



Just before the opening of the 1974 Professional Golfers' Assn. Merchandise Show in Port St. Lucie, Fla., GOLFDOM made a random sampling of manufacturers around the country and asked them to comment about the show; how the professional might better use his time there, to predict merchandise trends for the coming year and to discuss rumors of delivery problems, which we keep hearing.

Without exception, everyone we talked to agreed that the merchandise show concept is a great asset to the golf industry and serves a definite need.

One manufacturer added a thought, though, which might have merit. He feels that the month of January is too late to hold a major show. By that time of year fashion merchandise has been committed; lines are sold out, resulting in unfilled or partially filled orders. A regional show, he feels, would be more aligned with the manufacturing cycle. A regional show in the Northeast, for example, could be held during November, a time when most club professionals have not started

South and would be able to attend. A regional show would be especially attractive to professionals who do not go South during the winter months. A mid-November show would also allow the professional to make late purchases for his Christmas program.

John Cantwell of the AMF/Ben Hogan Company strongly advocates the show concept as it now exists, because, he feels, its unique atmosphere, not unlike a large outdoor bazaar, is impossible to duplicate with an indoor coliseum-type show. He would like to see the show in a permanent location, perhaps at its former West Palm Beach site. He added, however, that AMF would support the show regardless of the location. All other manufacturers contacted also favored a permanent show location, although some were reluctant to state a site preference.

Ken Boyce of PGA-Victor is enthusiastic about the show. "We think enough of the total concept that we sponsor the match-play tournament that goes on concurrently with the merchandise show. For us the show has been a tremendous success. We have increased our participation in the past two years and will do so again in 1974. We personally write a tremendous amount of business at the show."

The apparel trend for spring and summer 1974, according to Jack Lust of DiFini Originals, Ltd., will be toward lighter weight fabrics with smaller patterns, the look of classic elegance. The tailored collar is strong in men's shirts, but the fashion collar is making somewhat of a comeback. There is a tendency away from the all-polyester look, with blends developing strongly—polyester/silk and polyester/cotton. The linen look in shirts, slacks and jackets is important for the coming year.

Lust predicts that the "Put Together Look" will be very much the new trend. The method of "coordinating" is now old hat. The "Put Together Look" depends on good blending, which will be demonstrated by DiFini in a new type of display presentation at their show booth this year. The exhibit is intended to teach the professional how to improve his display techniques for use at his club in addition to helping him buy better.

Another slack manufacturer felt that, although belt loops now dominate the pants market, most golfers still prefer the self-belt or beltless style because of its comfort and flexibility. He added that, although, there is interest in straight legs, the golfer has gotten used to the modified flair, which he will continue to prefer.

Some thoughts were expressed on how the professional should make the most of his time at the golf show.

All agreed that the single, important imperative for the professional was to, "Come to the show totally prepared." This means making up a plan before he gets there. The professional must know how much money he has to spend and in which areas he will spend it. Such a plan requires a review of past sales along with a breakdown of present inventory and those items already ordered in the fall for spring delivery. Armed with this information, the professional is ready to shop the show, making notes of the best items. Then and only then is he ready to place his orders.

The manufacturers pointed out that too many professionals come to the show with the purpose of buying, but are completely unprepared, without any plan. The results are sporadic: overbuying in some areas and underbuying in others, and almost always, an unbalanced inventory and a disappointing sales year. If the professional hasn't purchased enough of the

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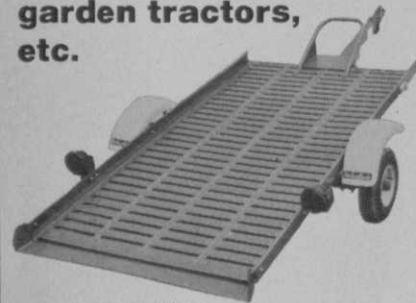
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hot items in the spring, he can be sure they will be unavailable from the manufacturers in May, June or July.

Don Drotman of Izod offered some unique thoughts. He felt that the professional must not attempt to do all of his buying at the January show, for two basic reasons. First, by late January most good lines are either completely sold out or badly depleted. Second, the professional doesn't have time, during the three short days he has, to sit down at the show with each manufacturer and buy intelligently. Drotman suggests that the professional place his basic orders in the fall to be assured of spring delivery. Then the professional can go to the show with his remaining funds to purchase special items.

Izod will be featuring at the show what they call their "third line." Completely different from their spring line, it features summer merchandise, emphasizing lightweight fabrics. The trade name they have chosen for this third line is "Dozi." (Izod spelled backwards.) These items will be available for early summer delivery.

Izod decided to develop "Dozi" as a result of experience gained at the show. They simply were not in a position to fill spring orders taken late in January. The professional is helped if he can pick up a fresh new line for June and July, to complement the merchandise already in his shop.

Drotman feels that fabric weight is very important, especially for spring and summer. It must be light. Double-knits are still selling well in slacks and shirts. But a trend toward textured fabrics, which give a more natural look than the typical double-knit, appears strong.

He agrees that polyester blends will again be big, along with 100 per cent polyester. An advantage of polyester over cotton, Drotman points out, is that much better and more vibrant colors are possible.

Concerning deliveries, most manufacturers contacted agreed that if orders are received early most items will be delivered on time.

They point out, however, that because of shortages of some yarns, especially natural fibers, such as cotton and wool, the professional must plan earlier to be assured of delivery. In some instances, even very early orders may not be delivered. Fine count

cotton, for example, is in extremely short supply.

Most golf club manufacturers we talked with were noncommittal on the future of graphite shafts, although all admitted that they were selling well. Among the major equipment producers, Wilson has recently entered the graphite market. One comment made was that the graphite shaft has given the pro his greatest revenue potential since the introduction of the electric golf car. With all the talk about graphite, investment casting should not be overlooked. Once again, investment cast clubs are big news, with impressive gains over last year.

A golf bag manufacturer contacted pointed out that synthetic fibers will be used wherever possible, because the increases in the price of leather have virtually eliminated its use on a bag, except where leather is needed for strength. The trend here is toward the traditional, richer, more elegant appearance.

The big question with which all manufacturers are vitally concerned is the shrinking supply of raw materials. What this portends for the future, no one is willing to speculate. □

—by DICK FARLEY

Beginning on page 33, GOLFDOM has listed the merchandise that manufacturers, distributors and representatives will be exhibiting at the PGA show. The list is unofficial; the companies, not the association, have indicated to GOLFDOM that they will be present at the show.

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