

Pros Must Learn to Follow Thru on Prospective Sales

By AL. STECKMAN

BECAUSE I can always find a congenial crowd to chat about golf, I like Pinehurst. During the 1931 North and South Open, I spent my evenings on the hotel porch talking with golfers—not pros, but golfers with high and low club handicaps.

After discussing Wiffy Cox's fine 69 on the first 18, and exchanging a few harmless lies about our own games, I steered the conversation around to the business side of golf. I learned something that I think is well worth passing along to pros through GOLFDOM'S pages.

Every man in the group, and there were seven, agreed that he would rather buy all his equipment from his pro. So I asked if they all *had* bought exclusively in their pro's shop. The answer was unanimously "NO".

Then I asked the obvious question;—"If you'd *rather* buy from your pro, why did you make purchases elsewhere?"

No one seemed to be ready with a logical answer and cigar tips glowed red in the darkness as my seven companions puffed thoughtfully. At length, the good natured, bald-headed, fat man on my right, answered;

"Last season" he began "I bought a set of matched irons from a department store. Until this very minute I had always thought I hadn't bought from the pro because I saved a few dollars. But since you asked the question the way you did, I don't think it was price after all. Let's analyze the sale from beginning to end and see."

My heavy friend, flicked the ash from his cigar and shifted to a more comfortable position in his wicker chair.

Fails to Follow Through

"It was my Pro" he went on "who made me dissatisfied with my old clubs—a bag full of mongrels. He kept pointing out to me that every swing in golf is fundamentally the same. This seemed logical as did his follow-up argument that every club should also be alike in balance. He sold me good and hard on the matched set idea."

He paused seeming to turn a thought over in his mind before he continued. When he stopped gazing at his cigar end, there seemed to be a new light in his eye.

"You know, I believe it was right there that the pro's selling job fell flat. He had certainly made me feel badly about my old clubs and made me want a matched set—but he *assumed* that I would buy them from him. As a matter of fact, I had no idea of buying them anywhere else. But I put it off for a few days and the pro didn't push me.

"About a week later, I happened to be in a department store making another purchase and I walked through the sports shop. I saw several sets of matched clubs on display, the same brand as the pro wanted to sell me. I picked up a club and waggled it. A clerk came over to me and told me the price for the set was \$16 cheaper than the pro's price. In five minutes I had made a selection and charged the clubs to my account."

Another pause, more ashes flicked and more reflection.

"Those clubs are alright, I suppose, but I've never felt quite sure of it. Several times I half wished I had paid the pro the extra \$16 so that I could have had more confidence."

Conscience Numb on Pro

I interrupted at this point to ask;

"Were you uncomfortable about them because you felt you owed it to your pro to buy them from him?"

His answer was quick.

"No, not that! I didn't feel obliged to pass up the lure of an alleged \$16 saving just because I happened to belong to a country club that hired a pro. Our pro, I assume, gets paid for his services and wouldn't starve merely because I had bought a set of clubs downtown."

I didn't go into all the angles of *that*—but I did point out that a large part of the pro's income comes from the sale of merchandise in his shop. My statement seemed to surprise my heavyweight friend. However, I hadn't got to the real meat of

his story yet and, lest we get sidetracked, I asked another question.

"Forget the moral obligation part of it" I said "and tell me this; you said the pro's selling job fell down after he had sold you the matched set *idea*? What did you mean?"

"Simply this" he answered "He failed to point out that there was a matched set for me that was exactly right. He assumed I would buy from him and he undoubtedly would have given me a set that fit. But he didn't remind me of it *before he had completed the sale*. In other words, he had left me in a frame of mind where anyone who had a matched set for sale could have sold me. He didn't stake me off for his very own."

I interrupted once more.

"In other words he had merely sold you the idea, or rather the logic of the matched set idea. He never once asked you to buy the *clubs* from him."

Nail Them Now

"Yes, I think he asked me," was the reply "but it was merely an invitation to buy now and not next week. If right then he had put the fear of God in me about being sure the set *fit* me, I'd never have even considered the \$16 difference in price."

"You know" he continued "I believe that every golfer knows that the game is at least 75 per cent mental and that should have been the pro's cue. If he had even intimated that I would be dissatisfied with even a matched set that didn't fit me, I'd have been afraid to buy the department store clubs. But I was so engrossed with the idea of matched clubs that I didn't think of the mental side of it. Now every time I hit a poor shot with these clubs I wonder if I didn't make a mistake. I haven't the confidence in myself or the clubs that I would have had if my pro had selected them for me."

Start Isn't All of Sale

The moral of this story was not obscure to me any more than it is to GOLFDOM'S readers and yet I knew that this self-same incident occurred over and over again at nearly every club. This pro *hadn't* finished his selling job. He had assumed too early in the game that a sale started was a sale rung up in the old cash register.

I was turning this over in my mind when another of the group gave throat to a remark. He was a man about 45, with a

bead in his eye, obviously a successful business man.

"I'm general sales manager of a large manufacturing concern" he said "and our product is sold by our own sales force to hardware dealers on a franchise basis. We give exclusive territory protection to a dealer in exchange for a contract of a prescribed volume. Our one greatest difficulty is getting salesmen who are what we call 'closers.' Any of our men can get a prospect interested in our proposition but we have only about 25 out of 250 who can get the name on the dotted line. Your pro wasn't a closer."

This speech crystallized my thoughts. Pros have to be closers—not merely salesmen. Remember that each one of these seven men had said that he would *rather* buy from his pro. The only reason they hadn't was because the pro failed to put the final *punch* into his selling. He had failed to be a good closer.

I saw the fat man's department store clubs the next day. As I had half expected they weren't right. They had a lie so upright that he couldn't have swung them *correctly* without finding his tummy in the way.

PRO PROFIT BOOK OFFERED FOR ASSISTANT STUDY

Providence, R. I.—Cheering prospects for pro shop business for 1932 already are in evidence, according to E. C. Conlin, golf ball sales manager of the United States Rubber Co., who cites pro activity in pre-season education of their assistants. Conlin comments:

"A number of the pros who have engaged their assistants for the 1932 season have written asking if any of the **Pros, Players and Profit** books are left, so copies can be sent to their boys for earnest study prior to the opening of the season.

"It is a new experience to me to see these foresighted men making strenuous effort to see that the very important position of shop assistant is filled by a trained young fellow who has studied the responsibilities and details of his operations. As a manufacturer, I'd say it is positive indication of pro shop selling on a more business-like basis than ever before, and certainly shows that the PGA has done good work in stirring up pro business thought by its plans for business schools."

Conlin further advises that a small number of the books are left and will be sent free to any name and address pros instruct. The book is a first class piece of business literature for practical use in the pro shop.