an important and highly satisfactory answer to entertainment and exercise needs in the Pearl Harbor area and an admirable operation by military services.

With very few exceptions other golf courses at military installations also have been built and are operated at no cost to

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## 1952 TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE

### MARCH

- 3-7 — South Fla. Amateur, Palm Beach (Fla.) GC  
 6-9 — St. Petersburg Open, Lakewood CC, St. Petersburg, Fla.  
 11 — La Gorce Pro-Am., La Gorce CC, Miami Beach, Fla.  
 11-15 — 2nd Annual Nat'l Seniors Best-Ball Ch., Ponce de Leon GC, St. Augustine, Fla.  
 12-15 — Women's Titleholders Ch., Augusta (Ga.) CC  
 13-16 — Miami Beach Open,  
 17-18 — Reed Memorial, Seminole CC, Hobe Sound, Fla.  
 17-22 — 34th Annual Houston (Tex.) CC Amateur Inv.  
 17-23 — Amateur Senior's Match-Play Ch., Kenilworth Lodge CC, Sebring, Fla.  
 18-23 — Women's North & South Amateur, Pinehurst (N.C.) CC  
 18-19 — Seminole Pro-Am., Seminole CC, Palm Beach, Fla.  
 21-23 — Nassau Inv. Four-Ball, Bahamas CC  
 21-24 — Jacksonville Open Inv., (Club to be announced), Jacksonville, Fla.  
 25 — Aiken Pro-Am., Palmetto GC, Aiken, S. C.  
 27-30 — Wilmington Azalea Open Inv., Cape Fear CC, Wilmington, N. C.

### APRIL

- 1-6 — Trans-Mississippi Women's Championship, Arizona CC, Phoenix  
 3-6 — Masters Tournament, Augusta (Ga.) National CC  
 4-6 — 17th Annual Midwest Amateur, French Lick, Ind.  
 4-6 — Ladies PGA, Dallas, Tex.  
 11-12 — Women's Weathervane, Brae Burn CC, Houston, Tex.  
 11-14 — Greensboro Open Inv., (Club to be announced), Greensboro, N. C.  
 15-19 — Bermuda Amateur, Mid Ocean Club  
 18-20 — Ladies PGA, Tucson, Ariz.  
 21-26 — 52nd Annual North & South Amateur Championship, Pinehurst (N. C.) CC  
 22-26 — Women's Bermuda Amateur, Mid Ocean Club  
 26-28 — Ladies PGA, Richmond, Calif.

### MAY

- 2-4 — Ladies PGA, Fresno, Calif.  
 8-11 — Four-Ball Inv., CC of Little Rock, Ark.  
 8-11 — 1st Pan-American Open Inv., Club de Golf Mexico, Mexico City  
 10-11 — Women's Weathervane, Broadmoor GC, Seattle, Wash.  
 21-25 — Colonial CC Nat'l Inv., Fort Worth, Texas  
 26-31 — British Amateur Championship, Prestwick GC

- 29-June 1 — WGA Open Championship, (Club to be announced) St. Louis, Mo.  
 31-June 1 — Women's Weathervane, New York

### JUNE

- 6-7 — Curtis Cup Match, Muirfield, Scotland  
 6-7 — NAIB, (Place to be announced later.)  
 12-14 — USGA National Open Championship, Northwood Club, Dallas, Texas  
 16-20 — British Ladies Amateur, Troon GC, Ayrshire, Scotland  
 16-21 — WPGA Open, Skokie CC, Glencoe, Ill.  
 17-20 — WGA Junior Championship, Univ. of Minnesota, Minneapolis  
 18-24 — PGA Championship, Big Spring GC, Louisville, Ky.  
 25-27 — DAKS Professional Tourney, Wentworth

