The tennis boom is on, and club managers have been caught off guard by the resurgence.

But building courts can be expensive, unless a sound financial program is worked out

By Joe Doan

Nobody really has a good explanation for it. Not more than five years ago, if a club had courts, probably half the membership wasn't aware of it. The teenagers around the club made some use of them, but at the first trickle of sweat, their allegiance was transferred to the swimming pool. In 1965 or 1966 the only adults around the club who played tennis were the skinny little eccentrics: the ones who wore the boxer shorts that were too big for them and ringed their foreheads with sweat bands. They did well if they constituted 3 per cent of the membership.

Now, flip the calendar. Bring it up to 1968. Suddenly, tennis is invented, discovered, or in the case of country clubs, conjured. For reasons that club managers, at least, can't explain there is a great declaration in favor of this newly-unearthed, sweaty pastime that includes one out of four members. At some clubs, it's more like 50 per cent. Kids swarm over the club's two or three courts. Torn weathered nets, which haven't intercepted a tennis ball in years, have to be quickly replaced. The old chickenwire backdrops have to go. There are a few hundred complaints about the lumps and ridges in the long neglected playing surfaces.

"Excuse me for using the word 'incredible,'" says one club manager, "but that's what it was. All of a sudden 70 or 80 people in a membership of 250 decide they want tennis. We were totally unprepared for it except that there were some courts out there."

This manager has no sure explanation for the instant popularity of tennis. A small part of it may be due, he believes, to people reading about and getting to occasionally see the professional tour. But Rod Laver and Arthur Ashe certainly aren't firing imaginations the way Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus did about a decade ago. So the manager isn't sure that

the tennis professionals are making much of an impact. One thing he suggests is that so many barnlike, indoor tennis structures have been built in recent years that the game is now a year-round sport, and people want to continue to play it at their clubs through the summer. Finally, there is a new attitude among a large percentage of people. They are bored with being spectators or playing sedentary games and so they are looking for something with action. Tennis gives it to them. At the same time, it renews their lease on good health.

The action-health factor, the manager concludes, probably is the compelling reason why so many people have gone back to playing tennis or are taking it up.

Tennis facilities at country clubs aren't new, by any means, it's just that people are finding out that they are there. The 1969 Directory of Information, published by the Chicago District Golf Assn., shows that at the conclusion of the 1968 season, 38 out of 91 clubs in the Chicago area had tennis courts. Reliable estimates now put this number at close to 50, because in the last three years membership demand has led to the installation of tennis facilities at several clubs that didn't have them before. The CDGA's Directory is no longer being compiled, so up-to-date information isn't available from this source. However, a survey made this spring by GOLFDOM confirms that there is definitely a tennis building boom going on, not only in the Chicago area but around the country.

This is confirmed by the C.R. Peterson Company of Elk Grove, Ill., which has been in the court construction business for 40 years and has installed hundreds of tennis facilities throughout the United States as well as in the Caribbean and Hawaii. In 1970 the Peterson firm put in more than 100 courts at private clubs (golf

and tennis) as well as numerous installations for universities, schools and municipalities. In spite of the recession, the company did a record volume and at the moment has a backlog that will carry it through September. Several of its competitors are in the same happy predicament. Of the 100 or so private club courts Peterson installed, 30 were in the Chicago area and most were for country clubs.

Individual courts range in price from around \$8,000 to \$15,000. This includes chain-link fence backstops, from 10 to 12 feet high, 60 feet long at both ends of the court, and four wings extending about 30 feet. A complete backstop runs about \$1,500. Har Tru or Har-Court (Peterson calls its equivalent Petco) surfaces, which are most popular, run about \$6,500 per court. This type is a mixture of hot or cold liquid asphalt with subsoil installed over an eight-inch stone base, with drainage around the court perimeter.

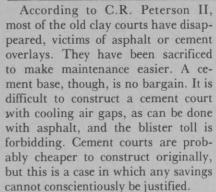
Slightly more expensive is the GrassTex installation. It, too, is laid over a stone or macadam, water bond base. GrassTex, which is laid on with rollers, is a one-fourth-inch cane fiber and is practically indestructible if properly maintained. It costs around \$7,000 per court.

