

"No!"

Says E. W. HARBERT

[Pro, Battle Creek, Mich.,
Country Club]

IS PRICE ALMIGHTY

AFTER reading the articles that Wille Ogg and Herb Graffis had in March GOLFDOM, in which they ask for opinions from other pros, I am taking this opportunity to express my view based on my own case.

I have discontinued the idea of price cutting and banished the notion of chain stores hurting my business inasmuch as I don't think they hurt me or the other pros at the exclusive clubs. If they do, it is mostly the pros' fault. I do think it is just a matter of education on the pros' part.

The pro can educate his members to buy from him if he wants to work a little. Of course, there are a few "bargain hunters" in every club who will buy cut-price merchandise anyway. If one cannot win them over to his side, the only thing to do is forget them.

I do think cut price does hurt the public course pros and just a few in the smaller clubs. But I also think that the more wood one puts on the fire the larger the fire.

I hope sometimes that the pros willorget, and not talk about price cutting. As far as chain stores are concerned, I think that is for the manufacturer to remedy.

Mr. Ogg said he did not know whether the manufacturers wanted to, or did not care to, maintain prices, and did not care for the pros. I think he is right in the case of some unknowing manufacturers, for if these manufacturers did care, they would not sell to every purchasing agent of any concern who has one, or to anyone writing in and saying he is an agent for buyers or makers.

I have established a policy in my club that if a member asks me the price I pay for a certain article I am very glad to show him the invoice and he knows just what the article costs. As a rule they are business men and know I am classed as a business man and try to be. Then there is no question about buying. They also know I am not overcharging them for my stock, and as a result I think I have about 100 per cent backing of my members.

One store in our town owned by one of my members had quite a sale on some

Is price a peril to pro golf merchandising? With the cut-price stores trying their best to lure unthinking trade is the pro right to stick to the idea that "quality remains long after the price is forgotten," or to fight the devil with fire? At the private clubs the situation is not acute, but with the public and daily fee courses developing new players by the thousands, these courses are face to face with the problem.

It seems to be a matter of deciding

clubs. They were mostly dead stock from another town brought in for this purpose as leaders. I watched this very closely, and one club came to my shop in a bag. The member who purchased it came to me and apologized for doing it. He later threw the club away. The owner of the store and I have laughed about the suckers coming in and buying these clubs. This man is a very smart golfer, not as a player, but as a student of golf in all the branches.

The above case did hurt at least two other pros, for there were about 1,000 clubs in this lot and all of them were sold out. These same pros were helpless. What I meant by education of the members would be to explain as often as possible to each and every member that you are buying the best merchandise money can buy, maintaining a price for a profit, plus the service. Personal service, both in your shop and on the course, is what they are entitled to as shop purchasers.

Manage to have a few clubs just as cheap as the other fellow for showing only and not to sell, unless you have to, which would be only if a player insisted on buying. Just sell it without any obligation on your part, and I have found this overcomes one of my hardest problems.

Of course, one could talk and write on this subject for quite a while, but as far as I am concerned, I am going to try to forget the price cutter and chain store and just go to work and work hard as hell.

“Yes!”

IN PRO SELLING?

Says GEORGE J. PULVER

[Pro, McGregor Links,
Saratoga Springs, N. Y.]

whether to employ effort in education or to take “the easiest way” and meet the bargain hunters, if it can be done without serious impairment to the pro shop’s valuable and distinctive reputation as retailer of only the best in golf goods.

Two representative thinking professionals debate this topic on these pages and if any of the rest of you have something to say GOLFDOM will be glad to hear from you.

I HAVE read with great interest the article in March GOLFDOM, entitled, *Is “Cheap Goods” the Siren’s Song?* Also Mr. W. Ogg’s reactions to your views as outlined in said article.

In the main, my experience and reason urges me to bear with Mr. Ogg. While I will admit there exists a considerable difference between the staple merchandise sold by chain stores and mail-order houses (as contrasted to merchandise, which must be fitted to the inconsistency of individual needs), I still maintain that the pros must make an effort to compete with these large concerns on the basis of price, notwithstanding.

I do agree with you, however, that we could not engage in a price-cutting war with large distributors without inviting ruin. I well realize that such concerns often make a leader of some merchandise and sell it below cost in anticipation of volume in other goods which they carry. The pros have no leader—golf goods and services thereto are all they sell, and they must do this at a profit or cease to exist. But would it not be possible perhaps, to sell at prices at least comparable with those of the stores in town, and by so doing arrest the buying deflection which every pro in the business is feeling to a more or less extent?

