

Is it a false-alarm
snare for the pros
as claimed by

HERB GRAFFIS

Is "Cheap Goods"

THERE are many phases of merchandising development that excite the public interest but which, through lack of experienced and thorough organization or from basic unsoundness, vanish from the picture and leave behind only the faint recollection of a still-born hope. By drawing on a good memory we recall "Wear Overall Week" as one of these demonstrations of public interest directed against the clothing manufacturers who were accused of profiteering. It was a "circus stunt" that struck the popular fancy and commanded plenty of newspaper space, despite the advertising volume of the clothing makers and dealers, but it never got anywhere, even as a price reducing threat.

Professional co-operative buying, now being given consideration by a P. G. A. committee, seems to us to be making too much of an element that superficially appears to be something that will arouse the golfing public to wild cheers—lower priced golf merchandise. That suspected blazing enthusiasm for lower prices is the grand old bunk. Not a doubt in the world about it. Check up with the most successful merchandisers of golf goods, wholesale or retail, and you'll throw the lower price plan overboard for keeps. Pro attention to this subject of merchandising, as evidenced in the co-op talk, is a healthy sign in several ways. It shows that the fellows are thinking about selling more and making more money. It shows their determination to work out a plan for mutual profit to the pro, the maker and the player. But it's wrong when the boys start to talk about an arrangement that will get them into the class of price-cutters and savor of the price selling methods of the cheap radio stores that sell a bag, five clubs and three balls for \$9.98. If they start battle on a lower price front, then the department stores or the sporting goods stores will fight it out on the same sand-bagging basis. That won't be so "hot" for pro merchandisers who now stand as the one reliable source of highest class standardized golf goods.

The cut-price is a false idol for the pros to worship. First class retailers have discarded the price cutting policy to the utmost possible extent. They wish they could do away with it altogether. It is contrary to the now generally accepted purchasing policy, "the best is the cheapest." The pros are in the business to make money. Their volume is subjected to definite restrictions. As it looks to us, the pros' hope for the profit due him lies in more sales of properly priced quality merchandise, with the pros' cost price of the merchandise kept down by team-work with the manufacturers in eliminating distribution and credit loss wastes. Selling the stuff to the members for less money is nothing to hold forth as a hope. The savings reasonably possible won't amount to enough to warrant the reduction, and the

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IS THE pro right or wrong in attempting to buck cut-price golf goods competition? The question came up as a detail of the consideration of the pro co-operative buying proposal now being worked over by a P. G. A. committee headed by Willie Ogg of the Worcester (Mass.) Country club.

An advance proof of the GOLF-DOM story on the negative side of the question was sent to Ogg for comment. His side of the case appears under his signature here.

While admitting the validity of a good part of Ogg's reasoning, GOLF-DOM'S editor thinks that some of his premises are wrong; for example, the comparison of pro shops with chain stores and mail order houses, which deal in staple merchandise that can be sold satisfactorily without the element of personal service. They often cut prices away under

the Siren's Song ?

-or is it wise and timely sales policy as believed by
WILLIE OGG

IN MAKING my comments on your article, "Cheap Goods a Snare," I wish it understood that the views I express are my own entirely and it does not follow that the P. G. A. will adopt any policy advocated by me. You miss the point in your article by suggesting that the pros contemplate entering the cheaper class field. I do not advocate any such move but I do say that the pro should be in a position to meet any local price situation that may exist. Surely you would not expect the pro to sit back and be undersold by all and sundry without making a move to protect his business? What you say is exactly what the pro has been doing these many years but things have come to such a pass now by our following that policy the pro now must move and move fast.

I used to be of your opinion about cutting prices and until now the pro has held fast to the regular price with what results? I shall try to enumerate a few of the things we are up against by following the policy you advocate.

The pro shop is regarded by some members as a fine place to get "stuck" because the same article *might* be bought cheaper in town or elsewhere from a price-cutter who uses it as a come-on. The fact that the pro stocks this article is proof to the buyer that the article must be all right. Hence the members doubt us. They think that because we are undersold is a sign that we either stick them or that we are a bunch of numb-skulls for allowing such a situation to exist, consequently we risk losing constant buying touch with our members and we are accused of lack of business sense because we are undersold.

You admit that the pro is the one reliable merchant left in the golf business and I ask you, are we not losing ground by it? You must admit our business is not keeping up with the increased playing of the game.

Even though the pro makes the market for golf goods, and establishes brand standings the store maybe buys cheaper than we can because of large volume and cash which adds big to their profits and gives them a leeway to play with, but whenever it was suggested that we do the same by pooling our buying, up went a holler and I am curious to know why. Is not the manufacturer interested in large orders for cash? They would be foolish if they were not. Does buying in this method not result in cheaper manufacture? Absolutely yes. Surely this would not cheapen the goods if some of this saving was passed on to the consumer. The motor car is a fine illustration. Compared to five years ago when it comes to price surely the cars are not a whit inferior. You say first-class stores are not cutting prices—are Sears Roebuck, Montgomery Ward, United Drug and the innumerable chains not first-class stores and the ones

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actual cost as a lure for volume that will make up losses on the featured merchandise. That policy would be suicidal for the pro.

The manufacturer is a vital part of this picture and obviously his support and co-operation is necessary in helping solve the merchandising problem that confronts many of the professionals. In taking this subject out for a clinic GOLFDOM invites any interested manufacturer to express his views, to be published WITHOUT his signature, so a frank and full expression will be encouraged.

Golf is a new business, and like all new businesses has its pressing problems. A lot of time and money will be saved for all concerned if these problems are publicly probed. That's what GOLFDOM'S for.

HERB GRAFFIS,
Editor.