A third choice is the Astro-Turf type installation, most adaptable to old courts. However, there is no great rush to install Astro-Turf because it costs anywhere from \$11,000 to \$14,000 per court.

The old clay court, still a sentimental favorite with men who build tennis facilities, is almost extinct. The reason is that it is almost impossible now to find blue clay that isn't permeated with shale. In the winter the imbedded shale works its way to the surface. After it is removed, it takes a tricky topdressing operation to restore the court's finish.

(Continued on page 42)





In 1969 the Chicago District's club administration committee made a detailed study of three member clubs' tennis costs and programs and came up with some interesting figures covering a four-court installation at Evanston CC. A 200 by 120-foot site was set aside for the Evanston courts. The total cost was \$40,000, including fencing and an automatic sprinkling system for cooling and cleaning. The total investment was perhaps \$5,000 higher than would be normally expected because an unusual amount of tree removal and grading work was required. The installation project took 90 days. The dimensions cited above are considered to be standard for a four-court layout, although some clubs are exceeding them slightly in anticipation of eventually putting in lights. As far as is known, there is only one lighted court setup in the Chicago District.

To pay for its courts, Evanston originally planned to sell \$500, 7 per cent interest bonds to members. The bonds were fully subscribed, but in the meantime so much interest was generated in the tennis construction project that a different method of financing was adopted. Initiation fees were increased, and \$350 of each of these fees diverted to pay for the courts. In addition, dues were increased \$20 a month and a portion of the money realized from the increase was used to help defray the cost of the tennis installation.

According to the club managers, more women play tennis at country clubs than men, but there aren't any head counts to substantiate this. At Cress Creek in Naperville, golf widows were liberated when two courts were built for them in 1970 and a woman professional hired to run the tennis program. Some teenagers used the courts there, but a male with a raquet is a rarity. A majority of players are in the 20 to 40 age group,

but enough fiftyish and older players are to be seen cavorting on the courts to challenge the adage that golf alone is a game of a lifetime. Octagenarians in tennis attire are not an altogether uncommon sight at many clubs. The heaviest traffic, though, is among teenagers. At practically all clubs where there is a tennis professional, great emphasis is put on the junior program.

About two out of three clubs have tennis professionals. They rank considerably below the golf professional in the pecking order. Not more than one out of four has a tennis shop. Generally, the tennis professional is employed from June 1st through Labor Day, is paid a salary of \$500 a month plus meals, according to the CDGA special report, and earns some money from giving lessons. He probably doesn't begin to rival his golf counterpart in the merchandising game, though, because from an equipment and apparel standpoint, tennis isn't the same lucrative business that golf is. The fact that so few tennis masters have shops doesn't help, either. At only three out of 20 clubs surveyed by GOLFDOM does a tennis professional sell through a golf shop. At two clubs the golf professional handles tennis goods as a convenience for the court players. Actually, there are very few out and out tennis professionals who are employed by the clubs. Most of them are university students or high school or college tennis coaches who moonlight during the summer.

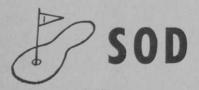
At almost every club it is almost certain that the tennis operation is run at a loss. It is similar to the pool, in this respect. Those clubs that do charge for tennis, and they are in the minority, usually restrict the tab to \$50 for an individual membership and \$100 for a family. Guest fees, which give all day playing privileges, rarely exceed \$3.50. A tennis membership, as such, is rare. However, one high dues club in the Northern suburbs charges tennis members 60 per cent of its regular membership fees. Another club is the same area pegs the tennis fee at \$75 over its social membership dues.

Hinsdale CC, which has maintained first-class tennis accommodations for its members since the end of World War II, extends tennis privileges to its social members without making any extra charge. The reason it does this is that golf mem-

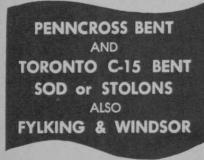


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berships usually aren't available until five years after a person joins the club, and something beyond clubhouse amenities are thus made available. Flossmoor, which will have tennis for the first time in 1971, was undecided on a tennis fee at the time GOLFDOM was making its survey. But the feeling among club officials there is that the tennis players shouldn't get an altogether free ride.

