

WOES OF THE PROS —but Some

*of These Troubles Are Being Eliminated
by Workers and Thinkers of P. G. A.*

By HERB GRAFFIS



To our friends, Golf Illustrated of London, we are indebted for this picture of James Bradbeer, pro at Porters' Park. Note the tidy, business-like arrangement of this corner of the shop. It's a reminder that the bench department of shop operations needn't look like a billy-goat's nest. A neat layout like this makes work easier and impresses people favorably with order and a general air of competency

HAVING just completed a 1,500 mile swing around the eastern circuit and bearing sharply in mind recent talks with a number of pros and makers of golf goods, I still am willing to go on record stating that the pro isn't getting the full appreciation that is due him for his efforts to improve as a business man.

What seems to be the biggest fly in the ointment is the indifference of some

of the pros to their credit rating. Pinning down the complaining parties to actual cases, there is confession of a marked improvement in the pro credit situation, but still a legitimate howl because certain professionals who actually have the money are reluctant to put it into circulation by paying their bills for merchandise.

There is no doubt of the pro being the

most important factor in making the market for golf goods. If the pros endorse and push any certain brand of golf goods, the product is "made". The department and sporting goods stores follow suit. The stores, alone, have no case to cite of ever having made a commercial success of a golf product that depended principally on them for retail selling. So, with this fact of the pro's vital importance in merchandising admitted, the pros to maintain and strengthen their positions must go through a first class house-cleaning on the credit situation. This work must be done from within if it's to be done right.

There are some cases—a bunch of them, in fact, where the pro is honest and diligent, but either through over-ordering or slowness in collecting from his club, is put into the slow-pay spot. The over-ordering part often is the manufacturers' fault as much as the pros' but even that is no excuse for a stubborn disregard of bills.

Manufacturers are rejoicing at a record volume of business this year. The growth of the golf market is such that the old-line maker of golf goods who isn't experiencing a boom may be uncomfortably certain there is something wrong with his business.

On the pro's side the lineup presents a majority of the pros who are conscientiously striving to make themselves first class business men, the P. G. A. organizations that are doing splendid jobs of getting professional golfers on a business basis, and GOLFDOM which is doing its persistent damndest to make the manufacturers deeply conscious of the value of the pro as the all-important retailing unit, and to help the pros develop as business men.

We want to thank the pros for patronizing the GOLFDOM advertisers. These advertisers are getting results that plainly indicate the pros are strong for an influence that is alone in its crusade for greater pro profit through better merchandising.

Manufacturers who are helping the pros on this platform are profiting. You need not look far to see new names in the manufacturing end of golf that have been quick in coming to the front by taking advantage of the present lively and large golf market and the betterment of the pro as a retail outlet.

How California Stands

The golf business seemingly revels in making snap judgments that are allowed

to become accepted facts without appraisal. One of these statements is that the majority of California clubs operate their own pro shops and give the pros no chance for shop profit.

Some very definite proof of the untruth of this statement has been handed to me by Ed Conlin, manager of U. S. Royal ball sales. Conlin made a survey of clubs in the Pacific coast territory and found out that of 87 clubs reporting, 55 of them gave the pro the ball sales privilege, at only 9 did the club control the ball sales, at 2 the greenkeeper sold the balls and at 21 no balls were sold.

In California, as in other places, there are clubs that are experimenting with club operation of the shop. I have seen a number of annual statements of clubs operating in this fashion, and if the clubs went into shop business with the idea of making much money, they at least came out with some inside and accurate information that the pro has to keep stepping to make half of what he is reputed to make out of his shop.

A Club Shop Case

Before me is a copy of a letter on the club shop situation written by a professional whom I regard as one of the best of the substantial and capable younger school. He was in line for the pro job at a fine club. The directors are men who haven't been active in golf long and don't know what a good pro can mean to the club. The presiding powers, wanting to get all the club profit possible—and you can't rule them off for that—saw nothing but the gross profit at the pro shop and neglected to consider the expense of shop operation. They wanted the young fellow as pro but they didn't want to let him have the operating of the shop.

The letter the pro wrote the club's president in telling his side of the case follows:

"I have been running my present shop for about one and one-half years, and it was not only difficult to make a living at first, but it took some 'tall' thinking to get the business, as the members are of the middle class or working people. The experience has been a wonderful education in business, and it impresses on my mind the fact the professional is entitled to all he can make as long as he advances the interests of his club as he forwards his own. This opens the whole thing up, for obviously a professional can promote his own business only by promoting the game, and his efforts cannot but directly benefit his club.

Do you really believe that the professional who is willing to associate himself with a club that administers the golf shop, restricting him to what he can earn from lessons and club repairing, is ambitious to better his own condition, or stimulate the interest of his members in the game. Hardly, for the professional willing to tie up to such a proposition demonstrates at once that he is not particularly anxious to undertake the responsibilities of running a business and that his ambitions are of secondary calibre.

From another point of view: The banker, lawyer, doctor, and other professional men spend many years learning their professions, but when their educations are completed they reap their rewards, which are considerably more than the professional golfer can hope for, notwithstanding the fact that he has spent just as much time learning his business as they did in theirs, not to mention the fact that in his years of preparation the professional golfer does not acquire the general education which their careers afford.

When a club proposes to run a golf shop it does the game a serious injustice, for it reduces its professional to the condition where he pretty nearly becomes an object of charity. I'll demonstrate:

My records indicate that my steady and most reliable source of income is my club racks. Some reasons follow:

In the case of established clubs, golf club sales return inconsequential profits calculated on a time basis, because the life of a stick, barring accident, is long and it is not necessary to replace them frequently, and in established organizations the members all have their equipment.

