



Talking in the 19th Hole

DRIVER. During 46 years in golf, I have met many caddies, players, and pros. I have been a caddy (since I was eight years old), player, member, and golf pro. Living golf from different roles gives you a broader perspective of what happens in a club. Today we will talk about unprofessional behaviors that I have seen in golf pros. I make these observations with the following objectives:

- Improve the training of the pros.
 - Improve the performance of the pros and the quality of the services we provide.
 - Improve service to members.
 - Eliminate bad labor practices by working as team members, managers, executives, and pros.
- The pro seller. A persistent behavior in our environment is that the provider sells you a club or equipment that does not serve you. We see it that they do it with children, ladies, and gentlemen. Examples:
 - It is not right for a pro to sell Ping equipment to a beginner, which was fashionable 30 years ago.
 - In the opposite case, it is not correct for a pro to sell a set of blade irons from a recognized brand to a beginner if he knows it will be complicated to hit them well.
 - It is also not right for the pro to pressure a player to change clubs, much less if he has already told her that he does not want to change for the moment.

Understandably, the pro has financial needs, but abusing the player's trust and lack of knowledge is an ethical fault that calls into question her professionalism. Over time the player will realize that the pro took advantage of his innocence and will stop taking classes with him, in addition to telling his friends. In the end, the pro loses more than the profit he made from the sale.

- The pro payment in advance. In this case, the pro proposes to the player to pay him several classes in advance, for example, ten classes. Conventional wisdom says that "paid musicians play badly," and that also happens in golf lessons. The pro hides not to teach the classes, he gives them reluctantly, and in many cases, he does not complete them. In my experience, "given class, paid class" is the best practice to maintain a healthy relationship with students.
- The pro barter. This pro is characterized by exchanging classes for items or services. If the player has a furniture store, the pro asks for a furniture living room and pays for it with classes. In appearance, it is a win-win negotiation, but in general, the player loses because in reality, he does not need the 50 classes that the furniture living room costs, because they are confused with the number of classes given, because the player is tied to taking classes only with this pro, etc. "Given class, paid class" is the format that best suits the pro and the player.

- The pro rebates. The pro rebates is characterized because it charges its work very cheaply. Some pros charge their classes at half price to have more students. This behavior causes golf classes to be devalued, and players are unwilling to pay the market price. We know that golf lessons are expensive, among other reasons, because of the market to which they are directed, because of the specialized nature of this knowledge, and because very few professionals are qualified to give them.
- The pro borrower. There are pros to having a bad habit of borrowing money from members. They ask to go on vacation, pay other debts, pay the credit card, pay the mortgage, complete buying a car, etc. The pros have a good salary, plus income from private classes, they are among the highest-earning employees at a golf club, so they shouldn't borrow money. Human resources regulations should prohibit staff from borrowing money from members. The club may have a savings account or an employee loan fund.
- The pro raffler. Running a raffle is one of the least creative ways to get resources. Members don't like being pressured by pros to buy raffle tickets, no matter how noble the cause. If there are personal or group needs, other alternatives should be sought to obtain resources.
- The pro overlapper classes. In their eagerness to teach many classes, some pros make the mistake of overlapping classes, which means that they put two or more players on the same day and time. Both players are upset by the pro's failure. The person in charge of the golf area must admonish the pro who makes this mistake frequently. The pro must review her schedule very well and confirm each class not to make this mistake.
- The pro pirate. This type of pro is characterized by the fact that it wants to cover all students and to achieve this, it tends to hack students from other pros, reaching the extreme of fighting with their colleagues. For example, without a pro going on vacation, the pirate pro looks for a way to take away his students. The same students tell their pro that the pirate pro has been doing his dirty work. The pro must respect the students of the other pros; fortunately, the sun rises for everyone, and there is work for everyone.
- The pro politician. The pro-politician is characterized by promising the sky and the stars to the players or their parents. He tells them that he will make them champions quickly and make them hit the ball better, that with him, they will achieve greater distance, etc. The promises are not kept, and the pro puts his colleagues in a bad way, because the player believes that all the pros are sellers of smoke. A pro should not promise results to players; his job is to teach how to achieve them.
- The pro tips. The pro tips is characterized by giving unsolicited advice for the player to take classes with him. Many years ago, I learned that I should not provide recommendations if the player has not asked me. The pro tips usually go through the practice looking for someone to give advice. I believe that if a player needs you, he will ask for your help.
- The pro protagonist. The role of a pro is to teach the players, but some pros seek to appear in the photo as if they were the players. The pro protagonist looks to show that they are the best pros and that their students are the most successful. The main pros even look to the outstanding players

because they see that it is easier to hang a medal with them. The pro must understand that their work is behind the scenes and should not be in the photo.