### JULY

- 5, 7-12 — U.S. Public Links Ch., Miami (Fla.) CC  
 7-11 — British Open Championship, R. Lytham, St. Annes  
 10-11 — Western Seniors, Edgewater GC, Chicago dist.  
 14-18 — WPGA Junior Inv. Open, Lake Shore CC, Glencoe, Ill.  
 14-19 — Southern GA Ch., Holston Hills CC, Knoxville, Tenn.  
 14-20 — 49th Annual Trans-Mississippi Ch., Lakewood CC, Denver  
 16-17 — Canadian Open, St. Charles CC, Winnipeg, Man.  
 21-25 — Great Lakes Amateur (Club to be announced)  
 23-26 — USGA Junior Amateur, Yale GC, New Haven, Conn.  
 28-Aug. 2 — WPGA Amateur, Los Angeles (Calif.) CC  
 29 — Simpson Cup Matches, Canada vs Washington, D.C., Toronto, Ont.

### AUGUST

- 4-6 — Natl. Lefthanders Ch., Shawnee on Delaware  
 9-12 — All American Tournaments, Tam O'Shanter CC, Chicago dist.  
 11-16 — 7th USJCC Natl. Junior Championship, Eugene (Ore.) CC  
 16-19 — World's Championships, Tam O'Shanter CC, Chicago dist.  
 18-22 — 7th PGA National Caddie Tournament, Columbus, O.  
 18-22 — USGA Girls' Junior, Monterey Peninsula CC, Pebble Beach, Calif.  
 18-23 — USGA Amateur, Seattle (Wash.) GC  
 25-30 — USGA Women's Amateur, Waverley CC, Portland, Ore.

### SEPTEMBER

- 8-14 — WGA Amateur Championship, Exmoor CC, Highland Park, Ill.

## 1953 TOURNAMENTS

- June 11-13 — USGA Open, Oakmont (Pa.) CC  
 July 13-18 — USGA Amateur Public Links, W. Seattle (Wash.) GC  
 July 29-Aug. 1 — USGA Junior Amateur, Southern Hills CC, Tulsa, Okla.  
 Aug. 17-21 — USGA Girls' Junior, (Club to be announced)  
 Aug. 24-29 — USGA Women's Amateur, Rhode Island CC, W. Barrington  
 Sep. 4-5 — Walker Cup Match, Kittansett Club, Marion, Mass.  
 Sep. 14-19 — USGA Amateur, Oklahoma City (Okla.) G&CC

the taxpayers in providing highly popular sport for military personnel.

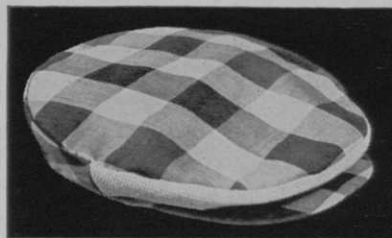
It's customary for congressmen with a presidential election coming up to begin fussing at golf as the symbol of the country club set. The politicians show poor judgment with their blasts at the military golf installations. With about 65% of all golf now being played on public and semi-public courses, and the private club members putting up campaign funds without any of the under-world hook-ups so common in campaign

money, the attacks on golf now look especially nonsensical.

### SOUTHERN TURF ASSN. MEETS IN MEMPHIS, APRIL 7

Professor H. B. Musser, Penn State College and Dr. Glenn W. Burton, Georgia Coastal Plain Exp. Station, Tifton, Ga. are featured speakers on program of the annual meeting of the Southern Turf Assn. meeting at the Colonial CC, Memphis, Tenn., on April 7.





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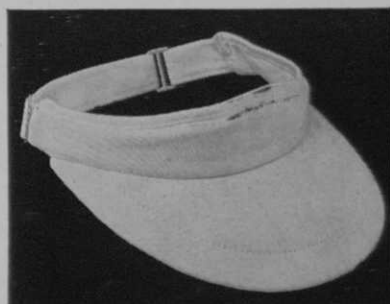


**No. 440** Made in white, tan, red, green, and navy twill with airflow sides of white mesh. Texon visor with green underbrim in white cap, self underbrim in others. Suitable for all ages.

