

Professionals and Their Suppliers: CONCERNED BUT NOT PANICKED

Hard times are nothing new to the people in the golf industry. They, along with millions of other Americans, have weathered shortages of food, basic materials and fuel before. A major depression and several recessions have come and gone, and each time the golf industry has survived. Even at the peak of rationing during World War II, golf clubs serving local communities experienced banner years. Members could not use their automobiles because of gas rationing. Local golf clubs became the focal point for community activities. It was true then: it's true now—Americans somehow find a way to do what they want to do, and many Americans like to play golf.

GOLFDOM recently made a sampling of the golf community, contacting apparel and equipment suppliers, as well as golf professionals, to determine what steps they have taken to meet present shortages and to determine, if the energy crisis worsens, what contingency plans they have made.

One large supplier of apparel with a national network of salesmen is conducting a contest among its salesmen for the best "game plan" in the event of a severe fuel shortage. Some of the ideas that have come out of this competition are:

1. Mini showrooms. These would be set up in hotels or motels at central locations. Professionals would be told beforehand where and when the shows would take place so that they could make appointments to see the lines;

2. Mobile vans. Those salesmen who are working out of these vans would continue to do so, but would park them in central locations and set up appointments with professionals.

3. Combination showrooms. Several suppliers would combine to set up one showroom to serve an area. They could coordinate their appointments so

Like the famous saying, the golf industry will keep its appointed rounds, despite rough winds

by DICK FARLEY

that one professional could see several lines in one trip;

4. Encyclopedic catalogues. More informative, wholesale catalogues would be developed, which would contain pictures, fabric swatches and greater descriptive materials about the products. These catalogues could be "bicycled" within one area from club to club on a scheduled basis, if the cost of producing and mailing the book in quantity became prohibitive;

5. Super phone. One of the best sales tools, the telephone, would be used much more extensively;

6. Future, future orders. Professionals would be encouraged to order farther ahead to ensure deliveries, and in some cases, staggered shipments would be the best solution;

7. Buddy system. A closer relationship would be developed between the salesman and the professional. Because the golf industry is relatively small, most salesmen know their customers already, which would certainly help the cooperative plan. More reliance would be placed on the salesman's ability to do the right thing for his customer.

INDUSTRY OPTIMISTIC

Both apparel and equipment manufacturers are greatly concerned about raw materials, from the standpoint of supply and price. Cotton, traditionally

a good golf fiber, is in short supply: so is wool. Polyester, a mainstay of the garment industry, could also be a problem to get. One company is predicting an 18 per cent decrease this year in this derivative of the petrochemical industry. Leather is expensive and scarce, as are some other basics.

In spite of these problems, the industry as a whole is forecasting a record season, with sales well ahead of last year.

Some major golf club manufacturers have already announced that their production is completely sold out and that they are not accepting any new orders for golf clubs for delivery this spring or summer. Many apparel makers also report being sold out of their spring lines.

LESS MAINTENANCE

That the fuel shortage could adversely affect golf course maintenance has been widely speculated. One professional reminded us that less than perfect courses did not stop anyone from playing golf during World War II, and he "didn't expect it would slow up play now either."

CONCLUSION

Adversity sometimes is a blessing in disguise. If club members have to stay close to their homes during the crisis, more local participation could be beneficial to the golf club, the golf professional and the members.

Other countries have always expressed admiration for the ability of Americans to adjust quickly to problems, to overcome them and move forward again. But this requires understanding on the part of everyone. In some cases, compromise is the best solution.

Cooperation and understanding by all—buyers, manufacturers and suppliers—will help us through this difficult time. We'll make it, because everyone's future is at stake.

What the Industry Is Saying About the Energy Crisis

"Our merchandising position is concentrated in popular-priced products, highlighted by coordinates and sportswear, which lend themselves to multiple add-on retail selling. Our bookings for spring '74 are the best in the history of the company. Initial reaction to the early delivery of this merchandise has been excellent."



—Larry Schwartz
Golf Merchandising
Manager
Palm Beach
Company

"In the event the fuel shortage becomes critical to the point that salesmen are experiencing difficulty in making calls, there must be cooperation between the professional and the salesman."



—Frank Gallagher
Sales Manager
PGA-Victor
Golf Company

"We don't expect any drop off in play because of an energy crisis. Pebble Beach is extremely popular. Golfers come from all over the world to play here. However, if long distance travel does become a problem, we will make up the deficit from the nearby population centers of Los Angeles and San Francisco."



—Art Bell
Golf Professional
Pebble Beach
Golf Links
Pebble Beach,
Calif.

"We are quite optimistic . . . with business on our books for spring and summer already well ahead of last year at this time. Being only 90 miles from both New York and Philadelphia, we are within range of a tremendous population who can drive to Tamiment and return on one tank of gas. We don't think people will give up their vacations because of inconveniences caused by gasoline shortages; they'll find a way to get here."



—Vince Yanovitch
Golf Professional
Tamiment Resort
Tamiment, Pa.

"All indications are for another record year at Etonic. If the energy crisis becomes severe and creates a shortage in the petrochemical field, Etonic could have a decrease in the number of golf shoe styles available to the golf community."



—Wally Phillips
Vice President
Sales
Etonic

"We are developing contingency plans for our sales staff in case the energy crisis becomes critical. Our salesmen are involved in a contest offering a liberal cash prize for the best 'game plan.'"



—Lee Glover
Sales Manager
Ernie Sabayrac,
Inc.

"We are very optimistic that the golf industry will have a banner year in 1974. Should there be a severe fuel shortage, golf clubs serving local communities, which account for the majority of golfers in America, could experience a windfall, developing traffic unparalleled in recent years. Professionals, club managers and club officials might be hard pressed to develop the ingenuity necessary to cope with the situation. This condition, however, might have an adverse effect on the distant, hard to reach resort."



—Robert D. Rickey
Vice President
MacGregor,
Div. of Brunswick

"Our greatest concern for 1974 is . . . committee involvement and performance, especially in scheduling to ensure that all members receive optimal use of club facilities. This becomes even more critical in the event a serious energy crisis prevents members from traveling away from the club."



—Richard Munson
President
Scarsdale GC
Hartsdale, N.Y.

"Our members live in proximity to the club and because the energy crisis has limited travel, we feel that they will use the club facilities far more in 1974 than at any time in the past."

—Craig Shankland
Golf Professional
Middle Bay CC
Oceanside, N.Y.