- The pro by chance. Many of us work as pros without having the vocation and the profile to be one. Some are pros because their father or a manager put them in, others because they were a player's caddies and when he was executive put it, others were ball pickers, watchmen, gardeners, etc. How well they are pros, it is fair to give them credit; the point is that now they strive to develop the vocation to be. Obviously, many pros don't like teaching, but they should at least show some interest in it, and maybe in time, they will.
- The pro addicted to the cell phone. Like many people, the pros are dependent on cell phones and the Internet, so that during class, they are talking on the phone, browsing their social networks, or writing messages. The pro must respect the class time to focus his attention on the player. Only in urgent cases should he attend to the cell phone, and when doing so, he should notify the student for education.
- The pro ball setter. I was waiting for a person at a driving range once. During the waiting time, I was watching a teacher give his class. As the wait was long, I kept watching because I wanted to see the pro make a swing, a shot, or show his student how to do the movements. The pro didn't do it; he was just putting the balls. I promised myself that I would always do swings and shots in my classes to show what I am teaching.
- The pro touch. Once a player reported a pro, he asked us to tell him that "he will not touch the merchandise," referring to the fact that the pro was going beyond the limits of what was allowed with a female player. The pros (men) must be very respectful of the space and the approach we have with girls, young people, and ladies during a class. If it is necessary to touch them to help them with a position or movement, ask their permission. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this issue is more relevant, so the pros must adapt to teaching without touching the students.
- The pro cheerleader. Reinforcement is an excellent teaching tool, but when praise is excessive and unsupported, their effect can be negative. Some classic examples are:
 - The pro tells the player that he is doing the movements well, but the reality is that he is not.
 - The pro tells the player that he is hitting well, but they both know that he is not.
 - The pro tells the player that he is achieving greater distance, but the truth is that he is not.

The students are smart and soon realize that the pro is very good at cheering but not improving his game. The pro should be honest with his students about his progress.

- The pro military. This pro believes that club golf academies are like military academies or specialized golf academies, both in the United States. The reality is that the golf academies of our country's clubs are educational, recreational, social, etc. It is true that discipline is necessary, but not military grade.
- The pro no rules. One day I was riding with a pro in a golf cart; we were cruising the course to monitor play's pace. Suddenly the pro goes off the road and crosses the fairways, as in that club it is not allowed to circulate on the fairways; I told him that it was not right to do it, he said to me

that there was no problem that the pros are like traffic police and that we could break the rules. Unfortunately, this behavior is common among pros, for example:

- They go to classes on the golf course and do not ask the starter to leave.
 - They go to class on the golf course and get into any hole without asking permission.
 - In their classes on the golf course, they use more balls than allowed.
 - When they play and get angry, they damage the golf course.
 - They drop the flag on the green carelessly (currently not because of the pandemic).
 - They are still in class when the service areas (carts, club storage, driving range) have finished their hours.
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- The academy is bad, I am better. In their eagerness to get private lessons, some pros tell parents that the golf academy is not good, that the students do not progress there, and that it would be better to take private lessons with them. This disloyalty of the pros "who bite the hand that feeds them" must be sanctioned by the person in charge of the golf area. Most boys and girls should take classes at the golf academy; very few should be in private lessons.

 - The pro knockout boxer. We have talked about the fact that very few adults have ever trained for two hours, now imagine a child who trains for two hours at the golf academy and then receives a one-hour private class. That is three hours of golf lessons. Logically, the third hour's performance will be deficient because the player is tired, weary, exhausted, etc. Parents and pros justify this by saying that the child asks for it. I doubt it a lot, but in time let's see what happens.

 - The jealous pro. This pro does not like competition; if, for some reason, an external pro teaches a class in his club, the jealous pro will do everything possible so that he does not do it again. In general, I believe that clubs should protect their pros, but I'm not scared that other pros want to teach at my club; competition makes us better. Times are changing, and current circumstances are making clubs more open about independent pros. Clubs have found that they can have a wide range of pros without all being on the payroll.

 - The pro fake curriculum. I knew a pro with an extraordinary résumé, but when the human resources department asked him for a copy of the certificates he claimed to have, he turned the matter over and didn't turn them over because he didn't have them. The pros must be truthful regarding the information contained in our resume. The human resources department should verify the information.

 - The ant theft. The main reason a pro gets fired is dishonesty. Some colleagues are used to stealing; the most common ways are:
 - Sell passes and green fees.
 - Steal merchandise from the pro shop.
 - Rent the carts of the members without their permission or rent the carts for the area personnel.
 - Rent spaces in the golf cart storage building and keep the money, do not charge rent to some members for having their carts in the golf cart storage building, sell used batteries as if they were new, change the batteries to the carts (putting older ones) without that the member realizes, etc.
 - Steal balls, clubs, rangefinders, etc. from the storage room for golf clubs.

