

# "Discount Hound" Banished From One Pro's Troubles

By JACK FULTON, Jr.

THE longer one studies pro golf merchandising the deeper becomes the conviction that it is a fine business with its shortcomings being more the fault of the man than of the business. These days when most business men are crying tears as big as 90 watt Mazdas, the golf business is better than ever before, according to 8 out of every 10 good professionals.

However, there is one disturbing element in the pro business these days providing good reason for worry. That is the pernicious practice of "buying at wholesale," the false alarm effort at thrift now raising hell generally with retail business. Pros have plenty of this chiseling of a few nickels and dimes done mainly by members who don't realize what the pro is up against, but who fall for the discount lure in a way that flattens out pro profits. The pro still can control this "wholesale" urge if he gets busy and uses his head. If he lets it go he is bound to become miserably S. O. L.

As an example of what can be done by this unrestrained bargain hunting for discounts we can take as an average of current retailing the case of a tire dealer in Pittsburgh, with whom this writer talked a few weeks ago. The fellow had a fine looking tire, battery and car lubrication station. The investment was such that each detail of the operation was required to make money. The dealer said, "Last year we did \$150,000 worth of business and just a bit more than broke even. Everybody seems to be getting tires at 'something off' these days and the profit is so cut that I reckon if we figured closely our actual cost of doing tire business we'd show we were selling them at a loss. It's the dealer's own damn fault, too. It started a few years ago when dealers started offering a little cut here and a little cut there and the competitors decided they'd meet the discounts just to keep the original price-cutter from getting the business. It didn't take long for the retail tire price schedule to be wrecked."

The pro today is one of the very few small retailers who is maintaining prices, and on this basis deserves the utmost in support and development from the manufacturers. It's the manufacturers in the long run who have to harvest the bumper crop of woe that sprouts from a break in the retail price structure. All a golf goods manufacturer has to do to be impressed with the necessity of encouraging this price maintenance policy of the pros is to talk to manufacturers in other fields and hear their tales of trouble. Then there'll be one speedy and earnest rush to play ball 100% with the pros.

At present there are many professionals who have the locker-room brag of discounts quieted down to a very low and apologetic whisper. In diplomatic fashion they have shown the former victims of the mania for "five off" the error and unsportsmanship manner of their ways.

## Pro Maintains Right Price

Professionals who may think that this achievement is a will-o'-wisp are invited to discuss the situation with Eddie Gayer, pro at Twin Orchard. Twin Orchard is one of the younger clubs of the Chicago district. Its membership is entirely Jewish and includes some of the liveliest wholesalers in the midwest. Beyond much doubt any of these members can buy practically any brand of golf merchandise at a discount, in some way or another. This is a situation that would cause most pros to throw up their hands in despair. But Gayer maintains that not 2% of all the golf merchandise used by his members is bought at a discount. That is a fine tribute to Gayer's selling eloquence and logic and to the sportsmanship and good business acumen of the Twin Orchard members. One of the active golfers at Gayer's club is a prominent figure in the retail sporting goods industry. Every nickel's worth of golf goods he buys comes from Gayer's shop. That's the world's record, we think.



Ninth green of Phoenix (Ariz.) C. C. where Dr. Kimball Bannister of the home club won the 16th annual amateur championship of the Southwestern Golf association. The new champion is at the left of the foursome.

In explaining how he has secured this support from his members Gayer says:

"When there used to be a lot of business lost on account of wholesale buying by members I would look for a chance to talk things over with the misguided member. I went after his business at list price on a strictly business basis.

### Talk It Over With Member

"I'd ask, first of all, what he was saving in the course of a year? We could figure it right down to the last dime and the amount would be somewhere between \$10 and \$20 a year. Then I'd say, now let's look at the clubs you got 'wholesale.' I could point out innumerable details of misfit jobs with which the player stepped on the first tee with a seven or eight stroke unnecessary handicap. Any of the fellows can do that, if they know what they should know about club construction and proper fitting of the clubs to the players. You can figure out that these strokes mean paying off to the others in the foursome, and an eventual replacement by the right clubs, so the player really is out of money when he thinks he has put over a fast one in buying at wholesale.

"There was no use scolding fellows who hadn't bought from me. They belong to the club and pay their dues so they have a right to my personal attention just as much as any other member, although it's human nature for me or anyone else to give his best customers the utmost in personal service. By showing these strays some attention, helping them with little tips on their games and playing around with them

Sunday afternoons instead of doing like a lot of pros, playing with the same old bunch of low handicap men, I got on their good side. They learned to have confidence in me and would take my word on their purchases instead of thinking that I was actuated solely by mercenary motives.

"To get business and fight competition to a standstill you have to make your members happy. You can't do that unless you know them and go out of your way to show them some thoughtful personal attention.

### Members Make Merchants

"You hear so many pros say that jobs with Jewish clubs are the best jobs in golf and you'd think it was just because the members are good spenders and usually very well to do. That is only part of the answer and a very small part too. The real answer is that the members are good business men whose interest in business is as much a sporting interest as it is a money-making proposition. They play business as a game and being in this atmosphere the pro at a good Jewish club is made a first class merchant by his members if there is any sort of stuff at all in the pro.

"You take any problem in pro merchandising and if the average pro would give it as much thought as he would to ironing out some fault in his own golf game, the answer to the problem would be forthcoming quickly. This discount mania can be whipped without much trouble if the pro will enlist member support on a fair face-to-face business basis."