

TREAT HIM AS YOU WOULD YOUR SON

by

FRANCIS C. TRUITT

Member, USGA

Junior Championship Committee

AT THE MERIDIAN HILLS Country Club, in Indianapolis, Ind., we have found a wonderfully satisfactory and successful solution to the caddie problem. It works, and our membership has had a lot of fun making it go.

The basic reason for the universal question, "Any caddies today?" is a shortage of manpower. Most of us can remember before the war when we had a much larger supply of caddie material at our clubs. However, the young men and the older men who used to be our career caddies—our regulars, so to speak—have switched to industry because they can make more money in a less seasonal type of work.

We no longer have the backlog of well-trained men who serve as an influence on the younger, less experienced boys coming up. There are few who have an interest in moving up to the post of caddie-master. If they have an interest in golf as a livelihood, it is in playing, teaching or selling. Many clubs report a shortage even of young men who could be trained as caddies.

At our club, we realized we had to find a new and untapped source of labor. The old source was gone.

The Key to the Source

Is there another source? Our faith said yes, and our subsequent experience has rewarded our faith.

There is a fundamental concept which, in many cases, may have been overlooked, one which, if we are to rebuild, must be kept in mind. Any program entered into today to insure a good and adequate supply of boys must be entered into with understanding, patience and cooperation on the part of the membership of the club.

Now to our program, which is in its third year. Mind you, this is only a suggestion, one which has worked for us.

From my work with juniors I have a great deal of respect for their adaptability, their needs, their desires and their abilities and capabilities if given proper direction and guidance. Knowing that these boys stick pretty close together and look to someone older for their inspiration, we decided it would be necessary to find a man who would be a magnet and draw a number of these boys onto his team.

Naturals for the Job

Where to find such a man?

In the field of athletic coaching there are men who are naturally liked and to whom the boys flock with enthusiasm. Just such an athletic coach has directed our program, and we now have a card file of some 700 boys to call on.

Most high school coaches are looking for summer work to augment their incomes. Many are camp councilors. Some go into industry. They all need and are looking for summer work.

They are naturals for the position of caddie-master. Many are golfers themselves. With only a little help from the club professional or the Caddie Committee, they are able to teach the boys what to do and how to do it. Remember, their main job is imparting knowledge of sports to boys.

Proper facilities, such as shelter, toilet and shower, sandwiches and soft drinks, baseballs, horse shoes, basketball court and balls, are an added incentive to draw boys and to keep them occupied when not actually out on the course.

Boys like to have a feeling of identity with a thing of importance. Give or sell at cost to those who, by their regular attendance, have earned the right, T shirts which proclaim their association with the club, but make them earn the right to wear them.



The job of caddying and the caddie yard must be made attractive in order to draw the best boys and to keep them as happy as these caddies obviously are.

Such identification also helps them to get rides out to the club. If it is possible to designate pick-up locations on the way out to the club which are not out of the way for the members, it will help solve the transportation problem for the boys.

If a boy comes out, spends the day and doesn't get a job, it is our suggestion that he be given lunch money and car fare and be placed at the head of the list for the following day. He goes home with the feeling that he has been fairly treated, and he has good reason for coming back.

Perhaps, by now, you realize that while these things are being done the club is getting much good word-of-mouth advertising.

One thing that has been most amazing to us has been the number of parents who have called us, wanting to get their boys into our program. They have heard about it, they like the supervision given to their friend's boy and they want the same thing for their own boy. The slogan we have adopted for our program and ask our members to follow is: "Treat your caddie as you would your son."

Our caddie-master-coach holds classes every morning on weekdays during the summer. Some of the instruction is gen-

eral, some may be quite specific. Records are kept, and he knows how each boy is doing, where he is strong and where he is weak.

At the conclusion of every round members and guests are asked to note on a card furnished by the caddie both the good and the not-so-good points about the boy. This is returned to the caddie-master and forms the basis for instruction and/or praise. An additional feature of the card is that it serves as a means of introduction of the player and the caddie. Both names are shown on the card, and the boy gives the card to the player on the first tee.

At the end of the season, each member sponsors a boy at a dinner held at the club. Awards are made to the boys with the best attitude, the best attendance record and the most improvement.

It's a wonderfully fine feeling to reflect on a season of play and realize that, while you have had your fun and your share of good games, you have helped all these young fellows—who have honestly tried to be the best caddie you've ever had—to become better citizens of tomorrow. The objective has been accomplished, you have enjoyed it and they appreciate it. You have treated them as you would your son.