

Scared Stores Pray for Pro Shop Ruin

OBVIOUSLY the pros' mastery of the golf market which has been in striking evidence during the past few years is making the sporting goods stores wince and worry. Even the slashed prices upon which the stores depend to get the greater part of their golf business doesn't seem to have clicked in getting sales volume, and the stores are deeply concerned about the pros' undisputed command of the situation.

It is plain that the subject is one that is making the stores gray-headed, for *Sporting Goods Illustrated*, a strong voice among the dealers, handles the subject editorially in a recent issue under the heading, "Regarding Freak Competition: Don't Be Alarmed About the Golf Pro." Under this head there are four pages of four-eleven alarm. One of the display boxes in the article tips off the pros to the old Trojan horse trick by saying to the dealers: "You Won't Get Very Far at Fighting the Pro for Local Business. And the Pro Will Find You a Hard Competitor. Why Not Make the Best of It by Getting Together on a Business-Like Basis?"

Well, and why not? In the first place, because the pro has more at stake than the stores in the intimacy and value of his selling contacts with members. Any overtures along this line made by the stores to the pro should have the pro's exceedingly careful consideration for it is very plain that the only thing the store will have in mind in such "co-operation" is undermining the pro.

Shooting Wild

Many statements made in the *Sporting Goods Illustrated* article are the wildest sort. The yarn reeks with the hope that it may help somewhat to have the pro throw over his merchandising altogether. And wouldn't that be just dandy?

Let's take some of *Sporting Goods Illustrated's* statements and see just how they stack up. The quotations are italicized. Our comments are in parentheses.

This business of golf goods selling by professional instructors who teach the game is a greatly over-rated one. On the

*other hand, the golf pro as a competitor is no small source of consternation and envy to the legitimate merchant. (Especially since the pros do about 70 per cent of all the golf business.) * * * The professional can destroy sales more easily than he can create them, and his interest in selling supplies comes more from necessity than normal desire.*

This latter phase of a controversy between merchants and professionals is a new angle on an ancient condition of unnatural competition. To get the professional's viewpoint, I interviewed professionals. And I found that as a general rule they are trying to sell golf supplies because necessity compels them to find a part of their sustenance in this manner. Excepting a very few, there is not a golf professional in the country who wouldn't prefer to devote his entire time to teaching the game. (And, of course, no sporting goods dealer is in his business because he has to, and wants to, make money.)

But all golf clubs, unfortunately, do not pay professionals enough for their services. So the pros must sell equipment to fill out their income, and, as they consider themselves professional rather than business men, they tackle the job with an undercurrent of antagonism. (This is absolutely wrong 99 times out of 100.)

Pro Called "Dirty Competitor"

That perhaps is why the pro as a class is what we term a "dirty competitor." His method of interesting prospects in his merchandise takes the form of pooh-poohing the equipment that has been purchased from other sources, and if discounting the ability of other sources to select or recommend equipment adaptable to the needs of the individual player.

Golf pros as a class do not take the merchant's pride in their stocks of equipment. "A dumbbell player," said one pro, "is a dumbbell. You can't change him by changing his clubs. Get a fellow that just doesn't earn and you have a tough job on your hands. He'd slice the ball if he hit it with a tennis racket. A different club won't improve his stance because the ailment is fundamental. But you can't

afford to lose trade by being candid. And the dumbbell player always feels the fault to be in his equipment. So's he a good customer for the pro. (But, previously, the interviewer said the pros want to devote their entire time to teaching. Isn't selling easier than instructing the hopeless dubs?)

Getting down to individual cases, there are times when a player starts the game with sticks that are no good at all. He buys 'em cheap and probably doesn't expect anything better. I always try to sell better sets in such cases, but you'd be surprised how hard it is. (Because the store has to set the buyer's standard at any sort of junk, just so it's cheap.)

The attitude of pros toward selling equipment is fairly composite. None of us get a kick out of the job. But to the majority of pros, and especially those located in smaller communities where pay is very low, it's a necessary function. The club hires you on a sort of check-room basis. You get a small salary, fees for instruction, and the right to sell equipment. I'm all in favor of the stores' working out some plan whereby a pro gets a living salary from his professional services and leaves the equipment to the dealer. I think every pro would welcome such a condition of affairs. (Not unless they were simple enough to lay themselves open to sacrifice of their unquestioned command of a profitable market! And have their incomes reduced because the dealer has no interest in the pros' prosperity.)