- Appropriate and sell the balls taken from the lakes when the management pays a person to take them out and use them on the driving range.
- Sell the area's materials and equipment: practice balls, mats, flags, rakes, etc.
- Steal the products and samples that the sponsors provide for the participants of the tournaments.
- In some private tournaments, the organizers provide cash support for the golf area; some pros take everything and do not distribute it.
- Steal donations in kind and cash that members make for caddies and golf staff.



It is sad to talk about these behaviors, but it is a reality. The human resources and security department should make sure they are not happening in your club.

- The pro invoices. This is the typical pro that presents a false expense check when you attend a junior tour, training course, interclub tournament, etc. I think that a person with such dishonesty should not be pro because they are not golf values. The human resources and accounting department should be on the lookout for these behaviors.
- The pro orders. This pro is characterized by ordering golf merchandise from members who travel to the United States. It is good that there are members who support the pros; the problem occurs when:
 - The pro does not give money to the member to make the purchase.
 - The member has to finance the pro.
 - The pro does not pay the merchandise to the member.
 - The pro believes that the member must help him.
- The pro truancy. Most of the pros spend more than 8 hours at the club. But some don't attend their job to go to play on another golf course, to the casinos, to teach at another club or to the driving range, etc. The human resources and security department must be aware of the pros' attendance and punctuality; when they observe a pattern of absences, it is essential to speak with the pro.
- The pro threats. This type of pro is the typical boss who abuses the authority of his position. His style is to intimidate, threaten, scold, abuse, etc. Caddies are their favorite victims. He forgets that he was a caddy, too (in most cases). If someone dares to question their decisions, they will retaliate over and over again. Sooner or later, this type of pro will get back all the wrong it did.

- The pro punisher. With his punishments for employees, this pro wants to inspire fear so that they fear him. Their motto is "the one who makes the pay." Curiously, he is very strict in giving extreme punishments to those colleagues who do not like him, but he does not even make an observation for his spoiled ones for behaviors that deserve a sanction. These pros are urged to take leadership courses.
- The pro that doesn't seem pro. I observe the pros of swimming, gym, paddle tennis, tennis, soccer, etc. They all look like athletes, but some pros don't seem pros because they have neglected their physical appearance in golf. It is difficult for a pro to stay in shape if they are not even used to walking. Some pros even go to the bathroom by cart. I think the pros should be an example of the benefits of walking golf, and we should educate players to do so.
- The pro player. This type of pro is characterized by being a good player and by his liking for betting. I think a pro should play with members; what I think is not right is that:
 - Be advantageous with the members, earning their money every week. Strangely for some reason, the members like it.
 - Let the pro play two or three times a week. That means 8 to 15 hours of work, which could be used in other priorities in the golf area.
 - He only plays with the same group, curiously the group of executives or influential in the club. If the pro likes to play so much, he should play with different groups, even those who are not considered splendid.
- The cheerful pro. Some pros like to drink beer during their work or when they play, that habit is respected. What is not correct is that he ends up drunk. For years this was an accepted behavior, but times have changed, and nowadays, in most clubs, it is not well seen that the pro gets drunk while working. Let us remember that the pro is a model or example for the golf academy's children and young people.
- The pro clerk. Some clubs want a pro who focuses on administrative work, and they ask him not to teach private classes or clinics. I think this does not work because the pro must be in contact with the member to see first-hand how the services in the area are working.

By personal decision, the pro clerk does not leave his office, supposedly because he is very busy with administrative work. The pros that hide behind a computer are not well accepted because they do not know the member, do not make an appearance at the teeing area or in the golf course, avoid giving the clinics, and send the assistants to talk with the members, etc.

- The pro boot licker. This pro is characterized by being a creep, barber, snitch, etc. with the club manager and executives. Pro is there to serve all members equally. The pro must be a counterweight to executives who tend to make decisions for their benefit. Executives should value a pro who is capable of proposing, commenting, questioning, etc.

These behaviors show us that it is essential to include values and ethics within a golf pro's training. The pros must help each other not to fall into these behaviors since they affect us all. Members, managers, and executives can help us by telling us when we make these mistakes. A mature pro will welcome

these observations and should be grateful for them. I have made many mistakes and continue to do so, and I know that we still have many areas of opportunity. Golf teaches us integrity and consideration, so if we consider ourselves masters of this sport, we must be a worthy representative of the values it represents. **FORE.**

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