

The PGA and Its Tournament Program

By MELVIN (CHICK) HARBERT

VICE-PRESIDENT, PROFESSIONAL GOLFERS' ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA
CO-CHAIRMAN, PGA TOURNAMENT COMMITTEE

Nowhere in professional athletics can so unique a set of circumstances be found as those which govern the tournament program of the Professional Golfers' Association of America.

Consider, if you will, these conflicting facts:

With increasing public interest and ever-growing purses, the tournament program appears to have stepped into the class of big business. Yet there has never been a question but that the principal, in fact, the only, purposes of the PGA tournament program are to promote golf and to provide a training ground where younger professionals can acquire competitive experience and the opportunities for the future that go with it.

This is further stressed by the fact that the PGA is a trade or professional association of some 3,000 golf professionals and 30 local organizations. It is not a commercial venture organized for profit. Its tournament program involves only a small segment of its members and its activities. It is the show window of the PGA and of professional golf, creating inestimable interest in the game generally.

This year prize money in PGA tournaments will top \$700,000, a figure that would seemingly provide a substantial living for a great many players. Yet the players who compete spend more than \$1,000,000 of their own funds in an effort to corner a share of the purses, and many of them win very little, if anything. In no city do we take away more money in prizes than we leave in hotels and restaurants.

Where else in professional sport do you find 50 full-time contestants and many others who enjoy no employment contracts, have no guarantee of salary or prizes and no assurance even of living



Chick Harbert

and traveling expenses, no minor league in which to learn their trade, who are asked to schedule and operate their own program and to contribute from their own pockets to the actual function of the promotion? And where else do you find a trade association that is operating such a program in a major sport on a non-profit basis?

In spite of frequent references to a "mountain millionaire" and a "Texas tycoon," the average playing professional suffers from a moderate to severe case of thin wallet. Virtually without exception, they struggle through at least a dozen lean years before hitting the top pay bracket, if they ever do. Moreover, their schedule is such that they must spend up to two days a week practicing, in addition to four days playing and one day or more traveling. We would be hard put to find a profession or trade that pays

so little for so much, or one where conditions are so conducive to the keenest of competition.

The program operates on an unbelievably low budget. Yet if it were not for the assistance from the major equipment manufacturers, it would be virtually impossible to maintain our staff of five full-time employees and to provide services to sponsors and press. And we can't forget the sponsors. They take the risk, sometimes making little or nothing, although in most cases their interest, like the PGA's, is in promotion, rather than profit. They also pay a small service fee to the PGA, which covers about one-half of the Tournament Bureau's cost of operation.

The need for additional funds was emphasized last winter when, in order to initiate a publicity and promotional program, it was necessary to turn to the players themselves and ask for a weekly assessment, thus adding to their contribution.

The entire tournament structure revolves around a seven-man Tournament Committee, Tournament Supervisor Harvey Raynor, PGA Executive Secretary Tom Crane and Promotional Director Fred Corcoran.

The Committee, made up of the President and Secretary of the PGA, four tournament players and one PGA member at large, has complete charge of the program, including player conduct and discipline and routine operation. Members of the Tournament Committee include President Horton Smith, who is Chairman; Secretary Harry Moffitt; the writer, who is Co-Chairman, Dave Douglas, Jack Burke, Clayton Heafner and one PGA member at large, now being elected.

Raynor acts as Tournament Supervisor in the field. Crane handles matters at the Chicago office. They are in constant contact and coordinate all matters with the players, committee and sponsors. Raynor is assisted in the field by a secretary, an assistant and an official scorer. The PGA headquarters, meanwhile, has one Tournament Bureau secretary and the part-time

services of Bob Gibson, who combines our publicity program with the editorship of PROFESSIONAL GOLFER magazine.

Services to Sponsors

The present system of Tournament Bureau operation was inaugurated in 1947. The authority to operate the tournament program was conferred upon the Tournament Committee at the Annual Meeting of the PGA in the fall of 1950, at which time the Constitution of the PGA was amended. Under this system the Committee has adopted regulations governing the entire program, operating under a huge body of rules which have grown up over the years. These rules govern player eligibility, relations with sponsors, player conduct and discipline and tournament routine.

In addition to the services provided by the field staff, sponsors are given the PGA Tournament Sponsors' Guide, which contains complete and detailed instructions regarding every phase of tournament operation. Sponsors are also assisted in the preparation of their program and publicity by photographs and feature stories, record books, player histories, current standings and so forth. The same type of material is provided directly to press, radio and television personnel in tournament cities.

Unbelievable as it may seem, tournament golf is still growing tremendously. In the last five years purses have increased from the 1947 total of \$402,000 to an estimated 1952 figure of \$700,000. It would today be higher, far higher, if there were sufficient weeks in the year to accommodate the many requests that are received.

ATTIRE

We don't mean to preach,
But this isn't the beach;
Will you kindly wear golfing attire:
Shorts to your knees,
And full tops, please,
For a costume we all may admire.

From "Fore", an occasional publication of the Merion Golf Club.