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terious cause that is believed to be due to micro-organisms in the soil. So far as this scald has been observed, mercuric treatment checks it. Lime treatment brought the plat upon which the results were noted back into good shape.

During his address the Green Section expert drew many comparisons of plant and human life, one of which concerned leaf spot which, he stated, was as liable to attack a vigorous grass as weak growth. Turf disease study, he said, was getting more complicated but not confused.

The exposition part of the meeting was a decided success, due in no small degree to the work of Fred Burkhardt, chairman of the show committee. All space for the show was sold and the exhibitors reported an excellent volume of business.

Beware of Price-Cuts in Pro Selling

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players at the private clubs are not of any great desire to be thrifty in the purchase of golf equipment when this thrift involves sacrifice of quality.

Pro merchandising is undergoing a drastic change. No one knows it any better than the bright pros. This co-op investigation, whether or not it will be found practical to a limited extent, to a vast degree, or not at all, is a sure sign that the pros are awakening to their power as merchandisers. The buying group at Kansas City, headed by Bill Wotherspoon, shows that the critics of the pros who blanket the field with the statement that the pros are the babes in the woods of business, are plainly unaware of the work the pros are doing.

To further maintain the amazing progress of the last two years the pro must set a fast pace in the modern trend of handling high quality, good priced lines. He requires thorough and careful studied merchandising methods.

Another Trend Noted

It takes barrels of money to establish the reputation for high-class goods in any line. The nationally advertised goods that have general consumer acceptance have taken the buying play away from the clubs bearing the local pro's name. There is no question of that being one of the trends of

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comparatively recent development in golf merchandising. However, the pro still has the situation in command because he controls the selling force at the most important place in the entire sales channel—the point of interested contact with the ultimate consumer. Now, with national advertising establishing a preference for good and staunchly maintained prices, why should the pro consider tossing away this price advantage? One reason for the diminished sales of bench made goods was the attitude of the members who would say that "the pro socks me three bucks more than I have to pay for a club down-town." The manufacturers have done much to correct this situation by raising their retail prices. They'll have to maintain them so other retailers can't take unfair price advantage of the pros. If the manufacturers don't, it will be "just too bad" for their pro volume. The matched set idea did a whale of a job in raising the price standards on good golf goods, and the current indications plainly point to still higher prices, with the development in construction and market allowed by higher prices that are still well within reason.

Financing the Commissioner

Some months ago GOLFDOM proposed

the employment of a P. G. A. commissioner who will organize and co-ordinate the professionals in a way that would, among other things, help the pros cash in on the merchandising advantage that conditions now present to them. The boys have thought well of the possibilities of the suggestion but have held back action until a plan to finance such a commissioner's office and operations could be worked out and supply the funds. Out of this thought being given to the co-op idea, there might occur something definite in financing this and other activities of the P. G. A. It is entirely practical for P. G. A. membership to be limited to members whose standing as business men entitle them preferential discounts from manufacturers; part of such discount to go to the individual member and part to the P. G. A. funds. This would tie up the buying of the group with the credit standing in a fashion that promises advantages to all concerned.

The pros have something to offer in credit rating now. The old stuff that pro credit is poor, is absolutely out of line with the present fact. Pro credit these days is on a par with the better class of other golf goods retail outlets, and a whole lot better than the outlets for the lower

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priced golf goods. Pro credit losses, such as they are now, are reduced to the point where the pro can be proud of the great improvement. If a manufacturer is "stuck" to any appreciable extent with pros now, it is partly the manufacturer's own fault for the P. G. A. sectional bodies, the manufacturers' credit departments and the clubs who investigate before they hire men, have made a clean-up that will shine in comparison with the work in any other field we can call to mind.

Willie Oggs Tells His Selling Policy

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who are showing the largest increase of sales.

Please remember I am not upholding this price cutting, but I certainly advocate any move which will place the pro on an equal basis in the selling of goods. If we can buy as cheaply as chains, why should we not do so? We would not be taking away anything from the manufacturer but relieving them from all their troubles as far as the pro is concerned, for have'n't we been hearing how poor a business risk the pro is for the last several years? The manufacturers are either powerless to protect us in this maintaining of prices or they do not care to do so. Sometimes I am inclined to give them the benefit of the doubt and at other times I am inclined to think that they do not care a darn for us, for do they not supply the large industrial concerns with golf goods at wholesale or less? This avenue is the greatest leak in the golf game today and is probably hurting the pro more than the

store. It is rather sad sometimes to be told by some of our members that they can buy golf goods cheaper than we can. I don't believe there is one pro in the country today who could not buy cheaper through one of his members than he can from his wholesaler.

What the answer is to all this is hard to foretell, but this I do know and that is the pro must organize. The pros must be ready to move as a unit in any given direction that the situation dictates, this buying organization to be distinct from the P. G. A. but allied thereto and working in conjunction with the P. G. A.

Needless to say, I am earnestly hoping for some solution to our problem but I would rather see it done in such a way that the individual pro would benefit without ringing in the P. G. A. The P. G. A. members are well enough able to pay a commissioner without the aid of the manufacturer and this will be done in the very near future for the boys are beginning to realize what they are up against. A beginning was made last November in Cleveland in a small way, which shows the trend of the times and that we are moving in the right direction. There is one bright spot in the situation which the pros ought to feel proud of and that is the offers of aid received from all over the country to help us straighten out our sales problem. You will hear many arguments pro and con on this matter from now on, which I think is a healthy sign for it will serve to bring this matter out in the open where it belongs and help put it before the pros in such a manner that it will attract attention. Nothing will be gained by secrecy and I hope some of the other pros will take up their pen and let us hear what they think on the subject.

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