



Hagen, Al Link and Glenn Morris are shown here trying to get bench-made quality on a factory quantity scale.

## These Changing Times for the Pro Golfer

By WALTER HAGEN

THESE are changing times in the business of golf. The amazing development of the game during the last decade is quickening the elimination of the unfit and consequently making the business better for those who are doing a thoroughly business-like job of handling their sales, their instruction, and the other interests of their clubs and their members.

Successful business men to whom I have explained the situation have marveled at the progress made by the professionals who have become first class merchandisers by the tedious and expensive process of self-education. Generally the golfing public does not know what progress is being made in this direction and it seems to me that one of the highly important details of this necessary adjustment of the professionals' business to the current time is to acquaint the public with the pro's status as a merchandiser and to win for the pro

complete recognition as the prime factor in the sale of golf goods. Department stores have made enough of a dent in the sales of some professionals to impress upon the pros who have suffered the wisdom of immediately capitalizing their reputations as the dependable and authoritative sources of supply of quality golf goods properly suited to the requirements of each player. Those pros who have done this and established some foundation for their reputations by handling the right goods in the right manner, are making no complaint about outside competition.

It looks to me like the pro has a merchandising problem that in many respects is similar to the situations that confront the public utility companies. You'd think that everyone would want electricity, gas and telephone service, just as you think every club member would buy all the golf goods he possibly could use, solely from

his golf pro. But people don't act that way and the electric companies are constantly engaged in trying to wire more homes, trying to sell more electrical equipment and trying to get the customers to make greater use of the appliances already installed. The gas companies are encouraging more home cooking and more industrial consumption of gas by continuous sales and advertising efforts. The telephone companies are strenuously campaigning to get people to realize that the long distance telephone call is an economy as well as an under-used convenience, and to make telephone users appreciate the handiness of extension telephones in their homes.

Now, in view of these selling efforts of suppliers of necessities of modern life, where can the pro justify any position of merely standing by and waiting for business to come his way. This is the business age of golf and the pro must talk, think, and act business if he is going to keep in step with the prevailing conditions and to make a good living out of his job. The pros who think and are willing to work and study already are cashing in. Others never will awaken.

### The Magic of Selling

Again referring to the public utility field. Until a comparatively short time ago there was no great selling effort made by the telephone companies. The automobile industry since its birth has been distinguished by the most aggressive and best planned selling work in the United States. What has been the result? The telephone business is twice as old as the automobile industry, yet there are more automobiles than telephones in the country. And do you think you can get by without trying your level best to make yourself a first class merchant of golf goods?

The magic of selling, so frequently referred to by men who want to surround selling with a mantle of mystery, is a very simple thing when you get it down to the essentials. It's merely buying right and using ordinary horse-sense and persistence in showing people that the product you have for sale is more desirable to them than the money they'll have to spend for it. If you make the product seem desirable enough they'll not think about the money at all, which makes the selling job easier and pleasanter for all concerned. I am of the opinion that many professionals are discouraged because they think that selling is such a deep and dark sub-

ject that it is hopeless for them. With the intimate contacts with his market that every pro enjoys, selling should be the easiest thing in the world for him. Just keep at it with some intelligence and courtesy and you'll have no difficulty in boosting your sales and income.

### Where Pro Gets Help

I have been impressed often with what seems to me to be misplaced effort in pro shops. Hours and hours are spent in making clubs and only a casual time is spent in sales efforts. It looks to me to be a case of the cart before the horse. I view it this way because I refuse to mourn and see nothing but disaster ahead when I hear the boys say that bench club-making is becoming a lost art. That is tough on the artists, and that's about all, according to my belief. They'll make more money selling, anyway.

