

# PROS: MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR COMPETITIVE EDGE

by PAT SIMMONS

PRESIDENT  
SIMMONS INTERNATIONAL CORP.  
TORRANCE, CALIFORNIA



“The golf professional cannot, nor should he ever try to, compete with discount stores on the basis of price. Instead, he should refine and concentrate on the diagnostic or prescription approach to the sale of golf clubs.”

The golf professional is facing more competition than ever before from volume sporting goods dealers, who are making commercial-line golf equipment look increasingly attractive through one marketing technique—discount pricing.

The golf professional cannot, nor should he ever try to, compete with the discount stores on the basis of price. Instead, he should refine and concentrate on the diagnostic or prescription approach to the sale of golf clubs.

The golf professional is more than a clerk selling woods, irons, putters and utility clubs. Because of his training and background, he is eminently more qualified to fit a customer properly with a set of clubs than is a sporting goods clerk, who may be selling clubs one minute and camping stoves the next. The golf professional can take advantage of this weakness in his competitor's sales approach.

Most golfers can't analyze their own swings; that's like trying to hear yourself talk without a tape recorder. Few sporting goods sales personnel can analyze a golfer's swing. Only the golf professional has the necessary qualifications and expertise. This expertise is his strength.

When you need a pair of glasses or new lenses, you don't wander into a store and ask the salesperson to show you something that might be right for you. You go to an ophthalmologist or an optometrist, who examines your eyes and prescribes the proper corrective lenses. Then you have your lenses made exactly according to the doctor's prescription.

The same holds true in the selection of golf clubs. Prescribing the proper shaft flex, length, swing weight, grip

size and type of club and then melding these ingredients into the proper clubs for your customer requires the services of a diagnostician, not a clerk.

The professional, whether he works at a private club, public course or driving range, who approaches each potential sale as a diagnostician, has a much better chance to make the sale and help the player.

Let's examine how the diagnostic method works.

Unless the professional is familiar with the customer's swing, he takes the golfer onto the practice tee, where his swing can be studied. There are two reasons for this move. The practice tee is a merchandising tool unique to the pro shop. There usually is a marked difference in the way a person swings a club indoors and the way he actually swings when hitting a ball from the tee or turf.

While the customer is hitting practice shots, the professional is able to watch for the following essential characteristics: 1) How the customer stands up to the ball, which will determine the loft characteristics he will need in his new clubs; 2) How the customer holds the club, which will determine the grip size; 3) How the customer swings, which determines the flex of the shaft. For example, even though a player may be in his 60s, if he has a short, choppy swing, he still needs a stiff shaft to play his best game.

Once the professional diagnoses the foregoing points and considers the person's age, weight, strength and frequency of play, he then can make an intelligent recommendation on new clubs that will improve the customer's game.

This recommendation represents a personalized service to the customer—a service that will more than justify the higher prices a professional must charge.

Once the recommendation has been made, the professional must close the sale. The best way is to fit the customer immediately with the correct set of clubs from the shop inventory. (It goes without saying that the professional must carry an inventory substantial enough to meet most needs: a selection of both regular and stiff shafts in long and short lengths as well as in standard lengths.)

If the professional thinks that the customer will benefit best by clubs

*continued on page 57*

# GOLF COURSE ARCHITECT'S GUIDE

## EDMUND B. AULT Ltd.

GOLF COURSE ARCHITECT

*Sculptured Greens*

Member

American Society of Golf Course Architects

National Golf Foundation

7979 Old Georgetown Road

Bethesda, Maryland 20014

301-942-0716

301-657-4278

Circle No. 149 on Reader Service Card

BELLANTE, CLAUSS,  
MILLER & NOLAN, INC.

*Art Wall Jr.*

GOLF COURSE ARCHITECTS

Master Planning • Site Analysis

Plans Specifications • Supervision

Irrigation Systems • Storage Ponds

Bellante-Clauss Bldg.

Scranton, Pa. 18503

717-346-8771

Widener Building

Phila., Pa. 19107

215-561-1941

Circle No. 150 on Reader Service Card

## GOLF COURSE CONSTRUCTION

Building throughout the U.S. and  
Central America. Contact us.



**IBERIA**

**EARTHMOVING SERVICE, INC.**

IBERIA, OHIO • Ph. Galion, O. 419 468-5454

Circle No. 162 on Reader Service Card

A TRADITION OF DESIGN EXCELLENCE

**ROBERT TRENT JONES INC.**  
GOLF COURSE ARCHITECTS

17 CHURCH ST.  
MONTCLAIR, N.J.  
07042  
201 744 3033

706 FOREST AVE.  
PALO ALTO, CALIF.  
94301  
415 326 3833

P.O. BOX 4121  
FORT LAUDERDALE, FLA.  
33304  
305 564 3422

Circle No. 151 on Reader Service Card

## Bob Jordan

Golf Course Constructor

**Irrigation Systems**

*"I Supervise All Work"*

235 State St., East Peoria, Illinois

Phone: 699-6974 or 673-1067

Circle No. 152 on Reader Service Card

# MADDOX

CONSTRUCTION COMPANY

**GOLF COURSE  
CONSTRUCTION  
BY CONTRACT**

**Since 1924!**

P.O. BOX 66  
ST. CHARLES, ILL.  
312-231-2665

212 W. FAIRCHILD  
DANVILLE, ILL.  
217-442-2411

Circle No. 153 on Reader Service Card

## COMPETITIVE EDGE from page 35

made to special order, he must explain this to the customer and encourage him to wait a reasonable amount of time while his clubs are being made to the specific measurements.

### KEEPING UP WITH THE TIMES

The golf equipment industry is not static: each year, new concepts and innovations are introduced to it. If the professional is to maintain his superiority over the sporting goods store, he must keep up with the changes; must know what each new club has been designed to do and how each new line of clubs can aid the golfer.

For example, some golf clubs now selling on the market are specifically designed to help the high handicapper lower his scores. Other clubs benefit the low handicapper, who is more interested in adding distance to his already excellent accuracy.

The professional can keep abreast of innovative techniques used in design and in the manufacturing process by attending the Professional Golfers' Assn. Merchandise Show, where major club makers, with their sales representatives, display their equipment. The professional can also visit his suppliers' factories to see firsthand how the clubs are made. Often, on these visits, the professional can pick up valuable information which will help him in his sales approach.

Because the professional's livelihood depends on his ability as a diagnostician and because information is vital to him, he should insist on being kept technically informed by his suppliers through newsletters or sales representatives. The manufacturer, in turn, should recognize his obligations to the professional and be willing to accept the role of informant. Ultimately, both will benefit. □

## WILLIAM JAMES SPEAR

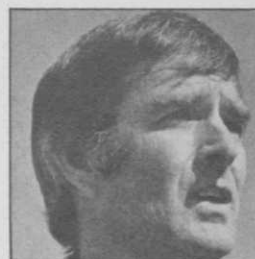
GOLF COURSE ARCHITECT

16 N. FIRST AVENUE  
ST. CHARLES, ILL. 60174



(312)  
584-8200

Circle No. 169 on Reader Service Card



PAT SIMMONS' peripatetic career has encompassed amateur and professional baseball, the construction business and

amateur and professional golf, as a player and head professional, and now the design and manufacture of golf clubs, using the facilities of his own company, which he started in 1969.