With respect to lessons, it is my experience that the demand for the services of a teacher decreases as the age of the club advances, and the results of practice and play reflect betterment in the players' games. And aside from this, income from lessons is spasmodic due to unseasonable weather conditions, etc.

Small, Steady Profits

The income derived from club cleaning and club rack rental together with the small but steady profits on ball sales pay the professional his salary on the days when he neither teaches nor sells clubs, and there are many such days.

As I told you Mr. ———, I am most interested in your club because it appeals to me as a club of good possibilities, and a very congenial mem-

bership to be associated with, but realize that the differences of our points of view afford but little ground for hope, excepting that my exposition of professionalism may enlist your aid in putting it on a high plane, thus benefitting the game, and paying the clubs more substantial profits than they can possibly hope to make in operating golf shops in the manner they must where the personal interest and responsibility of the professional is lacking.

I certainly am pleased to have made your acquaintance, and feel that you will not interpret this as an argumentative effort to cause you to alter your position, but that you will take it at its face value as a sincere, genuine plea that the status of the professional golfer be maintained on the same high status as is that of teacher, friend and business man in other walks of life."

The Pro Is Awake

Doesn't that letter show that the pro is deeply interested in establishing and maintaining a high regard for his position in the golf business. It is a statement from a pro who is far more representative of his profession than are some of the minority whose shortcomings are cited in blaming the entire group.

J. A. Patterson, secretary of the Professional Golfers' association of Southern California is one of the P. G. A. officials who is vigorous in making the P. G. A. bodies strong forces for the good of the cause. In getting the close-up on the shop merchandising situation in California we wrote Pat, knowing that he would call a spade a spade. He writes true to form in the following paragraphs and gives pros, their clubs and the manufacturers plenty of food for thought in giving the conclusions of a qualified analyst.

Patterson's comment:

"The whole golf life is changing and developing with such rapid strides that it requires keen foresight and deep study to approximately anticipate even the immediate problems and it is a brave man who would attempt to prophesy the future of the game.

I shall expect severe criticism for my statements on the 'professional's shop' issue but I am firmly convinced that honest criticism is justifiable and it is only when these problems are discussed from all angles that a satisfactory solution can be reached.

Perhaps there are more clubs here where the club holds the concessions than in other parts of the country

and if so it is to be regretted. My observation convinces me there are several reasons which I will not presume to name in the order of their importance but name them as they have occurred to me:

First: The carelessness with which many professionals treat their accounts. I could name you many pros who at times have been behind in their payments who do not even extend the courtesy of a reply to the wholesale houses when asked for an accounting. Nothing will cause a dealer to bear down on a debtor quicker than being ignored and it will be only a short time before that house will take other means of collecting. In justice to oneself and in courtesy to the wholesale house an acknowledgement should be made and a candid statement will always be listened to.

Second: In several instances observed, the pros have seemingly no desire to assume the responsibility of overseeing the details of merchandising but are content to accept a salary and make what they can out of their teaching. This is sheer laziness and if clubs working under these conditions by installing a capable businessman in the job and show a profit therefrom it does not take long for other clubs to look with covetous eye at the added profit.

Third: There are numerous professionals who have the idea that because they are gifted with a certain swing in the playing of the game that that club is under obligation to allow them to play when and where they please, forgetting that their first duty is to the members of the club and not to display their score when attention to their own work requires their attention.

There may be other reasons and they may be perfectly good reasons but I believe that these few will give you one side of the question anyway.

If this creates a controversy and brings a reply probably we can get at a better understanding of the whole situation."

Anxious to Learn

Generally we consider the pros the most eager men for business information we have run across during a number of years spent in reportorial activities in various industries.

Club officials and manufacturers will do well to give the professionals credit for this inquiring and receptive attitude of theirs. One of the pleasing evidences of GOLFDOM'S campaign for the pros is the favorable co-operation of club officials.

We may suggest in all due respectfulness that some of the manufacturers whose help we have been endeavoring to enlist think of the professional situation today as one calling for constructive and intimate merchandising co-operation and not paternalism.

Some Cost Cutting Ideas That Work for Us

By J. H. LOWREY, Greenkeeper
Louisville (Ky.) Country Club

ONE of the most important factors in doing golf course maintenance work for less money is *good* equipment. Some, you know, will stand the gaff. You also must have men capable of handling this equipment and reward them with a good word and favors such as outside work. Many a time a member comes to me and wants his lawn seeded or put down in bent. I take these jobs and turn them over to my men. I superintend the work and give them the profit and when I want a favor done such as staying two or three hours after working time on a rush job, they are always ready and willing. There are no drones and no drinking on the job.

Now the mowing question: When I went to work here the rough was so rough they were using two teams to two McCormick hay mowers trying to keep down the rough. The first thing I did was to fill all ditches and sod them with sod cut 4 inches thick. This spring I gave the rough two rollings, just after the frost was out of the ground. Now I have three fairway mowers set 4 inches high that do the work quickly and smoothly. I also have one man and tractor to take care of all rough and fairways on 18 hole course. We never water at night here in this section. Greencutters do the watering. I have six greencutters who take care of three greens apiece, such as cutting every day, watering every other day, taking care of all sand traps cutting and raking and keeping all banks and tees mowed. I have 34 sand traps and 22 tees. I have a year's supply of compost supply ahead. When I mix for using I mix my fertilizer, sulfate of ammonia and arsenate of lead and put all three on at one application. It takes a little longer to mix but you save time in long run and answers the same purpose. We do all of the work on machinery maintenance ourselves, such as over-hauling mowers, tractors. No work is sent out. This is a great saving.