



# CHUCK CUMMING

## THE PROFIT PRO SHOP

### PGA SHOW: THEN AND NOW

A large number of golf professionals regard the Professional Golfers' Assn. Merchandise Show as just another function of the PGA. They don't give much thought to the show's origin or how much work actually goes into putting the show together.

It was just after World War II that some golf salesmen, both reps and company, started gathering at Dunedin, Fla., where the PGA winter tournaments were held. To display their wares to the professionals attending, these salesmen would bring card tables or use the tailgates on their station wagons. After playing golf or when they had a free moment, the professionals and their wives would walk over to the boulevard at the entrance to the club, look and sometimes buy the merchandise.

The practice proved to be so successful that, as the years wore on, more and more salesmen attended.

In 1961 the first tent was erected at Dunedin; within it, golf cars were given individual booth space. In effect this was a tribute to the manufacturers and recognized that electric and gasoline cars were here to stay.

The first PGA show was scheduled for Palm Beach Gardens in 1964; however, the new home of the PGA was not completed on time, so both the tournament and show were held in Port St. Lucie.

The following year saw the show held at Palm Beach Gardens, where it stayed until 1973.

In the beginning, the show was run jointly by the PGA and the GMDA. Only in the past few years has the GMDA turned it over completely to PGA management. The GMDA now acts in an advisory capacity. At one time, in order to display, a company had to have a national sales force calling on golf professionals. Also, companies were restricted to a maximum of four booths. As the golf business increased at pro shops, so did

the number of people servicing professionals. These companies were also allowed to rent booth space, and the restriction of booth number was relaxed.

Now, we are back at Port St. Lucie with the two largest tents in the world packed with the most glamorous array of golf merchandise in the world. This is the only golf show where manufacturers spend over a million dollars to display for professionals all the soft goods and hard goods under one-two roofs.

This year's show was by far the best of any. We still have problems, however. The tent roof leaked, displays were late in arriving, the snack bar served poor sandwiches at high prices and the energy crisis dissuaded many golf professionals from attending.

I heard a few manufacturers and distributors complaining about the size of the crowd, so I started asking professionals what their opinion of the show was. Every golf professional I talked with agreed that the show was better because the public was barred; second, the displays and merchandise were excellent; third, it was hard not to over-spend; fourth, every golf professional was aware that the close-out items normally offered at the show were missing this year, pointing up to the shortages every manufacturer is experiencing now.

From the manufacturers' standpoint, it was heard over and over: "We had the best show we have ever had. We had less golf professionals, but the ones who were here were here to buy." Several commented that the first day and part of the second the golf professionals were looking at and comparing the new items, then coming back to place orders for those goods best suited for their shops. All in all, a more professional way of buying.

There is no doubt that the gasoline shortage and the lack of hotel and motel accommodations in the Port St. Lucie area were partly responsible for the

drop in attendance. Hopefully, in another year the PGA will be permanently located, and the show will become a part of its new and permanent home. Wouldn't it be a wonderful advancement if the PGA were to build a large, air-conditioned building in which to house the show? For several years this has been talked about, but nothing seems to come of it. Just think, a building in which every manufacturer could have a permanent display the year around. The PGA Golf Hall of Fame could be housed in the building and kept open to the public all year. There could be a central convention hall for meetings, which could be rented out to different organizations for sales meetings, and so many other events.

The 1974 show seemed to evolve around the new models of investment casted irons, the graphite shafts and in soft goods, the return to wool and cotton blends along with the usual doubleknits. I would guess that the big item was the graphite shafts. Everyone is writing about them and talking about them; at the show every company had its own graphite clubs on display and on the driving range for the golf professionals to try. Also there for the first time were the manufacturers of the different machines needed to manufacture investment casted clubs.

It would appear that the investment casted club is here to stay, but the club of the future has not been made yet, because all the manufacturers are hard at work improving their products. In 10 years the clubs that we think are so good today will be as different as when we changed from hickory shafts to steel shafts. Isn't it nice to be a part of an industry that doesn't sit still, but through research and development continues to advance a game that is so close to all of us?

May the 1975 PGA Merchandise Show, wherever it will be held, continue to grow and continue to be the finest golf show in the world. □