

News

ASSOCIATIONS

PGA opens in cold and sunny Orlando

NEWS, 9
PEOPLE, 44
COMING EVENTS, 45

It was a little bigger and a little better this year, as the PGA Merchandise Show kicked off another season for the majority of professionals in attendance at the Disney World site.

Going into the show's third year at the Florida resort, show coordinator John Zurek was smiling a little easier since the PGA has worked the bugs out since its first visit in 1975. But the cold winds of January were blowing all the way to Orlando, and the weather threw a chill into an otherwise well-run affair.

Total attendance edged up a little from the previous year with

Show Director Tom Boyle counting 9,399 people winding through the maze of more than 240 exhibitors during the 4-day run. The figure represented an increase of 240 from the '76 show.

In direct relation to the total increase, a record 2,529 golf professionals made the rounds, 164 more than a year ago. Boyle had no number breakdown available in the categories of buyers, guests, or exhibitors. Golf professionals, some of which were non-buying assistants, made up nearly 27 percent of all the people at Disney World.

With no hope of hastening its

planned convention complex's 1980 completion date, the PGA signed another two-year contract with the Disney organization to have the show there in 1978 and 1979. Solid dates for the '78 run are January 28-31. PGA officials told GOLF BUSINESS that Disney World had asked for a significant increase in price over the '77 show, and chances are good the difference will be reflected in next year's exhibitors' fees.

Among the 1977 exhibitors, there were fewer complaints about show positioning than in years past. The annual meeting of the Golf Manufacturers and Distributors



SCENES FROM THE PGA: Mary Kauffman (far left), buyer from Columbia CC, Chevy Chase, Md., discusses new golf fashions with Davy Meredith of Pickering Active Sportwear . . . Norman F. Bennett, pro and manager of Katke Golf Course at Ferris State College in Michigan, checks out a new golf car . . . and MacGregor salesman Tom Wiesenbahn explains his company's new golf equipment lines to an interested pro.



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Association was relatively calm as compared to previous ones.

New President Charles Van Dyne, H.D. Lee Co., started his executive duties by telling GMDA members, "We probably have a better standing with the PGA than ever before." He was quick to note, though, there would always be room for improvement.

GMDA Treasurer Paul Hornug disclosed that the 144 GMDA companies had an excess of funds totalling \$17,000. With that there was an immediate move from the floor to establish a scholarship fund at Ferris State College in Michigan for a student seeking a career as a golf professional. The PGA has been working with Ferris State in the establishment and the continuance of its golf management program.

Veteran show exhibitor Dick Tarlow of Foot-Joy disagreed with the plan, stating that association coffers should remain at present levels. Opposition was just enough to table the plan until further study. Nothing should happen on the scholarship effort until next January, since the GMDA meets formally but once a year.

Several manufacturers offered new shaft innovations at the PGA exhibit. Some firms boasted the '77 affair was their best ever. The Merchandise Show, though, is not the kind of place where if companies were doing poorly, you'd expect to hear about it.

Obviously, the pros that were there seemed to be ordering more than the past two years. The cloud of recession seems to have finally lifted from the shops. Several professionals did tell GOLF BUSINESS they were concerned with the higher prices for golf equipment. Most softgoods manufacturers indicated interest in their lines was at an all-time high. Munsingwear's James Chesser told GOLF BUSINESS the Minnesota firm has seen rapid sales gains among its pro shop accounts.

If the pros were buying bigger, it might have had to do with the relative ease with which the show was set up. Exhibitors virtually had the same positions they did in '76. Those pros with good memories had little problem finding their favorite companies.

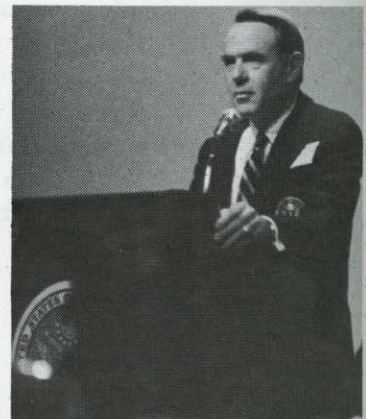
Certainly, the PGA will have a better bead on who comes to the

Merchandise Show after its tabulation of a survey it gave to all professionals registered. That may answer the age-old question of how much buying the show pros do, or if at all.

One thing about the show, it certainly can confirm business rumors about the large numbers of small to medium-size equipment firms that have been born and died over the last few years. Several folded during the last year and their absence at the show added credence to unsuccessful efforts by GOLF BUSINESS to locate some of those firms for inclusion in its fall equipment preview. As one veteran of the 24 years of the merchandise event said, "If you aren't here, you might as well be dead."

USGA meeting shows 28,000 Associates

In the USGA annual business meeting — which dispensed with the rollcall, minutes, and several of the committee reports — the men in the blue blazers and striped ties that make up the executive committee paraded before the crowd on hand to focus on the year the association had in 1976. First off, Jack Crist, Charlotte (N.C.) CC, told how the Rules of Golf committee had added a new consultant in club professional Hubby Habjan, replacing Joe Black, who was recently elected national treasurer of the PGA. Habjan and Black are



Starting another year in the presidency of the USGA was Harry Easterly as he took the podium at the association's annual meeting in Atlanta in January.