Pro Is Valuable—"But"—

To the manufacturer, the golf professional is a valuable medium of advertising. The more pros a manufacturer can get to handle his line, the more oral publicity he will get through this valuable source. But it is doubtful whether the manufacturer regards the pro as an outlet capable of standing on its own feet. When it comes down to volume and good credit, the merchant has the pro hopelessly surpassed. (Figures absolutely prove the last sentence wrong.)

There are certain natural obstacles that prevent the pro from becoming a good business man. One, as previously explained, is that he doesn't want to; another is that the pro in most instances is kept poor by gambling with club members. A professional acquires both the blessings and the curses of a hero. He is regarded—as long as he continues to hit the ball—as one of the bunch.

There's the rub. As one of the bunch, he must drink with every member who thinks he has something good, and he is invited into poker games where the stakes are high. Unless he is a good drinker and a first-class gambler, the pro is kept blue around the gills and light around the pockets. (Bushwah. If it weren't so plainly silly, it would be insulting.)

As a class, golf professionals are good sports. They have a broad social contact and, therefore, are more open-minded than the average merchant whose sphere is restricted to his business. A store that takes a golf pro under its wing is acquiring both an asset and a liability, generally speaking. But the percentage of asset generally far outweighs the less desirable qualities. (But if the pros are such irresponsible souses and gamblers, why be so anxious to use them?)

There is certainly nothing to be gained by merchants and golf pros fighting each other. One is as necessary as the other. If the pro sells more equipment than the local merchant, it is up to the merchant to dope out some scheme to cut in on the business. (Ah, there you are! Help the dear pro by taking his business away.)

The pro's assortment of equipment, at best, presents a very poor comparison to the elaborate stocks of the retail store. And his style of presentation generally is juvenile in character. Under these circumstances, the pro must depend on friendship for a part of his business and upon a common acceptance of his knowledge of the game, among prospects, for the balance. Neither of these influences is strong enough to constitute a dependable merchandising factor. (It is plain that the writer of the *Illustrated's* article hasn't been around pro shops much during the last couple of years or he'd seen plenty of shop displays that are far, far ahead of even many of the better class of sporting goods stores' displays.)

Pro Propaganda Needed

The excerpts given above are fair examples of the opinions on pro merchandising that are expressed by Rip Van Winkles who have slept while the pros kept pace with the growth of golf. Facts show beyond all question that the pro has advanced in his merchandising as in every other department of his work, but the old and flimsy notions of the unknowing are still being broadcast to do the pro harm. It is high time that the pros recognize and

remove this menace. The pros never can do much with the people who make or buy the junk in golf equipment, but the quality end of the market and the really meritorious golf goods must remain the pros' crown jewel just as in the past. There's no danger of the pros losing their hold on this situation, but it's not a bad thing to let the boys know that they are constantly exposed to the peril of false reports.

Pacific Southwest P. G. A. Advertises Its Aim

A STRIKING full page advertisement in *Country Club Magazine* of Los Angeles launches the advertising campaign of the Professional Golfers' association of the Pacific Southwest. The boys in the sun-kist sector have analysed their problems and consider that the first step in the journey to the pros' promised land is to get the players acquainted with the pro's aims and operations and with the personnel of the P. G. A.

you will find a full page advertisement of the Professional Golfers' Association of the Pacific Southwest, of which Willie I. Hunter is president and J. A. (Pat) Patterson is secretary. The professionals believe it will be good business for them to bring the purposes of their organization to the attention of the public and we agree with them. This is an age of advertising. If one doesn't tell the people what one is doing one gets no credit. The Professional Golfers' Association of the Pacific Southwest is doing a lot of good for amateur golf as well as for professional golf and is deserving of much credit."

GET BUSY KILLING CHICKWEED, SAYS ADALINK

Upper Montclair, N. J.—From September 15 until the middle of the following May is the time when the chickweed evil can be eliminated from golf courses in an entirely satisfactory fashion, according to the Adalink Chemical Co., of 8 Laurel Place, Upper Montclair.