This feeling generally prevails among club members. They concede, of course, that capital and maintenance outlays for tennis are very minimal compared with golf, but still a tennis program can't be run for nothing. At most clubs, in addition to the initial investment in courts and the tennis professional's salary, a full-time maintenance man is employed through the summer to water the playing surfaces, keep them rolled, keep the area cleaned up and occasionally do emergency repair work. Amortization and salaries on a four-court spread, for example, run to about \$18,000 annually. One manager has pointed out that the resurgence of tennis has been so sudden and recent that most clubs aren't aware that the court operation is an expensive one and should be underwritten by some kind of dues or fees

Because the comeback of tennis at country clubs is so recent, there hasn't been any strong movement to start interclub competition. Most of the rivalry is intraclub. The challenge board, which covers singles and doubles, is a popular everyday agency for players who want to try to climb the ladder to supremacy. Most club tournaments are played in August and September, but the season is interspersed with a variety of special events and one-day tournaments. At Hinsdale, where tennis has become entrenched, it is necessary to set aside one day a week as Ladies' Day.

Although interclub play hasn't begun to take hold, a half dozen Northside clubs have been playing in a tennis league for many years in competition with three outside tennis clubs. The golf clubs involved are Exmoor, Glenview, Skokie, Indian Hill, Northmoor and Lake Shore. They play a round robin schedule that starts in mid-June and is concluded in mid-August, with competition being spread over four divisions of players.

Although tennis has come on stronger in the last two or three years

than at any time in the past, and far more money is being spent today in installing facilities than ever before, the country clubs have had other court booms in years gone by. As C.R. Peterson has pointed out, the booms seem to be part of a near 15-year cycle. Back in the mid-twenties when Bill Tilden was at his peak and most sportsminded people were talking about tennis, quite a few were built by country clubs. Fifteen years later there was another revival and this one carried through the War years, largely because golf went off to war. Around 1955, when President Eisenhower had his celebrated heart at-

tack, people suddenly became conscious of the need for the brisk exercise that tennis can give, and one of the results was that clubs once again expanded their court facilities.

The present resurgence perhaps can't be tied to any particular person or happening. Probably as has been stated earlier in the article it's a kind of spontaneous thing. People aren't as sedentary as we are led to believe. They want action, they want a game in which moving around involves more than just walking. They've suddenly discovered that tennis gives it to them and so they are flocking onto the courts.



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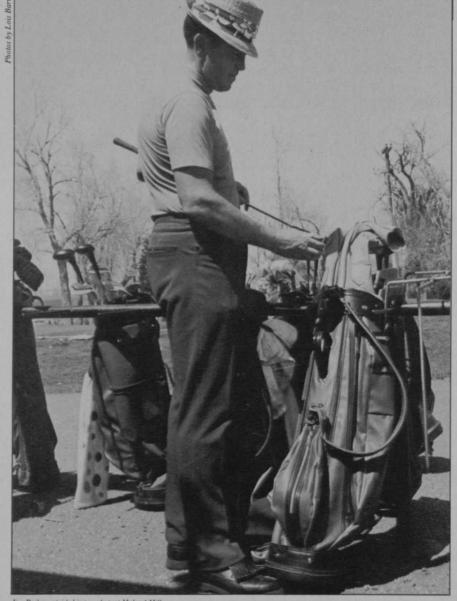
THE UNIQUE PRO SHOPPLAN:

FROM MILL RIVE Jim Bailey, Hyland Hills' professional, has adapted the Mill River Formula to his municipal course operation—with apparent success

HYLAND HILLS

By Jerry Claussen

Golf Services Director, Phelps-Brauer & Associates



Jim Bailey outside his pro shop at Hyland Hills

ersuading golfers to support the home professional is a universal problem, a minor plague at golf and country clubs, a major epidemic at public courses.

