Bicentennial bust: At last January's PGA Merchandise Show there was only one item I saw that had any connection with the nation's bicentennial.

I was surprised that the many bright minds among golf manufacturers and pro shop merchants had skipped timely chances to celebrate with red, white and blue on a ball or a club, but the only thing I saw was a golf bag with stars and stripes.

The bag was far more of a sensation than you'd expect. Smart pros saw glorious promise of selling tickets on the bag for tournaments on July 4 and other of our bicentennial holy days.

What a swell promotion there is in a bicentennial year bag prize every weekend with chances for a few bucks. And red, white and blue markings on bicentennial year club grips hit my imagination after seeing those stars and stripes bags as something that might jolt loose money from guys who have plenty, but don't expect to buy new clubs until our nation is 300 years old.

Market data far and few between: As a sports reporter I learned the first thing to do was to get the score correctly.

In covering golf business, I found learning the score is the toughest part of the reporting job. For years it has amazed me that the multi-million dollar business golf does a year is conducted with such limited knowledge of marketing figures.

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Lately I have noticed an increasing number of cases in which statements indicate golf business managers are reaching for market guidance that isn't there.

For years I have heard (and sometimes observed) that private golf clubs are badly run businesses. Maybe so, but where would officials go for figures that would provide operating guidance in the operations of clubs that differ so widely in conditions and character? The CMAA was the first organization that did some statistical work in determining the business score.

Possibly even that tiny help of facts may have helped the CMAA put over the general manager idea.