

# Some Sorrows of Pro Selling

*Underdone and Overdone "Salesmanship" as Seen  
by a Veteran Professional*

By GEORGE LAWSON

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I N a recent issue of GOLFDOM the statement was made that the pro is, from his training, unfitted for merchandising. From personal experience extending over a third of a century the statement, so far as it hit me, was only too true. To me the term "salesmanship"—it is really a recent growth—always has had a dubious application.

Apologizing to those who may have a higher idealization of it, it never appealed to me as anything else than hood-winking or hornswogling people into buying something that they neither wanted nor needed. I never gave "salesmanship" any attention on this account. And I wonder how few who aspire to cleverness in the calling think of it as anything else? Will it astonish when I aver that I even had a contempt for being considered a mere salesman, although I had to be one or get off the earth. I couldn't help this mental attitude of mine to the business part of the profession I had of necessity to follow.

My earlier training as a mere maker and repairer of golf clubs utterly unfitted me for the sale of golf equipment of all kinds, and it revolted me to trick people into buying articles that were worthless, unnecessary and beyond their means. Even the customer's financial weight—only guessed at—possessed my mind in every transaction.

I can see now that this was a psychological blunder, and should not have obtruded itself. My untrained mind took me even farther afield—I judged that economy should guide the customer as it guided myself—and, being Scotch, I was a natural economist. I wanted to treat him as I would have had him treat me—the golden rule. In other words, it was "against the grain" to "sell" something to somebody, my idea being that the buyer should know enough to "buy," and that he should even be grateful to me for the privilege of buying from such a safe and sound source. And although the latter feeling may have actuated a goodly number of my customers, especially those old-time golfers who knew what they wanted, it was not good business method. Notwithstanding all this dumbness on my part (GOLFDOM wasn't much out in its judgment regarding one pro at any rate),

I was astounded one day when a friend of mine—a manager in a large hardware concern—catching me in the act of making a sale, told me that I exhibited clever salesmanship.

Was I flattered? Not a bit. Clever or not, all I could say about it was that my efforts were simply directed towards supplying a customer's needs without depriving myself of any legitimate profit in the transaction. It may be that I was a natural salesman, merely lacking the so-



It's a far jump from the bench to sales work, but the pro has to make it if he wants to keep up with the procession. The same integrity that is responsible for the quality of bench-made clubs, is the basic principle of successful selling and bridges the gap between these two phases of the professional's work.

called "technique" that comes from training and practice. It may be that my talk, based on a lengthened experience, was convincing to my friend. I wonder!

### Trading vs. Cash

As may be guessed, I was never free from blunders, chief among which was one which an astute friend described as "trading dollars." I was losing my just profit. When I got next to what he meant I really felt that I would be the better off with a correspondence course in salesmanship. However, on further reflection, I doubted whether I had suffered much. The policy of taking old clubs and balls in trade—a practice that the more successful pros frown upon—fostered custom of a more valuable kind later on. It made customers, and I lost nothing in the long-run. On the contrary, maybe I gained. It was insignificant business for the higher-ups, but for me, in a small club with a nine-hole course, it was good business.

From time to time in my career I have had much unsolicited advice tendered me. Among my customers were some who were really sorry for me. They considered me a greenhorn in a business way, and they were prompted to favor me with suggestions. Among the many pointers from time to time was the well-known one of "moving stock." All I can say about this is that it never moved me. A "moving" of my own devising, though, was to move the shop-worn stuff out of sight for a few weeks and reproduce it again when it had been forgotten, or when the right party popped up, as he was sure to before long.

Another "tip" was to "have a sale"! My idea of that scheme was that unless I had local competition I was merely playing into the hands of the enemy, by whom I meant that well-known individual—often referred to quite opprobriously as the cheap skate—who buys only when he can acquire something for next to nothing. The way I looked at this suggestion was that what I sold at a sacrifice might just as easily be sold at full price later on, there being just so much buying power in the club membership anyway, which, with a few exceptions here and there, I commanded.

### Selling Second-Hand Clubs

For instance, in a small club such as mine, catering to a small community, the practice had to be suited to the field. The pace set was not fast. There was not much style among my clientele, and a

rather circumscribed spending power. When a young man came my way, playing golf as his sole recreation from business, and poor both in funds and time, I would suggest not only economy in equipment but also in club dues. For him the municipal course or the pay-as-you-play course offered the best returns. In the matter of equipment a cheap set of clubs, not necessarily new ones, would serve. I don't believe in cheap new clubs for anyone, but rather in used clubs of substantial make. I never saw a pro yet who didn't have a raft of these on hand for hire or sale at all times. Good players are all the time junking their clubs, and a good set of clubs can be obtained often at less cost than cheap new ones.