One solution is the pro shop membership plan used by professional Ray Montgomery at Mill River Club, Upper Brookville, N.Y. For \$50 annually a club member may buy any regular merchandise at 10 per cent above wholesale, plus freight and taxes.

What's good for the goose may not be good for the gander, or in this case private versus municipal golf shops. But after reading about Montgomery's promotion scheme (GOLF-DOM, October/November, 1970), an enterprising municipal course professional adapted it to his operation.

Jim Bailey is golf professional-manager at Hyland Hills GC, West-minster, Colo. He has a reputation as a sharp merchandiser and golf program promoter ("Try Promotion," GOLFDOM, August, 1970). His course is a municipal type, owned by a suburban parks and recreation district near Denver.

Montgomery's operation, on the other hand, is at a private club. His pricing plan, which is mandatory for Class-A members, creates automatic income and gives each member a reason to buy from his professional. In 1970 with 260 men golf members, it meant \$13,000 extra gross income. Shop sales, during the first three months of the plan, more than doubled over the same period last year.

Bailey faced some handicaps in trying to adapt such a plan for Hyland Hills: 1. the course and pro shop are open to everyone who wants to pay a green fee or buy merchandise; 2. there is no way to automatically enroll or bill a member, and 3. such a plan would be totally new to the area, and other professionals and suppliers might fight the "discount" approach.

ut one factor overcame all these objections. Hyland Hills, now seven seasons old, has active men's and women's golf associations. Each has about 200 members, paying a \$15-annual dues for tournaments, dinners and handicap services.

These 400 regular golfers, including 57 husband and wife pairs, feel they "belong" to Hyland Hills. Most live nearby. Bailey is "their" professional, although many have been buying store line equipment and apparel.

So Bailey started his own pro shop membership plan, aimed at these 400.

Here is how it works:

1. The plan is optional for currently paid members of the men's and women's golf clubs only;

2. To get plan privileges, a member must pay a \$25 membership fee;

3. All merchandise except tagged sale specials will be sold at 20 per cent discount to plan members. Only extra costs are a 4 per cent sales tax and freight charge on special orders;

4. Merchandise may be purchased for personal use only or for actual

gifts, not for resale;

5. Special orders and custom equipment are not returnable unless damaged or faulty;

6. No trade-ins will be taken on clubs purchased through the plan. Used clubs will be accepted on consignment, then refurbished before sales. Income on such clubs may be credited to the member's account or returned in cash, less repair costs;

7. Master Charge and Bank Americard charge purchases are allowed, but finance service charges are added to the price.

A major difference from the Mill River Club plan is that Bailey must sell each membership and collect in advance; for Montgomery the club bills members \$10 a month from May to September. The discount system also differs in the 10 per cent above wholesale at Mill River against 20 per cent off normal markup (about 10 per cent more) at Hyland Hills.

Under Bailey's plan, members thus can buy top-grade golf balls for \$1.04 versus \$1.30 each, including tax. A putter regularly selling for \$15.60 goes for \$12.48. A set of the best clubs retailing for \$364 is reduced to \$291.20.

The plan sells itself and pays for itself to any member who buys clubs, (Continued on page 46)



Bailey points out qualities that make up a good iron to Mrs. Ernie Azlein of Denver



Bailey talks golf with Dick Doffenbow of Westminster.

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Hyland Hills



Bailey tutors Dick Miller, Hyland Hills' instructor,

says Bailey. The golfer is encouraged to buy a top-grade set at the pro shop, not downtown. This is promotion, education and teaching all rolled into one.

Bailey says that he started the plan primarily to justify large inventory through rapid turnover. He carries an average of \$40,000 retail value in a large shop. It turned over about three times in 1970; Bailey wants to turn it five times

"The demonstrated psychology of municipal buyers is that volume not only turns the merchandise, but encourages impulse buying at point of sales," declares Bailey. "Cutting inventory only destroys income potential as a carryover from lessons and other services."

Bailey also emphasizes the importance of no-trade policy on clubs. He was concerned over a \$5,000 stock of unsold used golf clubs left from last season.

