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# HERB GRAFFIS

## SWINGING AROUND GOLF

**PGA Show gives preview of 1975 pro golf:** Ideas nibbled while strolling through the PGA Merchandise Show with Mickey Mouse, Disney World pro:

Pro shop business forecasts based on signs at the show indicate 1975 will be good for the pro who shakes himself into golf's new day . . . club, bag and apparel's larger manufacturers wrote orders that were larger in dollar volume than most of them got at the 1974 show . . . smaller exhibitors complained they were lost in the hash that the PGA was lucky to get following the convenience and cohesion of its tent shows that had adequate hotel space handy for PGA members and their wives and for exhibitors.

Numerous small exhibitors cooped away from the traffic flow in Disney main exhibition hall had pretty young dolls in hallways by exhibitors' rooms shilling, and an attractive damsel at any convention exhibit is like a cheese factory to Mickey Mouse. . . . She's bound to get attention even from the wives of the gentlemen at the trade show.

It again was demonstrated at the show that women often are better businessmen than men . . . it was the wives of pros who put pro shops in the apparel and accessory business . . . an instance of golf business-woman's imaginative shopping was the discovery by pros' wives and women's committee heads of the value of golf prints and historic mementoes on the golf prize list . . . Morton W. Olman, owner of the Old Golf Shop, Inc., in Cincinnati is a collector who made his hobby of golf books, prints, etc., a business . . . then Mrs. Olman got talking with "some of the girls" and a new and welcome category was added to the golfers' prizes.

Not among the wonders of Disney World are facilities satisfactorily suited to a show of a size and character of the PGA Merchandise

Show with its 226 exhibitors and the bright part is that the PGA officials and staff managed to do as well as they did for exhibitors and PGA members, hence to the golfing public.

Probably some of club manufacturing companies that were at the PGA show this year won't survive to be at the 1976 show . . . a bunch of them were born during the Japanese golf boom . . . more than 100 according to the golf club grip and shaft makers . . . when the Japanese boom puckered up one beautiful thing about the collapse was that the Japanese paid their bills . . . that was not the unanimous performance of American pros and stores who bought from the new manufacturers . . . there were many varying guesses about amount of money pros have in inventories of clubs bought and delivered in 1974 . . . and whether it is their money or the manufacturers.

Often the comment was heard from pro salesman that pros ought to follow the smart lead of automobile dealers and manufacturers and cut prices to move the models of last year or older . . . the pros learned how to do that on apparel without getting stuck by style and price changes but do not seem to have learned how to do it with golf clubs, according to pro salesman . . . so that, salesmen say, is why woods and irons in pro shop bag storage now are averaging two years older than the ages of irons and woods in bag racks ten years ago . . . that is what smart and snoopy veteran pro salesmen say, regardless of what the manufacturers' association figures might indicate . . . what the absolute fact is nobody knows because golf business, involved in a game that keeps the score closely does not star at knowing what the business score is . . . that is why so many of the conglomerates who got into golf as the Golden Garden of the recre-

ation area suddenly learned that the Easter Bunny does not bring babies and that Santa Claus can throw curves.

The National Golf Foundation is to be commended for making a wide and energetic attempt to learn basic figures on the golf market . . . the Foundation's executive director Don Rossi is conducting the most important research on the golf market . . . the Athletic Goods Manufacturers Assn. and the golf club and ball manufacturer groups have the production and sales statistics which are to a degree indicative of the pro shop and other retailing sales.

Among matters laughingly discussed at the show was the impending court ruling against pro-only by a lawyer-only set-up . . . quickly it has been again demonstrated that the cut-price sports stores cannot sell quality golf merchandise . . . the cheap crapola is the cut-price store field . . . a legal document extending the lawyer-only campaign

against pro-only disclosed a careless error that showed the reason for such extensive contempt of the law regardless of how courts have scored honest businessmen.

Definitely, the investment-cast club heads have sold themselves into the market well despite their price increase over forged-iron heads . . . they will not be a false alarm like the aluminum shafts . . . opinion of veterans who were skilled players as well as expert clubmakers is that the feel of the cast material at impact and during that exceedingly brief moment when the ball is on the clubface before resiliency helps speed it on its way does not mean as much to most players as the way that the investment-cast leading edge and the sole can get under the ball and get it decisively airborne.

The expert golfers who want to keep a ball down in flight they can control seem to like the feel, design and weight distribution of the forged heads . . . but these experts whose names so often are used in advertising clubs "played by the winners" do not spend much cash on clubs.

News of the demand of the Tournament Players Division for a much heavier split of the Crosby Pro-Am television revenue and the TPD complaint about the time taken out of the U.S. schedule by the British Open was in the papers during the show . . . with unemployment figures in front pages of the papers the opinion of golf businessmen was that the public was not going to have deep sympathy for the players who want more money out of the tournament which has raised \$3 million for charity and established the pattern that made the pro golf circuit big business . . . the British Open tournament conflict with the American events is not on account of the British Open, but is on account of other British advertising tournaments getting American players on the string of American players on the string of an American agent involved in promoting British tournaments . . . golf is not the only professional sport that seems to be trying hard to get off the sports pages and into the business news. □

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