**No. 448** Same as No. 440 except equipped with Clearsite glareshield with noseguard.

**No. 441** A sleek, trim-fitting plaid for men, women, and children. Made with solid crown panels, Texon water repellent visor with plaid underbrim. Available in red, blue, and green multi-colored plaids. A quick selling favorite suitable for all sports.

**No. 439** Same cap with airy mesh sides in contrasting white.



**No. 701** A Congo exclusive, fashioned with extra shading area in front and on sides . . . protects face and ears from blistering sun. Made of water-repellent Poplin in tan, red, green, and white. Hinged Texon visor. A sure sales repeater.

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# Reducing Thatch Brings Back Healthy Turf

By WARREN BIDWELL

When our population began moving westward in the early 1800's, the pioneers who chose the prairie lands for their new homes found a difficult task confronting them. The rich land was covered with thatched and matted grasslands sod, which had defied for centuries the efforts of tree seedlings to become established. The pioneers were men of the soil who realized that the sod must be incorporated with the soil if they were to see their dreams of abundant crops come true. The thick blanket of organic waste covering the soil was a rich storehouse of soil organic matter when put to work through the action of micro-organisms.

The pioneers did not know the scientific explanation of the soil's productivity. We know today the importance of the micro-organisms in changing raw vegetable waste into soil organic matter. Even the aerial portions of plants under normal conditions are covered with a varied mixture of beneficial organisms. When plants die — are cut — as in the case of modern turf production, this varied population of organisms is ready to begin the biochemical processes that change vegetable waste into the finished product — soil humus.

Certain conditions must be met if the organisms are to begin work. We have scientific proof that there is very little decomposition of grass clippings or roots during the winter months. Vigorous activity of the micro-organisms develops during the growing season, beginning about the time of the spring vegetative period. If the growing season should be unusually dry, very little decomposition of the accumulated clippings and roots will be ac-

complished. Equally important is the need for oxygen in the soil to promote an adequate supply of aerobic organisms — that is, bacteria that must have oxygen in order to function. The great bulk of decomposition of organic waste in soil is carried on by the aerobic organisms. We know that favorable temperature and moisture are necessary for nature to carry out the complicated processes of breaking down the accumulation of grass clippings and roots. Just as important for breaking down the thatch and mat found on many turf areas is the need for aeration to ensure the continued presence of aerobic bacteria in our turf soils.

## Shuts Out Moisture

Many turf men have experienced the time when they have gone out to old number six fairway after a prolonged rain expecting to find the moisture all the way down to China. Upon taking out their favorite watermelon knife and cutting the familiar triangular plug, disappointment has usually been their reward, for it was found that only one-quarter or maybe one-half inch of this thatched turf was moist. Why? Organic material of this type is known to possess a water-holding capacity up to twenty times that of a mineral soil on a percentage by weight basis. Equally true is the fact, that the ability of this organic material to absorb water rapidly is about the reverse in ratio as compared with the same mineral soil. So, we observe that if the next wetting period is five to ten days later, the small amount of moisture that penetrated the thatch has been of absolutely no use to the plants. The water held near the surface by the



F-G '51 Aerifier Triplex Gang in operation on fairway at Seaview CC.