"These clubs represent unrealized profits on sales," Bailey points out. "The consignment-only rule will be the plan's greatest asset from our standpoint, I believe. Our buying golfers should develop a more realistic attitude about the resale value of their clubs. As they learn, it bridges a communications gap about our business."

he plan was first presented to the membership in a special mailing last December 17th, effective through 1971. Five men took immediate advantage of the offer to buy clubs for Christmas. About 40 more memberships, mostly to couples, were sold before the golf season began with a Tee-Off Dinner April 16th.

Sales have already increased, based on early spring returns. Club sales volume for March alone was double 1970. Good golf weather and a closeout sale of pro-line clubs helped. Ball and glove sales were also up.

A member joining the plan must pay \$25 in full. He signs a small membership card and presents it to a shop staff member when he buys. Bailey carries the fee revenue under the category "rentals."

Maximum participation would bring in \$10,000 annually. Because only 343 different families are represented, real income potential is about \$8,500. Bailey says that he expects to sell 80 to 100 memberships this season, to make \$2,000 to \$2,500.

A few non-members now wish they were members of the men's and women's clubs. But the rosters are filled at 200 each. Bailey hasn't detected enough resentment to cost him business, though. Potential complaints from other nearby municipal professionals were answered in advance. Bailey sent copies of the mailing to his competitors, explaining the discounts were for members only. Neither suppliers nor local stores have objected. No other approval was needed for Bailey to offer the plan. He is a nearly-independent lessee of his business.

"We needed this plan to reach our price-conscious customers, to broaden our market for quality lines," he says. "Our success will depend on continued promotion. For example, we could give our plan members a gift next Christmas."

Bailey's pro shop, covering 1,200 square feet, is part of an 8,000-square-foot, one-story clubhouse. He carries a continuous inventory of eight club lines, half a dozen soft-goods lines, two shoe lines, several price levels in golf bags and gift items such as cocktail glasses. He normally places large orders in fall for spring, and in spring for fall-Christmas. His staff includes wife Marcia, LPGA professional-teacher and shop assistant, two other full-time assistants and two seasonal assistants-starters.

Bailey's income depends about 60 per cent on pro shop sales, 20 per cent on golf car rentals, 10 per cent on the practice range, and 5 per cent each on lessons and club pull-cart rentals. He is paid a modest salary by the District, plus all golf concessions less 5 per cent of shop gross as rent.

Hyland Hills has 18 regulation holes plus a par-three-nine. Play in 1970 totaled about 86,000 rounds. □



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By Patrick D. Williams President, Patrick D. Williams & Associates, Inc. Kansas City, Missouri

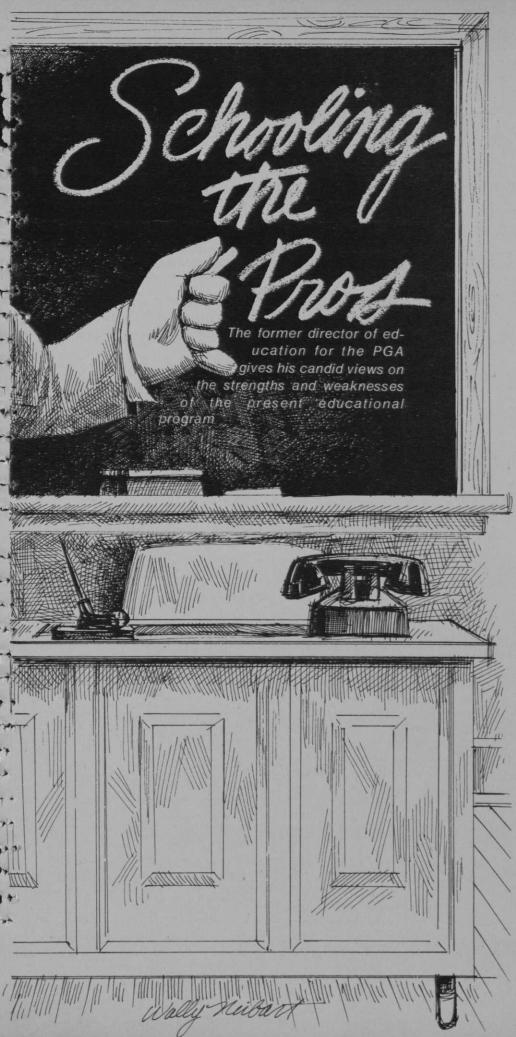
Sometimes I get very amused, but at the same time, very concerned about the general public's opinion of golf professionals. The typical reaction is that the golf professional has a soft job, makes a lot of money, wears sporty clothes and plays 18 holes of golf each day of the week. These people do not understand the golf profession, because to them it is an avocation. All of us in the golf business know that nothing is further from the truth.

