Feedback

Be a teacher first

In your August issue you carried a very fine statement in this department by Mac Hunter. I sensed there would be some flak resulting, and in your November/December issue Bob Gutwein gave a rather shallow and petty rebuttal.

Teaching is one of the prime responsibilities of the "complete" golf pro. It is a small source of income, but real money made from lessons and total concern for the golfer's welfare and enjoyment from the game is derived from the sales "beholden" members make in the pro shop.

Teaching effectively is not only a lot of hard work, but is time consuming. I have worked with many fine young assistants who wanted to be golf professionals. I advised them their, job security, income, and reputation would be dependent on their ability to teach all golfers.

I do know that Dr. Gary Wiren and Joe O'Brien of the PGA headquarters staff are aware of the need to project the golf professional in the areas Mac Hunter brought out.

I never gave much thought to outside competition in the sales of merchandise because of these reasons:

1) I was always available to my members when they needed my help.
2) I was always visible, or tried to be most of the time.
3) I was approachable, and between myself and my staff, there was always a concern for the golfer's game.
4) We applied sincerity during and well after a lesson or club sale.

I sold most of my merchandise by selling myself and my services. On most Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays, I served as a starter. Why? This gave me an opportunity to see and visit with each of my members. Golfers like to see and visit with the man. A few tips and kind words made me not only friends, but sales as well. At least 85 percent of my active time in golf has been teaching and visiting with my golfers.

The one simple fact that every golf professional must face is: his game is secondary to those he serves. Yet, he must play a respectable game. This is easy and can be done in one's spare time.

Gene O'Brien
PGA Pro
Wichita, Kan.

Negative on numbers

I found Richard Newell's golf car article (Nov./Dec. GB) very interesting and informative and his points are well taken. One minor flaw might arise in the hourly wage he pays his cart man. In the Profit Analysis, under expenses — cartmen wages, I doubt very seriously if the wage of $3.50 will remain applicable in the next 4 years. Perhaps a cost-of-living increase based on the average increase of the minimum wage over the past 3 years might yield a little more accurate figure over the 4-year projection of cartmen wages.

Dick Horton
Executive Director
Tennessee Section PGA
Nashville

Collision course on cars

The article by Devereux Josephs, Jr., in the November/December issue of GOLF BUSINESS is the perfect recipe for "killing the Golden Goose."

Rental of golf cars is one of the largest single sources of income for golf courses, but if rental prices continue to spiral to keep up with rising costs of the car, this major source of income could start to dry up.

The National Golf Foundation states more than 446,000 golf cars are currently in service with higher projections for the next 3 years, but where is the breaking point?

Mr. Josephs writes "cheaper golf cars aren't going to be around much longer," intimates low golf car prices are gone forever, suggests a number of firms that lead the vanguard in low pricing have closed their doors, and uses $1,700 as an average selling price in the article's net profit computations with a statement "luckily, the initial price isn't critical."

However, on his example of 45 golf cars, our pricing against his pricing can make a difference of $13,500 and in Richard Newell's article (same issue) the purchasing difference could amount to $30,000 in his 100-car example. This is critical. The higher interest and insurance on this $30,000 differential is equally critical.

In the first place, if Mr. Josephs wants to use $1,700 "as a high and average retail price" why is his firm's golf car listed at $2,136 in your 1977 Golf Car Guide published in the same issue?

Mr. Josephs makes reference to the $1,300 golf car as the "cheapest," when he should refer to it as the "least expensive." We all know a cheap product can be very expensive, but that it doesn't necessarily follow that a quality product has to be expensive.

Since Bogue demonstrates the lowest 4-wheel pricing in the 1977 Golf Car Guide (made in the U.S. as well) it is obvious Mr. Josephs is trying to qualify our product as the "cheapest." We admit to being the least expensive, but far from the cheapest. We don't believe it is necessary to gouge the customer in order to make a profit.

While Mr. Josephs is trying to encourage courses to increase their rental fees to $12 to absorb higher car prices, perhaps it is time golf courses encourage Mr. Josephs to either reduce or hold the line on golf car prices to enable golf car rentals to continue at present rental rates.

Robert L. Balfour
Vice President, Marketing and Sales
Electric Vehicle Division
Bogue Electric Manufacturing Co.
Augusta, Ga.

40 percent can still be found

Being an independent golf sales representative in the Texas-Louisiana area, I was interested in the comments of AMF Ben Hogan's Ray Coleman (Take Advantage of the Salesman Who Call on Your Pro Shop, Jan. GB).

I disagree with Coleman's contention that "Most salesmen realize the days of the 40 percent markup is over." Legitimate profit margins are being realized in most of the golf shops I call on with the exception of hard goods lines and, possibly, golf bags.

Many manufacturers will be looking with dismay upon the shrinkage of hardgoods inventories in the golf shop due to the difficulty of maintaining a satisfactory margin of profit. This may hasten an effort toward a solution because the golf shop still remains the best avenue for marketing top-quality golf equipment due to the advice and expertise of the golf professional in this field.

Softgoods manufacturers are benefiting temporarily from the professional's hardgoods dilemma as he seeks to restore sales volume elsewhere within the golf shop. He is limited as to how far he can go in that direction due to space limitations and difficulty in moving sale merchandise to a fairly static clientele. My feeling is that all manufacturers to whom the golf shop is important must become more conscious of his profit welfare, and that includes the salesmen who represent them.

Bill Barnum
Bellaire, Tex.

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