

# Is chain store idea of UNIFORM SALES METHODS urgent need of pros?

By B. H. BLAKE

The author is a manufacturer in the golf field and it's his good money that he has spent in studying the pro merchandising situation. He points out that the pros have more control of the golf market than they probably realize and advises them to make use of their power.

We doubt exceedingly that his recommendation of standardized clubs handled only by the pros is a hunch that can be practically worked out, for there is too much valid difference of opinion on what's best. But we do think his idea about more uniform merchandising methods is worthy of thought.

WHERE you see smoke you will find smoldering embers. If left to their own development they will leap into flame and soon consume everything within reach. Right now this condition exists within professional ranks, and just as soon as it gets a better draft, you can look for a real conflagration. This should, and probably will, consume one of the greatest obstacles to the future success of the professional field.

The fact that so much is being written about the pro losing some business through every Tom, Dick and Harry selling golf supplies, and at cut-throat prices, indicates that the situation needs correction. If these writings continue, which they no doubt will, it is a foregone conclusion that a way will be found to bring the business back to the home where it belongs. You can look out for such men as Messrs. Ogg and Sargent. They are thinking seriously, and don't forget there are many more Oggs and Sargents in the ranks whose opinions at the start of a campaign have not received so much publicity, but who will become more bold as the discussions become more heated. One or two men cannot do very much with a problem as great as the one at issue, but they can start the ball rolling. As it goes along it will attract others to give it a push, and before long there will be enough force developed to carry the ball over the goal.

A field as large as professional golf needs to be bound more closely together. The

P. G. A. is the one and only hope of achieving this condition, and when it attains the prominence and dominant position it is progressing toward, then we will find today's problems easily solved. The professionals do not realize their strength, for they are not yet a single unit. They do not seem to realize they are the Doctors of Golf, and that all golfers recognize, or should recognize them, as such. Why shouldn't they be so recognized, for it is they that impart golf knowledge to the players. BUT, does the player recognize him as a business man or merchant? We believe not. What is the reason? We believe the biggest reason is due to lack of co-operation among professionals, which in turn is due to lack of fullest support of the P. G. A. No governing body can function properly without full support both financially and morally of every member of the profession.

You can talk with a hundred or more pros about the golf swing, and every last one of them will lay down the fundamental facts without much deviation. This has caused the players to have confidence in the pro, with the result they try to live up to his instructions.

## Standardize Selling

But when buying merchandise we have a different picture. Hardly two pros in a district will agree on the same selling policies. One item in the pro's merchandising salvation is that there are not enough different lines of clubs of good grade to give the pros

the embarrassment and lack of selling "punch" that there would be if there were a score of strong manufacturers fighting for the "post" position. Even now there is enough difference in what the various pros recommend to bewilder the buyer. If there could be established a condition in this field similar to the reasonable standardization that exists in the professionals' teaching, I believe the united front soon would win the confidence of the players to the extent they would no longer be tempted by the cut-price bait on golf merchandise of uncertain quality.

Standardization of specifications covering the important units in golf playing equipment by the professionals, with enough grades to cover the various price ranges, and with distribution of goods of these specifications confined to the pros, would be the practical foundation of a successful centralized buying bureau, such as Mr. Ogg has been visioning. This would capitalize and protect the pro's position as the maker and controller of golf markets, so it seems to me.

There are some who say this cannot be done, for no one has yet been successful in other fields. But, with this set up we have nothing more than the CHAIN STORE idea applied to the golf field. Everybody knows what chain stores have accomplished in the various fields. You go into any one of a chain and you will see the same lines of merchandise exhibited as you will find in any of the other links. What one of them boosts the other does also. Centralized buying enables them to undersell the old time store, but not so much as we generally believe. The same product displayed in every store, and the same selling scheme, repeating its advertising power each time one walks into their store, does more harm to the old time merchant than the little difference in price.

Just think what it cost to change the various fields of merchandising from the single unit one to the chain ideas. Millions of dollars were spent in each group. Then figure how little it would cost for the professional golf field to change to the same idea.

### A Pro-Made Success

It might be well to mention at this time, another situation that is not quite as pressing or serious as the one already discussed, but which is growing faster than is healthy. That is the giving away of tees by the clubs themselves. We will all give

the pro credit for establishing the market for patent tees, and it was an uphill fight for several years. He finally won out, as proven by the fact that it is a rare thing to see a player now using sand. It is the most convincing proof of the professional hold on the field when they unite on one idea. What could they do if they would all unite on the idea outlined above? The market for patent tees was too large for them to hold. It soon attracted outside attention and too many manufacturers came into the business. No one seemed to hold a patent that would prevent competition. Too many tees were manufactured with the usual result of price-cutting by those who found themselves in over their heads. The bulk price was so cut so low that golf clubs themselves bought tees and gave them to their players, thus taking away a good repeat article from the pro.

Suppose the pioneer manufacturer would have held a monopolizing patent on the popular type of present day tee; is it not reasonable to assume the present condition would not exist? He would have controlled the business so the pro would still have the situation in hand. And you can rest assured that he would have done it, for no one recognizes the fact better than he that the pro put it over. The pro has certainly gained prestige at least for his efforts in exploiting the tee, for it has proven conclusively his hold on the field. It has made us all more thoroughly respect pro merchandising power.

There appears to me to be no features of this plan that would work a hardship on the manufacturers for all details could be worked out satisfactorily to all concerned. In fact, manufacturers would be benefited as much as professionals.

By adopting such a plan, the idea of a commissioner, such as Judge Landis in the baseball field, could be adopted. The returns to the P. G. A. from its work in eliminating distribution wastes would be sufficient to enable the association to attract and employ the character of a headquarters organization needed to work out the details of the P. G. A. officials' plans and ambitions.

Be sure that GOLFDOM has  
right names and addresses of  
your club's officials.