

Zoeller's thinking thought a bit 'Fuzzy'

K mart ad not 'A-OK' with fellow pros

BY VERN PUTNEY

Fuzzy Zoeller was out of bounds in doing an ad in the April issue of *Golf Illustrated* that said, "Make a stop at K mart before you head for the golf course."

That declaration triggered a resentful stance by most golf professionals — many of whom are superintendents — around the nation.



And, according to Will C. Mann, owner-director of golf at Quarry Hills Country Club in Graham, N.C., many amateurs to whom the ad was beamed are equally upset at what they feel is Zoeller's insensitivity to his fellow PGA members.

"Such tie and seeming endorsement of a discount department store at the direct expense of the pro, most of whom derive a major source of their income through shop sales, is surprising and disappointing," declared Mann.

Mann, vice president of the Carolinas PGA, is aware that Zoeller, ironically the son of a pro, has contributed much to golf.

"However," Mann asserts, "the ad proclaims, 'We carry a complete line of quality signature golf clubs and just about everything else for your golf game, short of the green.'"

"Zoeller must bear responsibility for that statement, and for similar scripting in national TV spots during recent tour tournaments."

Heated exchange

"Short of the green, indeed," fumed Mann. "How about short of the tee, fairway, rough, bunkers, greens, putting green, pro shop, club repair, practice tee, etc.? And, most importantly, short of a PGA golf professional."

Mann further wrote Fuzzy, "I think you will find it difficult giving clinics off K mart parking lots. Better yet, when you get the yips, or when the ball gets going sideways, call your local K mart for a lesson and see how much help you get."

"You have meant a lot to golf and we all are thankful and appreciative of your efforts," Mann told Fuzzy. "However, in suggesting that club members not support their PGA pro, you have simply slapped every PGA member in the face. In selling us out, you may well have just become 'Public Enemy Number One' to the PGA golf professional."

Zoeller's plug for K mart might be compared to a Lee Iacocca public stamp of approval on Toyota's line, said Mann.

Zoeller's response to this back-

lash is that it is a free world and that he is encouraging people to play golf.

Mann quotes Zoeller as saying that after buying their golfing needs at K mart, golfers are going to the golf course and "they might buy a shirt."

Retorts Mann, "Thanks a lot, Fuz. The shirt they buy might be the one you sold off our backs."

"Who at K mart or a similar store will determine the loft, shaft, flex, grip size and swing weights, etc. needed?" he asked. "The one person trained and qualified to help the amateur golfer determine what club he needs is a PGA professional. You can find him at your local golf course, not behind the sporting goods counter."

In Zoeller's defense, agent Barry Terjesen replied to Mann's rebuke, "Over the 10 years I have worked for Fuzzy, he has refused many offers from mail order-style retailers because of the effect his endorsement might have on the business of the local pro."

"Fuzzy is comfortable with the K mart association. K mart introduces new people to the game, particularly in the blue-collar areas and young people. These new converts are lesson takers and practicers. They bring their friends to a golf course to have fun and spend money. Eventually they will upgrade their equipment purchases at the local PGA professional's shop."

"We have difficulty viewing K mart as direct competition to the PGA professional."

Mann isn't mollified. He fired back, "If Fuzzy is sensitive to our



Fuzzy Zoeller

needs, and if he desires to be supportive, I suggest that in the future he, or whoever approves his ads, check the wording more carefully as to how such ads may affect his fellow golf professionals..

"Please assure Fuzzy that I regret this rather unpleasant incident as much as I am sure he does. Hopefully, we can all learn from the experience and get on with our respective roles in the game we all love."

Mann serves on three PGA of America national committees: Membership Eligibility, Policy and Procedures; Ethics and Constitutional Review; and Club Relations.

Game's traditions

Mann mirrors long-held game tradition. From the establishment of the game in America more than a century ago, it was accepted that club members "patronize their pro."

There has been a wide swing away from that practice in the last 30 years as sporting goods companies and others have competed vigorously for the golf dollar. Many

entering the game in the post-war era were unaware of that custom, and many of them bought elsewhere because of lower prices.

Mass merchandising and slick promotion have taken a heavy toll on shop sales and pro income, and gone is the enthusiastic pro shop reception that once awaited golf equipment sales representatives.

The sales reps have almost vanished. There is little personal touch. Orders are taken at sectional golf shows, and re-ordering is usually handled by mail.

Court decision

The drain on shop sales may have been somewhat staunching by a recent court decision reserving the right of manufacturers to restrict golf equipment sales to discount stores..

Joseph (Hap) Malia, a PGA member for 55 years who has followed the golf trail from Maine and Massachusetts to Florida for all those summers and winters, recalls club policy at his last pro post.

At Spring Valley Country Club in Sharon, Mass., where Malia held popular sway from 1960 to 1985, it was "deal with Hap exclusively."

A Spring Valley member who owned seven discount golf houses was warned, "It's OK to play here, but don't solicit business. This is Hap's turf."

That theme, akin to "Buy America First" philosophy, held true in only slightly lesser degree at Portland (Maine) Country Club during Malia's 1935-1960 tenure.

Malia may have been the pioneer in the tour practice of exposing product names to TV cameras. Nat Cooper, known as the Amana King of New York State

and New Jersey, frequently played with Malia at Woodlands Country Club in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. During a 1967 round, Cooper asked Malia how Cooper could advance further his product image.

"Put your name on golf hats, and have your army of employees wear them while playing," suggested Malia.

Getting into the act

Now, a Greg Norman hawks on the front of his shirt (worth a cool million) the Reebok running shoe label. Emblazoned on the shirt's arm is the golden arches of McDonald's. That can buy the hungry "Shark" a whale of a lot of hamburgers.

Caddies also get into the act. Caps carry a message, however subliminal, and an extra \$100 can be pocketed.

The latest dip into the golf pocket once reserved for pros comes at, of all places, a Colorado airport.

Denver's Stapleton International has built an indoor golf driving range. "Tee Off & Take Off" is located in a new mini-mall, and includes video "swing analysis" machines.

The store is equipped with a hole-in-one putting area and a video camera system that records the golfer's swing and transfers the images in slow motion to a VHS tape that the "swinger" can take home.

"But," echoing Mann, "who's going to break down the swing, analyze and correct the flaws?" The subject certainly isn't equipped. Perhaps he can invite over a few well-meaning friends?

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