

# Pro Notables Warn Against Store Plot for Pro Business

SCANNING the pro golf field in every direction there seems to be no sign of a stampede on the part of pros offering their sales business to the sporting goods stores and thus responding to the cordial invitation of co-called "co-operation" extended by an organ of the dealer interests.

Maybe the pros are to be criticized for their lack of enthusiastic response to this invitation, for their attitude of suspicion toward the proposal and for their other reputed short-comings as listed in loose fashion by the dealer paper, but we don't think so. Nor do the representative and successful professionals. The pro merchandising position is getting stronger every day, not only so far as the player market is concerned but in the reputation the pro has as the foremost factor in the sale of high quality golf goods with the manufacturers. There will always be a market for the cheap golf goods, and the pros, as a general rule, are not bothered about the dealers getting that part of the business. At present, as near as the best informed manufacturing and selling authorities can determine, the cheap golf goods business constitutes the greater part of the 40% of the golf goods market in the stores' hands. Of the higher priced playing equipment the manufacturers consider that the pros do at least 75% of the business.

The dealers' proposal that the pro turn over his golf goods business to the stores and be content with whatever straight salary and lesson income he gets is obviously such an unfounded affront to the pros' business intelligence and in such utter disregard of the profession's achievement and standing in golf goods merchandising that Alex Pirie, president of the P. G. A. of America thinks there is no need of paying any further attention to the matter.

## Keep on Improving

George Sargent, a former president of the P. G. A. and one of the recognized leaders in pro thought and action, points out that the attempt of the dealer interests to alienate pros from their rightfully won market is an admission on the part

of the dealers that their sales methods need improvement along the lines of pro procedure. This, Sargent avers, should stimulate the professionals to further development of their sales methods.

Sargent's statement:

"I feel pro shop business is pretty much the same as playing golf; it is not so much what the other fellow is doing as what you do yourself; that either wins or loses.

"There is little sportsmanship in modern business, and very little ethics; it is a cold blooded proposition in which the main rule used is, keep on the right side of the law. I have no kick on the principles; there they are, and there they are likely to remain; it is not up to the pro to try to change them; but it is up to him to have as good or better methods than the store of doing business with his club membership, if he is to succeed.

"The stores by their articles in their magazines distinctly admit they must improve upon their existing methods of trying to get the golf business; and undoubtedly they will try to do so. It is up to the pro to also improve his methods if he is to stay ahead of the game.

"The pro today is in a very strong position to get the golf business; because he is an asset to the game; he is the golf knowledge of the game; he is the only person in the golf business who is a real missionary and booster of the game; any of these things the store is not or ever can be. But it is up to the pro to improve in buying and selling merchandise. We must learn to help ourselves; the golf business is our living; it is our future; let's back it to the limit.

"Our organization has a fine foundation; let's build it up to where it belongs; by employing a commissioner to govern our affairs, and everlastingly shoot out propaganda showing what the pro means to the game."

## Protect Pro Asset

Canny Bert Way, veteran professional at the Mayfield C. C., who rates high as a builder of golf in this country, comments on the dealer hope of luring the pro out of his command of the golf business by

saying, "the sporting goods dealers naturally would like to fatten up on our many years of work in building up the game to its present popularity and bright prospects of great growth in the future. I can not see any benefit to the professional from any such questionable "co-operation." I do not want any of it. The professionals have excellent foundation for any unified attempts they chose to make in asserting their mastery of the golf market. Any thoughtful and aggressive measures they may make in this direction will clarify the vision of the manufacturers and protect the professionals and the players from operations based solely on commercialism instead of on the good of the game and the wholesome, foresighted business advance that governs each pro in his business conduct. The pro's harmonizing of these two factors of the game and the financial profit puts him in a secure position that should not be weakened by lending an ear to the voice of the tempter."

### Pros' Knowledge Is Power

Willie Ogg, whose work as chairman of the committee investigating pro buying has involved study of all phases of golf goods merchandising, rather conclusively disposes of the advances made to get the pro to give up his selling by pertinent observations on the plight of the retailers. In substance, Ogg says the store retailers would be better off to start putting their own house in order. This checks perfectly with the findings of an inquiry into retail sports goods selling at the dealers' stores conducted by Saunders Norvell, a successful practical authority on sports goods retailing. This report as set forth in one of the sports store magazines, tells of the manufacturers' salesmen saying of store sports goods salesmanship,

"First that there is a lack of training and teaching on the part of the proprietors of stores.

"Second, that the clerks themselves are not sufficiently interested and haven't the ambition nor the energy to study the lines they are selling."

Ogg is not so minded that he is going to turn the other cheek to the abuse of the pro handed out by the sporting goods magazine that raised the issue. He proclaims the pro as "a paragon of virtue" comparatively. He doesn't make this boast in a holler-than-thou sort of a way but is reserved enough to say that just because the spotlight is on the pro so persistently and

brightly the pro has to live publicly and privately a la little Sir Galahad or speedily suffer the dire penalty of any supposed misdeed.