This is a form of trade that the city store cannot fill, and should bring as much profit as selling an inferior article. But human nature often interferes here. I have seen many a poor, misguided wight, as poor in judgment as in pocket, spending more on one fancy club than would have bought three or four better but less fantastical ones. How I have pitied him! Nay, how I have advised him, but unavailingly. As I also have that other poor mortal—the one whose pocket-book runs only to reprints but who insists upon banging his lonely dollar away on a Dunlop or a Silver King to lose it or gash it before he had gone more than a couple of holes, when he might have had a couple every whit as good—to him at any rate. The object of the beginner is to play as often as possible, and the one who economizes on golf balls is better able to pay green fees. Green fees, not dollar balls, bring necessary practice.

### Discard Prejudices

To conclude this little ramble over a much-discussed field, while I corroborate the statement that the average pro is unfitted for merchandising, nevertheless I believe there are many exceptions. I have a belief that if the business end of the game had been engineered from the start by American-bred pros—I came across in the golfing Mayflower myself over thirty years ago—I would have an entirely different aspect today. The Big Boys would be receiving remuneration equal to if not away ahead of Babe Ruth in baseball. That they may yet do so is not at all unlikely, but being badly bunkered at present, a business-like niblick is an absolute necessity. The profession is short on loft.

For the pro to become a success in the

"golf business" he must "can" all his prejudices and traditions of the ancient and horrible kind. Provided he is willing to do this, he will have a chance to supersede the tradesmen and shopkeepers, whose encroachment upon his original province is becoming more pronounced every day.

The latter-day professional will fall more readily into the line of reform than the old-timer, who has those same traditions more deeply cemented into his make-up, and who in many instances will rather chuck the job than give up his birthright. In short, if the young pro is willing to

sink his championship ambitions—and he generally is after a few years of futile effort—and stick to business, financial prosperity should follow. But if he has altruistic leanings, is an ardent lover of the game itself and a devotee of the out-of-doors, and plans to spend a lifetime on the links, he will have to suffer the consequences. While gratifying his desires and having a picnic of a time, he will possibly remain poor in pocket. Even giving lessons, at which many pros persevere with some financial success, is in the long-run hard work for little pay. Golf business pays better.

# How and Why of Fairway Fertilization

By O. J. NOER

WHEN thin turf is not tillering and developing a denser sod, either conditions are not favorable for growth or the supply of plant food is not sufficient to support additional turf plants. If the soil is well drained, in good physical condition, plentifully supplied with moisture and free from harmful agents such as grubs, lack of aggressive growth is almost certain to be due to a lack of sufficient available plant food.

The presence of moss is more frequently an indication of impoverishment than a sign of sour or poorly drained soil. Luxuriant clover may be due to insufficient nitrogen if the turf grasses are not growing actively. The bacteria in the nodules or sack on the roots gather nitrogen from the air so the clover is not dependent upon the soil for its nitrogen supply.

The fallacy of extensive reseeded without fertilization should be recognized. How can the new seedlings survive in competition with established plants if the latter are struggling simply to maintain themselves! In the future more fertilizer and less seed will be the order on established fairways.

## When to Apply Fertilizer

When once obtained it is easier and cheaper to maintain good turf than to periodically renovate poor fairways. Troublesome weeds do not easily establish themselves when the turf is dense, but become a serious problem where the turf is sparse.

Fertilizers are best applied to fairways in the early spring, early fall or late in the season after active growth ceases, and should never be applied during the hot summer months when turf suffers for want of water. Many clubs prefer late fall applications to early spring. At this time the soil is firm and fairways are not cut up by the distributing machine; the arduous summer work is over and sufficient labor is available to complete the work with dispatch. When growth starts in the spring the turf obtains immediate benefits from the additional plant food.

## Plant Food Elements Removed by Turf Grasses

Turf grasses in common with other cultivated crops require only one or more of the plant food elements, nitrogen, phosphoric acid or potash. All soils contain an abundance of the other essential elements.

Freshly cut clippings consist of about 65% water and 35% dry matter. A ton of dry clippings contains approximately 35 pounds nitrogen, 8 pounds phosphoric acid and 25 pounds potash. More than 3500 pounds of dry clippings per acre were obtained from some fertilized plots of blue grass last year. On this basis 60 pounds nitrogen, 12 pounds phosphoric acid and 35 pounds potash were removed from the soil during the year. Usually well fertilized turf contains larger amounts of