

# Pro Vet Says Season's Lesson Was to Put Steam Into Sales

By GEORGE SARGENT  
Professional, Scioto Country Club

**D**URING YEARS of business upsets and revision the pro, like all other business men, must change his methods to suit the times. It is much to the credit of the golf profession that the necessary changes have been so speedily and thoughtfully accomplished.

For some time past I was of the opinion that by far the major part of a pro's time and energy should be occupied with instruction and I have harbored the thought that possibly too much emphasis was being placed on merchandising. This year's experience has so radically switched my views that I now am firmly of the opinion that the pros are holding back too much on their selling work.

Two significant items accounted for my own change of thought. During the Ryder Cup matches at Scioto, threatening weather and a sudden shower made it possible for me to sell about 150 inexpensive raincoats to the gallery in much less than that many minutes. That was an impressive example of what business could be had by the pro if the pro were ready, and it certainly was business that represented a real service to my customers.

The other thought-provoking experience was listening to the remarks of one of Scioto's members, Freeman T. Eagleson, at the lively little P. G. A. conference held during Ryder Cup week at Columbus. Mr. Eagleson is one of those members that any pro and any club treasures and when I heard him confess lack of acquaintance with the pro business problems, and make some pointed suggestions, I was spurred immediately to some deep study of pro business methods.

One who has spent as much time as I have in professional golf is bound to be conscious of the constantly changing character of our business. I believe that we have laid a solid foundation for a vast improvement in instruction by the work the P. G. A. has done with its motion pictures. Never has other action taken by the association focussed public attention on com-

petent pros and resultful instruction as forcibly as our pictures. Pros are profiting. It is obvious that we must take timely advantage of our merchandising opportunities.

## Record Year for Business

I have been impressed, in my own case, by the ease with which a pro can increase his sales and his member service if he adjusts his merchandising to the times. At my shop, July and August were among the two biggest months of my pro experience for sales volume. The interest aroused by the Ryder Cup matches kept play up well despite almost insufferably hot weather. With the people playing it is up to the pro to get them to buy. I found that price re-arrangements to bring the merchandise down to prices that made real temptations speedily increased sales and moved merchandise that, otherwise, I might have been holding in stock through the winter.

One of the shortcomings of the professional, I believe, is a reluctance to make the slightest verbal suggestion of purchases. Possibly some of us have been too shy, or have been wrong in believing that it is beneath the station of pro duties to do some actual profitable selling. I am coming to think that the further we progress as instructors the more we see the need of proper playing equipment by our members and, consequently, the necessity of more extensive and helpful selling as an important part of our work.

To my way of thinking one of the highly important phases of training and employing our assistants is connected with proper



George Sargent

selling to the members. I have come to the conclusion that unless a professional has in his shop an assistant who can sell and who shows an intelligent, persistent interest in merchandising, the pro is much better off if he immediately makes a change. Possibly some of the defects of the assistant are due to the pro not impressing strongly enough on the boy the necessity of good selling as a service that the members expect to be informed and superior, as well as the part of the assistant's work that pays the assistant's salary.

The master professional must be outside his shop a good part of the time so it is imperative that the inside work of his shop be entrusted to a competent and alert assistant who is a first class salesman. I found it necessary to make a change in my shop personnel this year in order to get an assistant who was a real salesman, and engaging a boy who was on the job in making my shop a lively retailing establishment was a substantial factor in increasing the season's income.

### Capitalize Opportunity

I have been given to understand by several of the leading manufacturers that the advance of pro business methods this year, and the failure of store selling based on price alone, has served to bring the pro into his logical, favored position as the foremost retail outlet for worthy golf goods in 1932. We will see, so I am advised, strong policies giving the pro at least an even break, adopted by practically all of the leading makers of golf goods during 1932. At last, it seems, that we have won the place for which we have been striving and it is up to the pros to justify this victory by merchandising methods that will exhibit the highest plane of independent retailers' business operation. During this crucial season of 1931 the pro has proved his right to preference and continuance of his dearly won triumph depends on each pro's energetic and thoughtful development of his sales possibilities.

We have been holding back long enough because we have been fearful of pushing carefully chosen and proper merchandise as an essential of service to our members. I'd say that making up for this time lost while we were patiently and thoroughly appraising the situation is our task for 1932. Furthermore, I believe that in selling lies one of the main answers to pro unemployment. I am told that there are only about 3,900 pro outlets at the almost

6,000 golf clubs of the country, so at the smaller clubs, the fee courses and the municipal courses it is part of the pros' job to prove that expert selection and selling of golf playing equipment is so valuable to the players that the engagement of a pro is fully warranted by his ability as a buying guide. If the services of a director of buying are found valuable to the members of private clubs where informed, well-to-do and veteran players constitute the membership, then certainly such services are magnified in value at establishments where the majority of the play is composed of comparative newcomers to the game.

There are many of my veteran comrades in pro golf who may have minimized the importance of retailing at their clubs, just as I have, but if they got through the 1931 season without coming to a realization that selling rates about 50-50 with instruction as a pro duty I trust that these lines about my experience will move them to thought. The veterans, as well as the hundreds of splendid assistants they have painstakingly trained to be credits to the game and assets to the players, will do well to spend their meditative hours during the winter in planning for bigger and better selling during the 1932 season.

---

### New Jersey Greens Course, Feb. 22-26, 1932

**C**OLLEGE OF Agriculture bulletin from Rutgers university, the state university of New Jersey, announces that the institution's annual one-week course in turf management will be held February 22-26, 1932. Tuition is free to residents of New Jersey. There is a small registration fee.

The New Jersey course is an excellent, practical summarization of greenkeeping practice. Complete details of the course and information regarding enrollment by residents and non-residents of New Jersey may be obtained from F. J. Helyar, director, Short Course building, New Brunswick, N. J.

---

**C**HILDREN'S DANCING parties make good entertainment events for clubs these days of socially precocious kids. One of the features of the Penobscot Valley C. C. yearly entertainment program is the annual dancing party for children Thanksgiving afternoon.