

Merchandising golf equipment and apparel in temporary quarters can sometimes be a challenge. When Bruce Wyatt, head professional at Friendly Hills G&CC, Whittier, Calif., found himself faced with operating for six months in a house trailer and then 3½ years in a temporary facility, he simply made the best of it and gained knowledge along with experience. When construction of the permanent golf shop was completed, Wyatt knew exactly what kind of shop setup and decor he wanted.


Collaborating with interior decorator Dick Taylor, a member of the club, Wyatt proceeded to furnish the shop in a manner that would display fully the equipment and wearing apparel that the shop



Wyatt (above) arranges merchandise in his long-awaited pro shop.

had always carried. Situated in the center of the new golf facility, the shop is directly across from the main entrance to the clubhouse. To capitalize on this location, Wyatt had installed sliding glass doors, which form the entire 20 foot front wall. Thus, when the shop is closed, area lighting displays the merchandise to anyone going into the clubhouse. Wyatt wanted to have the atmosphere warm and pleasant. He selected a rich orange, brown, black tweed for the carpeting. Display cabinets of solid oak were designed and built for the shop. The back panels behind these units were covered in wine velvet. Golf clubs are displayed on a Formica rack.

Taking into consideration the interest of the club membership in



PLANNED PROFIT AT FRIENDLY HILLS

Professional Bruce Wyatt operated out of temporary facilities for 3½ years, but with a new pro shop and new design and display techniques he has increased his gross revenue 39 per cent by MARIAN BOND

in new clothes and high style, Wyatt felt that, though the shop itself was not large, he could utilize the wall space to display the clothing he planned to stock. The selection of women's wear is not what he would like it to be at this time, and Wyatt does plan to expand this business as need demands. However, he finds that there are many more men, at least three times more than women, who shop with him. Nevertheless, he does find that women will very often shop for their husbands, and that men are inclined to buy wearing apparel on impulse.

"Our membership now is 350, but we probably have more business than most clubs that have 500 members," Wyatt says. "It has to be because of the way we run our operation. We want to create a comfortable atmosphere. They buy on impulse," he states. "If the merchandise is displayed in a professional manner and they see it as it's going to be worn, they want it." Wyatt doesn't believe soft goods should be merely hung on racks or stacked on shelves. "First you have to stock good merchandise and then back it up with the correct display."

Wyatt believes that golfwear apparel is an important aspect of pro shop business. "Our profession is becoming more educated in the field," he says. "A man wants to have good looking clothes as well as bag and clubs. The golfer is one of the best dressed men. He might wear \$50 shoes, \$40 slacks, a \$40 to \$50 sweater and a \$15 shirt." It is important for a club professional to have an awareness and a knowledge of fashion and know what his club members want. Wyatt finds this especially so in a first-class country club where people do buy.

More as a convenience to his customers than anything else, Wyatt features ties in his shop. "We have men's ties. A businessman will come into the club and play a round of golf and find that he didn't bring a tie. Or that he's unhappy with the one he's wearing. So, he'll go to our tie rack. And at Christmas we sold quite a number of ties." Wyatt also carries shirts that can be worn for golf or dress.

The lighting in the Friendly Hills golf shop is probably the most outstanding feature of the golf shop,



"First stock good merchandise, then back it up with the correct display," says Wyatt.

especially the effect it gives. When they first began decorating the shop, the bare walls and overhead "cafeteria style" lighting left a great deal to be desired. More than half of the fluorescent lighting was removed and two tracks of moveable spotlights were installed in the ceiling. These run the length of the 700-square-foot display area. The advantage of this lighting is that a display can be subtly lit to catch the customer's eye.

With the carpeting and the dark wall display units plus the lighting, Wyatt has achieved the effect he was looking for and the \$5,000 decorating cost began to pay off when his gross increase for the first three months of 1972 was \$14,000 over the gross for the same three months of 1971. "We grossed over \$100,000 in 1971," Wyatt says, "In 1972 we grossed a little over \$139,000. An over-all increase of 39 per cent. Although we've always had the merchandise, our sales have improved tremendously because the goods are more attractively displayed.

"We coordinate an entire outfit, clothes, clubs and bag. And we do change displays frequently," he says. "When we are selling items in a display we know it's working for us. When sales cease on a display, we feel it's not doing the job and we make a change."

Although club sales are the greater part of the business in the shop, Wyatt believes that a man does not buy his equipment on im-

pulse. In his opinion, golf clubs sell themselves, along with the advertising the manufacturer does to promote the clubs. "We give the customer advice," Wyatt says, "but he likes to think about the clubs he's going to buy. Of course we display them."

In addition to the display area there is an office, measuring 144 square feet and a storage area of 216 square feet. This back room is long and narrow. Wyatt wishes he had a larger storage area, but he makes the most of the room he has and even provides a gift wrapping counter. This is one of the services he gives to the club membership and he's quite proud of the professional wrap they give their customers. He finds the people who shop with him appreciate this added convenience.

The Friendly Hills golf shop is not large, but Wyatt has cleverly used all of the wall space. And he is always aware of the importance of color coordination in setting up displays. The new bright shades are highlighted by the spotlights and it's not at all unusual to find men and women stopping to admire and inquire about a garment.

"We do not have a large inventory," Wyatt, who does all of the buying himself, explains. "I feel most golf shops doing this amount of business are tying up to \$40,000 to \$60,000 in inventory. Ours probably averages \$15,000 to \$18,000. We turn it over and don't end up with too many items that don't sell." As an example Wyatt states that the inventory might include \$6,000 in clubs, bags and balls, and \$9,000 in shoes and apparel.

Friendly Hills is located in the rolling foothills around Whittier. It was organized four years ago and boasts one of the most beautiful courses and clubhouse facilities in Southern California. Wyatt, who began his career in Honolulu, has been with the club since its inception. The inconveniences of working from a house trailer and then temporary quarters have all but been forgotten by Wyatt and his assistant Chuck Seals. They've been in the new facility since November, 1971. Enough time to prove that better merchandising techniques mean increased sales. □