Ogg, in ringing down the curtain on the attempt to sneak away the pro's business and his good name as a qualified and successful business man, expresses himself as follows:

"Judging by the statements in the recent article in *Sporting Goods Illustrated*, that publications sadly misinformed.

"The old trick of berating the pro for his drinking and gambling is being pulled again. As a matter of fact the pro is a paragon of virtue compared with some sporting goods owners and their hirelings. In whatever locality a pro happens to be he is held in the highest esteem, he is under the glare of publicity and very few fall by the wayside. I venture to say that if the spotlight was turned on the sporting goods stores owners for a while the carnage would be terrible to behold.

"There are very few stores in the country that the pros would care to co-operate with because of various reasons but mainly because the stores do not know much about the golf business. The fact is the pro will always be the main outlet for golf goods as he is a specialist on the subject. He can satisfy a customer because he knows what the customer needs thereby saving the customer money. Usually in the sporting goods store the customer is sold by some clerk totally unaware of what it's all about with the resultant loss to the purchaser of the money expended on an article unsuited to their particular need. The pro is the doctor of golf and as such his advice on golf goods purchases is invaluable.

### Shop "Atmosphere" Sales Aid

"The pro usually has a display of goods that would knock any store to a fare-thee-well were it not for the fact that the pro shop is used by the members as a hang-out and a general dumping ground and checkroom. It is of course a workroom and club cleaning room with not too much space. But on top of it all it is a place where the members like to gather because it has the golf atmosphere which a store cannot duplicate. This we must be careful not to destroy by too much fancy display. Keep our shops neat of course but still let it remain a regular pro shop.

"The present mode of employment of golf pros I think is satisfactory. The pro must be the sole judge of what his pupils

use for clubs and balls otherwise he could not produce results with his teaching. A pupil must be outfitted with clubs suited to their particular needs and only the pro knows what is needed. He is a much better employee because of the need of profits from golf goods to make up the difference between what the club pays him and a real living wage. There is no doubting the fact that the pro has the stores worried because all indications point to a nation-wide co-operation of our efforts to get more business and a better understanding with the manufacturers. The stores fear our power as a unit and are alarmed at the forward steps taken lately by the pros.

### Prepare for Work Ahead

"If the pros elect a paid manager and organizer at their meeting in Atlanta next month, and I think this will come to pass, we will be in a position to launch a program in keeping with our position in the golf business and to take care of unjustified attacks on our characters which seems to be the favorite sport of store keepers and some manufacturers' representatives. This is the lowest form of propaganda possible and it shows to what depth a group of men will sink in the hope of gain. They would sacrifice the good name of all the pros in the country in the hope that by doing so they would get our business. Then they ask "why not 'co-operate' with them?"

"Manufacturers of the poorer grades of golf goods like to sell the store better than the pro, not because of the incorrect opinion that the store is a better risk. It is because the store is less exacting in demanding quality and the risk is lessened of having goods returned. In other words the store is used as a dump mainly because the store owner does not know the business nor the requirements of the customer.

"In conclusion I wish to say to the charge that the pro is a 'dirty competitor' that we would never stoop to practices of some sporting stores although we do have the whiphand. It is evident from the recent article in *Sporting Goods Illustrated* that we have nothing to fear because such an outburst is born of ignorance of the position of the pro in this field."

## Plan Help for Pro Gift Sales

CHRISTMAS is getting to be one of the big times of the year for golf goods sales, but instead of being an asset to the pro, it is a decided liability lots of the time. In California and in the South, the pros who have their shops open during the holiday season are in good shape to catch the golf gift business. In the rest of the country, the boys have to step lively and use their heads or they are beaten out of many sales the stores make to their members.

In years past, GOLFDOM has reported the Christmas-time sales activities of professionals who stir up members' business by mail and telephone. The women are good prospects for this sort of work for they will marshal the family and buy a set of matched clubs for the husband and father. In working on this angle of business, the telephone has been found to be the best bet. The boys who work it make it a point to discuss the golf gift requirements over the phone and then drop around to the home or office with samples of the clubs that are judged most suitable.

The fellow who is working in a winter school around Christmas time will find that it pays him to get some of the Christmas spirit in the decorations of his windows or stock. In the case of the man whose shop is open during the winter, some holly and similar decorative treatment, together with a few signs of Christmas shopping suggestions in golf goods at various prices, will remind his members that they don't have to roam in doing the buying of Christmas gifts that are certain of a delightful reception.

### Protect Against Sales Loss

So many professionals find to their regret that their members have gone heavily into Christmas golf goods buying that they are planning this year to get their due share of this business. With Christmas coming just before many of the Northerners leave for winter and spring vacations in warmer climes, the Christmas golf gifts have a timely utility value. Especially do the more expensive golf bags get an interested reception from golfers at this time.

Manufacturers are beginning to take steps to stir up this Christmas business for the pros. Figuring that the low price of