Opinion as to why the public thinks this way is diverse. Years ago some golf professionals were flashy, devil-may-care types, who made all the appearances of riding the waves. People watch television and conclude that all golf professionals make \$50,000 a year or more. Few know that the average income of professionals is in the \$10,000 to \$12,000 income bracket. (According to GOLFDOM's figures, in 1970 57.5 per cent of professionals earned between \$10,000 and \$12,500 a year.) Because few people understand the golf professional's situation, his skills and talents are grossly underrated. The very term, professional, refers to an occupation which demands skill, training, education and experience.

Twenty-five to 30 years ago the role of the golf professional was fairly easy to describe. The demands on his abilities were nothing compared to what they are today. The reason for the drastic change is quite simple—growth. Growth in the numbers of players, golf courses and other related areas. Growth means large-dollar investments, and large investments demand many more skills from the people in charge.

Let me digress briefly to cover one point. In my opinion the golf professional is the key to a successful golf course operation. He can make it go or can set up blocks that create its downfall. I am not saying that technically he is more important than the club manager or the golf course superintendent. Their roles are just as vital. The general public, however, judges a golf operation by the quality of the golf professional. Unfortunately, many clubs and courses direct their growth in other areas. During my tenure with the Professional Golfers' Assn. I saw





too many cases in which the golf professional literally kept an operation going solely through his own desire and initiative. As someone once said people join clubs to play golf and not swim in the pool. Conclusion: The man who services these people must be a first-class professional both in golf and in business.

Why do people become golf professionals? Simply, they are usually good players who think that by becoming a professional they can play all the time from now on out. Few realize the long road they face to become a qualified professional, and the attrition rate is high in the profession. A person does not decide to play golf for money and at the same time automatically become a professional. It doesn't work that

What does it take to become a golf professional in today's market? What will it take in the future? Candidly, the golf professional is off and running today in trying to get caught up with the growth. Years ago a man became a professional by working up through the caddie ranks. Today, the time is not available for this lengthy transition. When John Doe makes up his mind today to turn professional he is faced with a four-year apprenticeship, schools and training seminars and written examinations. He does not just turn "pro." If he fails at any step, he is halted in his progress for at least one year. So you can see that the process is not simple.

These requirements are fairly new. It was not until 1957 that the PGA started to get going in its training and educational programs for new professionals. It was not until the late sixties that it started to put together a complete educational package. Other professional groups started their programs in the late thirties and early forties. However, the PGA did build an educational program expenditure from a few thousand dollars a year to a quarter of a million dollars a year in a fairly short time.

Today the PGA's training program is quite stringent. Candidates must be high school graduates. College graduates are given additional credits. They must successfully complete two, week-long training seminars called PGA Business Schools. In addition, they must complete a five textbook home study pro-

(Continued on page 50)

gram and pass a comprehensive written examination. Also, they are required to meet various other requirements outlined by their local sections. Entrance, obviously, is not based on how well a person strikes the little white ball.

However, in light of all these "new" requirements there is still a void which the PGA must fill. This void exists in the assistance it provides not only to new members but to the older members as well. There is always a tendency in any association to say it is hard to teach an old dog. On the contrary, I have found that the "old dog" is by far the most receptive to learning because he knows that he does not know it all. The PGA is making some inroads in this area with its new Executive Management Seminar, but much more needs to be done.

