

"DEAR BEEF"

*An Open Letter to
My Pal, Beef McLip*

Dear Beef:

As I told you after you had registered your polite and open-minded squawk, I would send you my idea of the box-score on this free golf lesson idea.

One great thing about you, Beef, is that you come right out with your dissenting opinions even if you have to go to the trouble of writing them. I am strong for you on that count. The mugs who pout and do their bellyaching in dark corners I'll have to turn over to the attention of GOLFDOM's Who Gives A Damn Dept., and this department can get around to them after caring for a lot of other prior matters within its jurisdiction.

But there probably are other reasonably smart guys like you who are wondering just how far this free golf instruction business should go, and that's why I'm answering you publically, omitting a few of the words we might use in our private correspondence.

It Insures For the Future

In the first place, Beef, you fathead, free golf instruction for kids at golf clubs is easily the smartest, most foresighted thing pros have done to assure continuance of golf on a big and growing basis. Before the depression, golf could depend on its caddies for recruits. With a kid making a few bucks a day lugging clubs and usually more of a demand than supply of caddies, youngsters where being paid for being exposed to the game. In 1929 there were about 90,000,000 rounds of golf played. In 1934 this figure fell to around 50,000,000 and with reduced caddie fees per round. In the meanwhile, older fellows who didn't care about playing golf but who were somewhat concerned with having grub in their bellies, began to take over a lot of the caddying work. Therefore the recruiting strength of the caddie angle was reduced more than 50% in value.

I used to think that it might be a serious mistake to give free kid class lessons at the well-to-do clubs, but I've changed my mind on that. I meet a lot of nice people (as much as that may amaze you, Beef old dear) and I'll bet that I've

heard in the last six months 50 rather wealthy men of fine families lament that their boys haven't shown much golf interest. The older men know how much golf might mean to their boys as the kids grow older. That has made me think that if the competitive and educational interest of group lessons extended clear through to the top clubs, it would be a smart move for the pro who wants to keep his job and make a good piece of dough when he gets old. And I tell you Beef, golf, like any other pro sports business, is a hell of a game to get old in, unless a fellow has looked ahead.

Stores Are No Real Threat

Among words I heard you gurgle up through the suds was something about what's the use of teaching people free just to build up business for stores. Beef, the answer to that is you. As lame-brained and as lazy as you are, you can run circles around 85% of store golf selling. That may get me into a libel jam with someone connected with store selling, especially if they know what a punk you are and realize to what extent my statement insults them. But let it ride. We have made a record in being the only magazine in world history threatened with a libel rap because we stuck up for pros.

Show me a business where I can have an 85% edge over the competition in selling ability and location and where I know that racket like you know golf, and your playmate will grab a transfer.

Things aren't like they used to be in this matter of the pro making the market and the stores stealing the gravy out of it.

There have been some fatal cases of stores taking brand names that pros built into popular demand and the stores ruining the brands by beating the prices down so the pros withdrew support. Smart manufacturers have seen this happen so plainly, that for the manufacturers' own good they have to give the pro a break as far as they can. But no manufacturer, no PGA and no power in the kingdom beyond can prevent some competition for a pro. So you had better be glad that you get the first shot at the customers with these free class lessons to kids—or even

to the lower income or casually interested classes of adults at public parks in connection with newspaper publicity—or even to women at your club where I know that only about 15% of the women play as compared with almost a 40% national average.

How Henry Ford would rejoice to have the first and strong “in” on sales that you have with class lessons!

Free Lessons Beget Paid Ones

Your other yowl was that free lessons might reduce the paid lesson business. I have talked this over with many, many pros—old and young—during the course of our ballyhoo of free lessons as a profitable idea for pros, and these fellows have told me that if free class lessons destroy the market for individual paid lessons then there is something wrong with the way the pro is going after and teaching his individual lessons. The free group lesson business in pro spare time has been directly responsible for developing hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of individual lessons that never would have been bought were it not for the incentive acquired in the group lesson. Better remember, Beef, that most of that lesson time is time when otherwise you wouldn't be making a nickle.

The main point I make in this free lesson stunt is that it gives a pro a chance to arouse golf and sales interest with time that otherwise he'd kill hanging around the shop and listening to the radio, making members say, “what does that McLip do to earn that salary we pay him?”

Take Tip From History of Education

Beef, you read a fair number of good books during the year so I suggest you do some of your reading on the history of education. You will see that education used to be confined to the priests and the very rich. Plenty of poor guys with a yen for learning joined up as priests to learn to read and write and not with the notion of herding stray lambs into the church. Some of them smarted up too much and were too loose to be very comfortable to any religion.

Then when the free public primary schools came along there was an increased demand and more dough for teachers and more expensive private schools as the school idea developed.

The same thing has been going on recently right under your eyes in golf. Paid

golf instruction started on a big pick-up last year. Eight years ago at a National Amateur championship I used to hear most of the field brag they'd never had a pro lesson. At the last few National Amateur championships it's seemed to me that the kids are trying to brag about how many pro lessons they've had. Look how women's golf has grown and how the lesson impetus has been responsible. I tell you honestly, Beef, I sometimes think that free group lessons of half an hour for adult males at pretty high class clubs would increase pro lesson business, shop business and good-will a lot; but I'm not going to go that strong now, with you and maybe some other birds moaning about giving too much for nothing.

But you can put it down in your book that the free class lessons idea for kids has made more for immediate and eventual pro benefit than any other broad idea the boys have had during the depression years. I only hope the idea you gave me about keeping from topping wood shots will turn out as well as the pro free group lessons for kids.

Watch out for the horses and buggies next time you come downtown and have to cross streets, and be sure you ask me when there is anything else you want to know about anything. And listen, no back talk, or I will turn this argument over to your wife. Yours,

H.G.

Metropolitan Golf Association Forms Public Links Section

METROPOLITAN GOLF ASSN., New York metropolitan district, plans a year of great activity for public links clubs. There are approximately 35 public links clubs in the Metropolitan area eligible for membership.

Any eligible regularly organized public links club may make application for membership in the Public Links Section of the MGA. If elected, the club is entitled to all the privileges belonging to a member club, including Green Section and club management services. Members of elected clubs are eligible for Metropolitan handicaps and for all the Metropolitan tournaments.

The MGA will also conduct an annual Public Links Championship, open only to member clubs of the Public Links Section.

All applications for membership in the Public Links Section must be approved by the Public Links committee, composed of representatives of member clubs and of the MGA.