I do not hold that co-operative buying will prove to be an “open sesame” or a panacea for all the merchandising ills of the pro today. I do believe, however, it

will do several things which will aid this end. First, it will induce respect from the manufacturers and obtain a substantial discount which should enable pros to sell their goods at a lower figure. If our representative can say to a manufacturer, “I desire so many thousands of dollars of merchandise; here is a certified check in full,” the manufacturer can offer his units at a much lower cost, inasmuch as his distribution costs are tremendously cut by a cash purchase of volume. Collection agencies, paper work, and insolvent distributors increase unit cost to a maker—cash or a sight draft eliminates these costly factors. Secondly, it will tend to amalgamate the pros, inculcate into their minds fundamentals of business and co-operation, and since they will have to deliver up so much cash on demand for which they will receive merchandise, they will exercise greater discretion in anticipating their particular shop needs.

You spoke of the need of support and co-operation from the manufacturer—Volume orders and cash business are persuading ambassadors, and I am sure most manufacturers would lend an ear.

Players Are Thrifty

I do not agree with you, however, that players at private clubs are not interested in being thrifty. That was once the case when golf was in its infancy—when only those people of enormous wealth played the game. This is not the case today—a cross-section of the personnel of most of the golf clubs today would reflect a few members of unlimited wealth, a vast number of moderate incomes, and still a representative number of incomes not in excess of \$5,000 a year. That’s the whole story today—there might be a few clubs in metropolitan sections whose members would buy from the pro shop because of feeling so bound, but this is notoriously an age of discount seeking, and I fear for the future of that pro who prices his goods with any such assumption in mind.

In the good old days before the war, another factor beside wealth operated to the end that a pro could charge much more than the large stores did for mer-

GIVE THE RYDER CUP BOYS A HAND

FINANCING the Ryder Cup team is a rather serious task and there is still some work to be done before the expenses of the team of American pros are met.

The P. G. A. exhibition matches have done a good part of the financing, the various golf supply interests have done their share and now the balance is up to the golfers and the clubs.

Contributions of any amount will be cordially welcomed by the Professional Golfers Association of America. Checks should be made out to the Treasurer, P. G. A. of America, and mailed to 366 Fifth avenue, New York City.

The Ryder Cup team will sail on April 10 for the International professional matches, so no time is to be lost in forwarding checks.

chandise. It was then that practically all good golf clubs were bench-made, and those manufactured in factories were of a very inferior quality. This is not the case today—in common with other industries in this country, factory-made golf goods have reached a high state of perfection, and now that the pro has led himself into this fix of being a distributor instead of a maker, he is confronted with the self-made situation of having his shelves full of standardized goods, commercially and uniformly obtainable. His members think they are identically the same thing in the windows downtown, but here's the rub, they see such goods at a much reduced price. All things being equal, the pro will get the business rather than an in-expert clerk in a store, because of his peculiar fitness to aid one in the selection of their golf needs. But the price is not equal; therefore, we must make an attempt to make it so.

Why should we invite the loss of say 35% of our business as represented by members in every club who look for bargains, by disregarding price competition? There is no doubt that the pro could keep his prices up and stress quality, but why is it not possible to still maintain quality, while instituting a price reduction? Every

other industry sooner or later must come to such a condition, and they do it by more advantageous buying, group bidding, and larger volume in purchasing.

Recently I have been assured by an officer of one of the largest golf goods manufacturers in this country, when the time comes that the pros could buy in volume for cash, they would be ready to offer a discount on such business, satisfactory to our organization. I mention this instance merely to illustrate what might be obtained if the P. G. A. organization had a large, well co-ordinated buying unit. Of course, I am not unmindful of the difficulties in perfecting such an organization, but if the desire to accomplish such an end is genuine, why should this problem be insuperable?

Large organizations selling a commodity to the public have had to lower cost or face extinction. It is not too much for me to say that never before in the economic history of any country has such keen competition existed. The wholesaler is trying to get the retailers' business, and the manufacturer is vying with both the wholesaler and the retailer by seeking business direct from the consumer.

My reasoning might be unsoundly adopted, and uncritically retained, but I am for price competition, and vote for making an effort to compete on the basis of price to whatever extent possible with the pro. Mr. Ogg's contentions seem to mirror the pro merchandising situation as it is today.

Cleveland District Has Official Archery Rules

FEBRUARY issue of *The Putter*, excellent house-organ of the Westwood Country club, Cleveland, O., contains the archery golf rules of that club which have been adopted as official by the Cleveland District Golf Association. This number of *The Putter* also contains the report of the treasurer, E. W. Doty, which is an ideal presentation of a golf club's financial affairs.

DO not open the linen closet to the attacks of any employe in need of flat goods. Make one person responsible for the contents of the closet and insist that all other employes sign for all items they need with this one employe.