Sometimes there is a tendency in golf circles to become blinded by the glamorous aspects and forget the problems of the everyday rank-and-file golf professional. I agree that the tournaments and other affairs are a vital part of the PGA's activity; however, I think that its major thrust must be in helping the average guy in the membership ranks.

In my opinion the PGA must:

- Revamp its sectional educational programs so that they are serious pursuits in learning. Attendance would be mandatory and testing new as well as older members acceptable. The benefits of the area learning centers are boundless.
- Re-structure the PGA Business Schools in course curriculum. Presently, too much time is allocated to teaching how things are run at an affluent golf club. More emphasis needs to be placed on the public and semi-private operations. Further, teaching golf or how to teach needs to be seperated entirely from the business aspects of being a golf pro.
- Expand its winter educational program and get it out to the masses, rather than the handful who can attend the sessions in Florida.
- Establish a "national academy" for golf professionals where perspective professionals can go for extensive training in business, playing and teaching.
- Develop a solid on-the-job training program in which a person's learning progresses regardless of

the type of club he is employed by.

- Put some teeth into the National Employment Service whereby they can help place qualified professionals as well as encourage new blood to join the ranks. If jobs cannot be found, training is useless.
- Develop a myriad of programs for its present membership regardless of the hurdles. The association must provide help to the guy in the hinterland. This can be accomplished by carrying programs to him run by national headquarters; by developing a top notch bi-monthly technical bulletin; by getting him involved and understanding his programs, and by making the Professional Golfer magazine a more informative and useful tool for him.
- Develop a first-class research bureau to actually analyze and to keep data on the profession. I do not refer to an equipment testing division, but rather a division which can accurately report facts and project market trends for the golf business.
- And I think the entire association would directly benefit from a program of establishing regional offices to distribute its services. The Florida location is too far removed both geographically and financially from the average member. He has a hard time mentally associating with an operation so removed.

I hope that no reader takes what I have said out of context. To me the PGA is a very progressive and dynamic organization. My three and one half years as its educational director provided me with an invaluable amount of experience as well as an opportunity to associate with numerous top-rate club and playing professionals.

What I have tried to say in a constructive fashion is that the PGA has done a lot and still has a lot to do. I sincerely feel that the rank-and-file professional would have a higher professional stature in the business community if the PGA will help him to acquire the necessary skills, and more important help him to maintain these skills.

A growth business, which golf is, does not allow complacency nor tolerate being covered up with tinsel. Long-range programs are the only solution to guaranteeing success in this type of environment. By active and effective programming, the PGA can remove the professional under-estimation of the modern golf professional.

COMING EVENTS

- **Grassland '71,** Fourth Annual Field Day, Municipal Airport, Eugene, Ore., June 23-27.
- Sod Production Field Day, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Mich., June 29.
- National Golf Foundation Western Invitational Seminar for Teachers, Lake San Marcos Resort, San Marcos, Calif., July 12-16.
- Landscape Architects' Field Day, Cole Nursery Company, Inc., Circleville, Ohio, August 11.
- NGF Eastern Invitational Seminar for Teachers, Pine Needles Lodges & CC, Southern Pines, N.C., August 16-20.
- Turfgrass Field Day, Crop Science Field Laboratory, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Mich., September 9.
- Alabama-Northwest Florida Annual Turfgrass Short Course, Auburn University, Auburn, Ala., September 19-22.
- Florida Turfgrass Management Conference, Pier 66, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., September 19-22.
- Midwest Regional Turf Foundation Field Day, Purdue University, Lafayette, Ind., September 27.
- Wisconsin Golf Turf Symposium, Sewerage Commission of the City of Milwaukee, Wis., November 4-5.
- Northeastern Weed Science Society 26th Annual Meeting, Hotel Commodore, New York, N.Y., January 5-7, 1972.
- Golf Course Superintendents Assn. of America Annual Conference, Netherland-Hilton Hotel, Cincinnati, Ohio, February 13-18, 1972.