

# Plain Price Marking Is Timely Selling Hunch for Pros

By HERB GRAFFIS

**T**HOSE who have been making some forecasts of pro merchandising policies this year, based on observations during the winter in California and the South, and upon merchandising practice in other lines, are striking up the band for a revival of the good old theme song of business, "All Goods Marked in Plain Prices."

The basic reason for the advance of pro volume during the generally troubled times of 1930 was that the golf goods market at the pro shops buys instead of being sold. From time to time there have been self-appointed experts criticizing pros for not being more aggressive merchants. They seem to have the idea the pro should pounce upon the visitor to his shop and exercise all wiles and the high forceps to sell the prospective customer what he, or she, really should have. That stuff simply doesn't go at a private club and it's rather dangerous practice at a public course. But this is no excuse for many pros whose members are buying too little. The smart pro is going to have his stock and his display so the players are subtly and strongly tempted to buy.

Such a generally neglected item as the location of the ball display case is cutting down pro sales in many shops but there are a number of forces working to correct that. The ball case in almost every instance, should be located so it will get people into the shop and expose them to the purchase temptation of slower moving merchandise. Drumming away at basic points like this one is having its effect. Writers in GOLFDOM have done their share of banging this idea into the domes of the boys. The Hagen advertisements showing successful shops did a lot. The U. S. Rubber Co.'s "Pros, Players and Profits" books did a large share, and young Jack Holmes, the sport store design expert, who is handling part of Spalding's contribution to the improvement of pro merchandising, has revised the layouts of many pro shops in order to profit the pro from these floor plan factors that are basic

in the success of chain and department stores.

## Showing Means Selling

The boys are seeing that proper showing is a good part of selling in the golf field. But until they mark the merchandise in figures that are easily read by an elderly man with glasses, it may be said "they ain't learned nothin' yet."

There is going to be murder on the lower priced lines of golf clubs by mid-season. Too many of the "wood-shed" makers of clubs are in the business and will liquidate at distress prices. There is a suspicion among many of the uniformed golfers that pro shop prices are high, a suspicion that is unwarranted, as the pros handle only good merchandise on which prices are maintained unless some discontinued line, trick discount or dealer-out-of-bounds has entered into the situation.

To protect the pro and his customers from this flood of junk and to build buying confidence among the pros' trade, this is the year for the prominent display of prices.

People are not going to be inclined to handle money loosely this season, whether or not they are blessed with a surplus. Buying cautiously will be the national habit. The pro is in great shape to continue to increase his sales despite this close buying as there probably isn't a pro shop in the country where its patrons couldn't easily stand from two to three times their present volume of playing equipment. That makes it even more necessary for the professional to nurse the buying urge at his shop and, under the conditions that probably will prevail, price is going to be the big magnet inasmuch as pro shop goods has a solid reputation for quality.

## A Play for the Women

Of course, with the women's business this year promising to be much larger than ever before, there is an additional strong reason for marking all goods with plain prices. The pros are going to have to do

this on women's clubs and women's golfing accessories or find themselves losing business to the department stores that long ago learned how essential price marking is in getting business from the woman shopper.

Some of the wise laddies are figuring that 1931 will be a tremendous year in ball volume at all prices, due to the advertising push that will be put behind 50-cent balls. They figure that the fellow who has been playing his higher priced ball two or three rounds will reduce his times of play with the more expensive ball and play with the 50-cent ball in between. Then, they also figure, that the fellow who is addicted to the 50-cent ball will go gold-coast for the higher priced ball every once in a while. Without it being generally realized, these students of the situation maintain, people are playing golf balls too long and the expected popularity of the 50-cent ball this year very possibly will remove this handicap. With daily-fee and public golf one of the least expensive forms of amusement and lots of fellows having plenty of time on their hands, golf is all set for a new high record in play this year, but the players will be thinking of the costs.

### Thrift in the Private Clubs

One of the very bright and successful pro merchants, who is located at a leading southern club recently told GOLFDOM of a plan it is considering. This pro selling star said:

"The 'inside discount' racket has been hitting me as some of my members are being offered clubs at a cut. The idea struck me that instead of going into the discount business (which I am dead set against) I would approach a prospect and tell him that instead of worrying about the disposal of his old clubs I would allow him so much for them and take them off his hands. Even if I had to throw them out to the caddies I would still be some ahead, but most of these clubs could be used as rental sets or reconditioned and sold to young fellows or public course players. In the case of rental sets at my club these trade-ins, in the long run, probably would pay double what I allowed for them.

"I do know that when things in a lot of lines are tight and people are thinking twice about spending money, it is going to be a job selling \$90 and \$100 sets unless they are sold on installments. The pros are going to have to watch their step and

do some fast thinking. The trade-in argument is much better than any discount concession, for fighting the devil with discount lays the pro open so his members expect a discount on everything.

"I am going over the club-cleaning sets and pick out the members who ought to be ready for new clubs. Then I'll either write or talk to that member, telling him how much I will allow him for his old set.

"This trade-in proposition is not advisable unless the pro has a good market for the used clubs; it has to be handled with care. Automobile makers found out their wild and woolly trade-ins got their business in a jam, and I don't intend to use the idea to the point that it will get me into a similar predicament."

### Jersey Greenkeeper Hailed as Emissary by Britons

EDWARD STROUD, greenkeeper at Laurence Brook C. C. and second v. p. of the New Jersey Greenkeepers' association, was the guest of honor at a dinner given by the Greenkeepers' Association of Great Britain, held at the London Stone hotel, Jan. 14.

F. G. Hawtree, v. p. of the British organization, introduced Stroud as bearing greetings from the association's American confreres. Toasts were exchanged and the British association's secretary was instructed to formally reciprocate the message Stroud brought them from the New Jersey organization. The American representative spoke on the work of the American greenkeeping organizations and on the status of the golf course superintendent in the United States. The Britons pronounced the address so informative that the hope was expressed other American golf course superintendents visiting England would make it a point to attend the British Greenkeepers' meetings.

Stroud was taken to Croydon by W. H. Smithers, sec. of the British Greenkeepers' association, and to other courses by various members of the host organization, and found a number of construction and maintenance work of value to American practice. The hospitality and practical value of his visit, due to the efforts of the British greenkeepers, suggests a formal recognition, by greenkeeper organizations, of the usefulness of interchange of interest and courtesies.