Golf club manufacturing, just as other manufacturing, generally can be done better under expert supervision, with careful selection of raw material and skilled employment of specialized machinery than the work can be conducted with the limited resources of the bench. I'm not saying this loosely and with prejudice because I am interested in the manufacturing end of golf as well as in the performing department, but because it is plainly the truth, as any professional who will investigate may verify. The manufacturer of golf goods who has a lot of capital tied up in the preservation or making of a valuable reputation and a profitable and extensive market can, and does, go to the very limit in seeing that each item of his making gets the best that modern methods and talented men can put into it. He checks his results before shipping and he won't let anything go out that isn't 100% O. K. He can, and does, discard anything short of the highest standard for the plain reason that it costs him less to junk it than it might cost him to let it get out on the market and do his reputation and chances of future business an untold amount of damage.

However, I am willing and happy to admit that there remain a goodly number of experts who are working at benches in pro shops. There is a good field for their output, and always will be. They never can make enough to anyway near supply the possible market for bench-made clubs among their own members, and of course will get less income from making clubs than they will from selling clubs, but a

happy combination of bench-made clubs and the choicest of factory made products is necessary for a well-balanced stock.

Manufacturers of golf goods who know the most about the markets are anxious to see the pro develop as a merchandiser. They want to see him make all possible profit for the good pro today is an ideal outlet for quality merchandise. He has the reputation for handling first class merchandise, his credit has improved to the point where he is a whole lot better credit risk than other retail merchants with small establishments, and he gets a good fair price for his merchandise. The last point is highly important to the manufacturer for when a price slash is put on a well known brand of any product, the manufacturer in the end suffers. The department stores are notorious offenders in these price cutting debauches.

So, for entirely sound reasons, we find the leading makers of golf goods eager to give the professionals help in merchandising education. These changing times in the professional golfing field have made it vital that each pro's destiny be decided by himself, with the manufacturers aiding in the survival of the fittest and exercising no paternalistic influence to see that the weak brothers are kept alive to hinder the family's advance.

Helping the professionals to buy right and sell right, and helping them definitely, has become a very important part of the manufacturers' job and the pro can count on this factor to the limit.

### Learn From Others

There are very few of us who can't learn a lot by seeing how the other fellow "puts it over." With the volumes of advertising in the newspapers and magazines tipping off the successful selling practices of other merchandisers, and with business magazines telling of the selling methods in other fields available to pros by the score, it looks to me like some of the pros' winter reading might be for the purpose of adapting the money-making ideas of others to his own special requirements. Not alone in selling golf goods, but in selling instruction, does the pro need all the new ideas he can get. With these ideas, his own energy and brains, and the right stuff to sell, it is my very firm opinion that the times now hold forth for the pro a brighter future than he ever beheld during the past.

## Warm Clothes Sell Well in the South

THE northern golfer, traveling south for a winter "training trip," frequently packs his suitcase under the delusion that he is about to visit the tropics where only the lightest of clothing is needed. He remembers linen knickers, light golf hose, and thin sweaters, and he wears his lightest suit. Carefully left at home are his leather jacket, his woolen knickers and his heavy socks.

But when the northerner arrives in the south he finds the weather not quite as tropical as imagined. True enough, some days are suitable to his wardrobe, but as a general rule heavier clothing, such as was left at home, is more in order.

Here is where the pro can cash in. A representative stock of woolen knickers, leather coats and other warm items will sell rapidly. The only caution is to make sure they are displayed prominently so the golfers will buy at the pro shop and not from some town haberdasher.

Many northern pros, who also have a southern berth during the winter season, make a practice of bringing south with them all heavy articles of clothing unsold at their northern club. This reduces the investment necessary to complete a suitable stock at the winter post, and at the same time obviates the necessity of carrying these items without chance of profit until the home club opens again the following spring.

## Hire Greenkeeper Early—It Pays

"IF I ever have to go through building a new course again, I will see that the greenkeeper who is to serve the club is hired right after construction work is begun," remarked an ex-president of a comparatively new golf club.

"We wondered why it took several years to get our greens in shape, and blamed it all on the greenkeeper until we learned the real reason. Clay dug out for the traps was put on the top of the green and too scantily covered with top dirt. That, and other cases of the same character have convinced me that we would have saved money if we had put the man who was going to be responsible for the condition of the course on the job at the beginning."