The material Adalink suggests for use is Purfeck Chickweed Eliminator which was placed on the market last February and has met with decided success, its makers state. They remark:

"The action of 'Purfeck' on chickweed is due primarily to the absorbitive quantities of the weed. In applying the material, all that is necessary is to quickly spray the solution over the patches of chickweed. The chickweed being more porous than the grass and having a semi-hollow stem absorbs the solution through its leaf and then the solution works gradually through the stem and into the root system, resulting in the entire destruction of the plant without destroying the blades of grass that are still growing where the chickweed plant had been located.

"It is an economical and effective method for the elimination of chickweed because it destroys a plant entirely within two weeks without destroying any of the existing turf. Due to the method of application namely, spraying, the latter cost is very nominal compared to the old method of plugging and refilling each hole with a new piece of turf.

"This material cannot be applied in the summer time but can be applied from about September 15 to May 15 and also when the ground is frozen in the winter time, but at that time the action is considerably longer, taking approximately 30 days for the destruction of the chickweed. The ideal time to apply 'Purfeck' on the golf course is late in the fall because at this time playing has ceased and the slight discoloration which naturally occurs when the chickweed dies is not noticed by anyone but the greenkeeper."

WHY THE P. G. A. EXISTS

"THE OBJECT of the Professional Golfers' Association shall be to promote interest in the game of golf; to protect the mutual interests of its members; to hold meetings and tournaments periodically for the encouragement of the younger members; to institute the benevolent fund for the relief of deserving members; to hold meetings at which the subjects of green keeping and course architecture are discussed by professionals and experts to which the chairman of green committees will be invited; to act as an agency to assist any professional golfer or club maker to obtain employment, and to effect any other object of a like nature as may be determined from time to time by the association."

Membership List of the

Professional Golfers Association of the Pacific Southwest

MEMBER	COUNTRY CLUB	MEMBER	COUNTRY CLUB
Al Abbott	La Brea	Charles M. Johnson	Cherry Chase
C. B. Adair	Ames Canyon	Carl Kopp	Phoenix
Clair Bell	Shoshone	Ed Metzger	Shoshone
Leon Berger	Manzanita	W. M. Knight	Palo Verde
Eric Berglund	Manzanita	Pat Lambert, Jr.	Belvedere
Earl Berglund	Indian Wells	Samuel Lane	Chango Canyon
Allen Cammer	Hilchuck	Yonnie Lee	La Brea
J. J. Case	Manzanita	Willie Lee	Lakewood
Al Chavez	Hilchuck	Mal Lester	Shoshone Club
Charles Chang	Belvedere	Jack Malley	Manzanita
George Chang	Belvedere	Carson Malone	Vespera
Tom Clark	Chango Canyon	Paul Martin	Manzanita
Walter Clark	Northridge	Paul Mattern	Chango Canyon
W. V. Clenden	Ames Canyon	Sam Mink	Los Angeles
J. Cottrell	Los Angeles	Joe Hottel	Los Angeles
Joe Daniels	Los Angeles	Joe Hottel	Belvedere
George Dier	Palo Verde	Frank Hummel	Chango Canyon
W. C. Doherty	Los Angeles	Joe Isaac	East Foothills
Leo Dool	Agua Fria	J. A. Patterson	Phoenix
John Dool	Ames Canyon	Pat Patterson	Phoenix
Don Evans	Belvedere	Arthur Rigg	Chango Canyon
Edwin Fink	Chango Canyon	Richard Rigg	East Foothills
James Fink	Palo Verde	James Ross	Belvedere
Clarence Floyd	Belvedere	Paul Row	Manzanita
Earl Franklin	Manzanita	Samuel Row	Manzanita
Charles Freeman	La Graciosa	Samuel Row	Manzanita
Earl French	Cherry Chase	U. A. Sherr	Los Angeles
Charles Gale	Manzanita	Earl Smith	Manzanita
Larry Graham	Manzanita	Earl Smith	Manzanita
Harold Hanson	Chango Canyon	Tom Stevens	Chango Canyon
Harold Harv	Los Angeles	Earl Talmont	Chango Canyon
Myrtle Harv	Los Angeles	Richard Thomas	Manzanita
Leon Healy	Manzanita	Jack Turner	Chango Canyon
Paul Healy	Los Angeles	Ken White	Los Angeles
Samuel Hines	Manzanita	Willie White	Belvedere
Willie Hines	Manzanita		

This is the full page advertisement the Pacific Southwest P. G. A. used.

The publication carrying the advertisement makes reference to the campaign by saying:

"In this issue of *Country Club Magazine*