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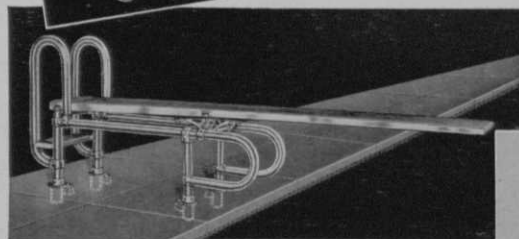
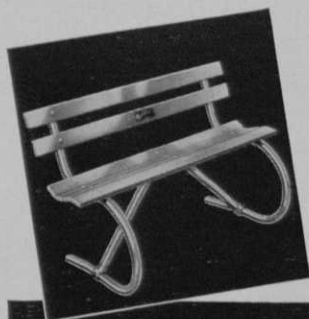
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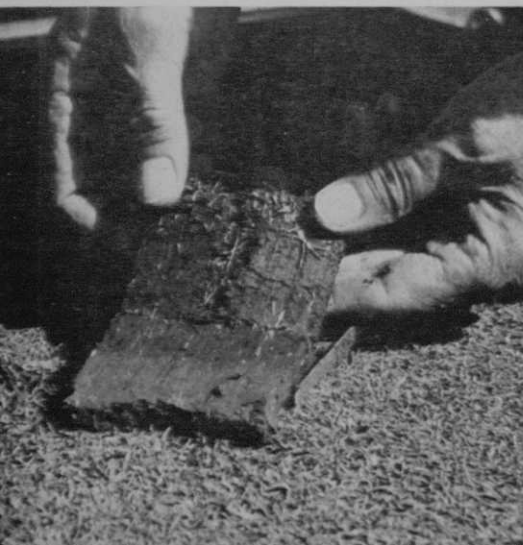
Fairway soil sample taken prior to aerification program; note thatch formation at surface.

organic waste simply evaporates instead of soaking into the soil to be used by the grass roots.

Why do we as turf men fret ourselves about thatched turf? Generally speaking, it looks good at most times of the year, it plays well and certainly it feels as luxurious, when we walk on it, as the famous Waldorf-Astoria rugs.

We know that thatch prevents much needed moisture from reaching the root zone of the soil and encourages shallow root development. That it is almost impossible for fertilizer to penetrate to the root zone where it belongs is another good reason for eliminating thatch. It stands to reason, that if this material prevents penetration of moisture and plant food, then the same handicap is being applied to the oxygen supply which is so vital for func-

With aerification program in progress thatch has begun to break down and root penetration is improved.



tional processes in the soil. If you have ever experienced a severe attack of dollar-spot on thatched turf, then you will recall how difficult it was to get rid of it. Even more noticeable are the deep and lasting scars and the extreme slowness with which they filled in with new grass. Thatch is a haven for fungi.

During the 1949 season, when heat and high humidity records were being broken everywhere, large areas of our Pines Course fairways did the old fade-out act. I call it smothering, for actually it is just that. A blanket of thatch as shown in two of the accompanying photographs is representative of not only some Seaview fairways at that time, but of many turf areas that have been established for years. Such a blanket with its disastrous filtering qualities, sets up even more complications to the maintenance program, than I have mentioned here.

Some desperate superintendents have followed the example set by the pioneers already mentioned; they have turned under their thatched fairways with the plow and started all over again with new seed. Such drastic action is never taken without the consent and full knowledge of the governing body. Regardless, criticism is still heard. What golfer will take time out to think the situation through? Even if he did, chances are that he wouldn't understand that this condition has been building up for many years as a direct result of his demands for thicker, greener and better turf. As a result of this attempt to please, we have been cutting and depositing far more clippings than Mother Nature can dispose of through the normal process of decomposition. So we have contributed to the thatch situation.

### Keeps Turf In Service

Only in the last few years has a tool been available that gives us an alternative to the plow — one that will allow us to keep turf areas in service while carrying out a planned program of thatch reduction. This tool is the Aerifier. Primarily, the Aerifier was to fulfill a specific purpose, that of cultivating compacted turf areas without taking the areas out of use. The challenge to correct compacted turf soils by cultivation is being met with an increasing degree of success.

The application of the Aerifier to our thatch was accidental. Those of us who, out of sheer desperation, have aerified thatched turf have been encouraged from the very beginning. The curved spoons penetrate the thatch and break the organic fibers over a larger area than the diameter of the spoon. Also, the open spoons scoop out a portion of soil. The soil brought to the surface and left in contact with the undecomposed organic material helps to maintain moisture in the critical area and