

Dealers Pick Flaws in Club Buying Policies

By JACK FULTON, Jr.

MARKED IMPROVEMENT has been in evidence in golf club buying policies during the last two seasons. The emphasis now is on buying instead of ordering. Clubs, course superintendents and manufacturers are benefiting from this improvement, which still has a long way to go before it may be classified as general.

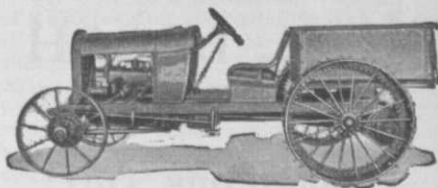
Recently GOLFDOM has questioned a number of the leading golf course equipment makers and distributors about what they think golf clubs could do to make buying wiser. The work has been timely for the golf club, as the next few months constitute the period during which most of the club budgets for 1932 will be made up, and the manufacturers, of heavy equipment especially, are burning midnight wattle trying to figure out their financing over the coming winter.

The remaining banks are not exactly tumbling over themselves to loan money for the manufacturing operations of a company that must make up a lot of mowers, tractors, etc., during the winter, ship on rush orders in the spring, and not collect for the equipment financed by the loan for five or six months at the earliest. The golf equipment business is not one of those rich profit fields that brings the bankers galloping in asking the boys to borrow even in those dear, departed times when today's bank troubles were being born.

A revision in the distribution of golf equipment and supplies will be fairly well completed by the end of this year. A golf supply dealer to warrant his existence and his cut of the margin the manufacturer has between cost and retail price, must spend lots of time and money in service work for which the clubs pay nothing. Some have been pretending to be distributors and collecting commissions that are merely scalped fees. There's not enough margin or volume in the golf business to justify a split between legitimate, hustling distributors and the folks who don't work to serve the clubs.

Longer Terms Helps Buying

One of the bright eastern dealers tags the short terms of green-chairmen as the greatest handicap to right buying. The almost annual changes that occur at many



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clubs result in purchasing practices that are not co-ordinated with the operating policy. Material and equipment is abandoned at great loss. Such abandonment has not been much of a feature during the last two years of intense thrift, but the error always is potentially dangerous. A decided trend toward longer terms for golf club officials is gradually eliminating considerable of the uninformed buying. The experienced official has an idea of what the superintendent wants and needs and can go to the front in battling with the board for the necessary money.

In this connection some of the distributors mention the delay in getting board action as a cause of expense to golf clubs. Stalling or passing the buck cost golf clubs plenty during the last season with its urgent requirements of brown-patch preventives that frequently ran into enough money to call for board action.

This brings us to the suggestion of one manufacturer who is widely acquainted with intimacies of golf club operation, and is a golf club official himself. This gentleman is terse and radical. He says: "Let's can the committees. The sum and substance of golf club mistakes in buying is that too many crooks spoil the broth. Let men who are competent and informed co-ordinate the buying requirements and the finances." He adds that some of the worst buying problems of golf clubs would be removed if the clubs would be more careful about buying from distributors who specialize in the golf business and are in proper position to give intelligent and prompt assistance.

One of the blind spots in golf club buying, according to a successful old-timer in the equipment business, is the failure to agree on definite terms of payment. Such an agreement would aid the manufacturers and keep the club accurately informed as to where it stood financially. In this sage's opinion, more attention to the elements of financing in the buying done by golf clubs would immeasurably better the standing of the clubs when they wanted to talk business with local bankers.

Golf clubs have been prime suckers for the "buy it at a discount" gypping, says one authority in the field. He states:

"There's usually some board member who prides himself on his ability to 'get it wholesale.' There are inflated list prices of some manufacturers made up just to handle this case, or some unqualified and irresponsible individual who acts as 'agent'

for a manufacturer who is careless about his future, will split his commission with the sharp shopper. The result is that when service is needed on the equipment, the margin of profit left the maker or agent who fell for the bargain-hunter is too small to permit any service operation. The hard use golf course equipment gets and the good-will importance of golf club emergency calls, make it certain that the club buying just so much assembled metal as equipment, eventually is guilty of a waste of its members' money represented by lost operating time and inevitable heavy costs of repairs."

HALLELUJAH! ANOTHER SOUL SAVED FROM CUT-PRICE HELL

Bill Curtis, vice pres., Schavolite Golf Corp., is a bright, busy young man who was cautioned by GOLFDOM that he would be given a burning this year by the price-cutters who would injure his price structure and relations with good dealers unless he kept the wrecking crew under control.

Curtis writes GOLFDOM'S editor:

"I am attaching a sheet outlining our policy concerning price-cutting. Now that you have been doing all this belly-aching about price-cutting for the last several moons I hope you are satisfied. Of course, I expect you will have another grouch on for the pros, but this will have to be fought out when I get out there next week."

The Schavolite bulletin puts it right up to the pros to squawk to company headquarters if there's cut-price competition, and jibes with the recommendations made by the Merchandising Committee of the P. G. A. The bulletin says:

"Since the inception of this company it has always been our policy to maintain retail list prices at all times, and we hasten to take this opportunity of confirming our belief that price-cutting is an evil that works unfairly, not only to the professional who is the legitimate builder-of-golfers, but

to all other high grade merchants as well. We ask you as a protection to both you and ourselves to please advise us of any unfair price-cutting on our merchandise by sending us copies of advertisements appearing in your local newspapers or other information which you may be able to procure, and we pledge ourselves to co-operate with you by immediately taking such steps as are necessary to stop same.

"Your support and co-operation in helping us to combat this evil will be personally appreciated by the writer.

"W. J. CURTIS, Vice-Pres."

ELECTRIC EQUIPMENT MAKERS HOSTS TO CHICAGO MANAGERS

At the invitation of the Public Service Company of Northern Illinois, over fifty club managers and officials attended a luncheon held on Nov. 2 in the employes' cafeteria of the Edison General Electric Appliance Co., Chicago. The purpose of the meeting was to demonstrate the latest developments in electrical cooking, ventilating and refrigerating equipment.

Cooperating manufacturers were: Edison General Electric Appliance Co., Chicago, showing a representative portion of their electric cooking equipment; Waters-Gener Co., Minneapolis, showing Thermotainer cabinets and kitchen units; Frigidaire Corporation, Dayton, Ohio, and General Electric Co., Schenectady, N. Y., showing refrigerating units and cabinets; and the Ilg Electric Ventilating Co., Chicago, showing several models of ventilating fans.

After lunch, which had been prepared on electric apparatus while the managers watched, Grant Call, house-chairman of the Riverside (Ill.) C. C., gave a short talk on the economies his club has secured by the installation of complete electric kitchen equipment. Following Mr. Call's report, the guests inspected the various displays and indicated by their reluctance to leave their intense interest in electrical apparatus as the probable answer to many of their kitchen miseries.

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