

# Proposes Pro Lab Tests and O.K's As Prime Buying Guide

By HERB GRAFFIS

**A** FELLOW WHO is highly regarded as a national advertising and merchandising authority was buzzing with one of the younger professionals who is prominent in P. G. A. activities. The pro was telling this sales promotion genius about the merry-go-round the P. G. A. was having with P. G. A.-branded clubs. It was all very confusing to the advertising and selling gent, and not much clearer to the pro. A tale of the doings at the P. G. A. convention was related and the business expert got still more bewildered.

"Hold, enough!" he yelped. "I don't want to hear any more, for I have already made up my mind that you pros are proving the prize suckers of sports goods history, the way you are messing around with a potentially great asset, that P. G. A. brand of yours."

The pro protested the indictment, so his critic went into detail, and here's the story the merchandising guy told, whether or not it is something you exactly relish, as a pro or a manufacturer. The pro told it to us so we could drag out any comments or constructive criticism any of the fellows have to offer.

## "PGA" Is Asset to Association

"In the first place," began the guy who gets paid many thousands of dollars for giving big manufacturers the dope he handed out to his pro friend free, "you pros have slowly built up a value for the P. G. A. brand, not because of expensive advertising that other folks would have to do, but because you have wonderful distribution facilities. You have confined the use of the brand name to goods costing enough to represent the highest quality. About cheapening this brand value for which any manufacturer would pay a lot of money for exclusive use, I have my serious doubts. If you are able to endorse a cheap article as first class merchandise then you have been a party to gypping the public, and I know too much about the pro business and the golf goods business to grant that this profiteering ever prevailed.

"But, it must be admitted that there is a difference in design and quality between two brands of goods selling at the same prices, and in these times of lowering prices you have to be covering yourselves by having cheaper stuff, especially for the growing trade of women and children and male graduates of the public courses.

"You tell me about a couple of things that happened at your convention . . . about the pros going in for the services of a publicity man to tell their story and about some fellow named Goss advocating an extension of the P. G. A. brand name. I don't know Goss but I'll bet very few of you appreciated the significance of what he said. You all, I'll bet, were too busy worrying about what few manufacturers would get the right to make stuff with the P. G. A. brand to realize that this statement opened up the one and only big way for your outfit to capitalize on its position as an authority.

## Quotes Examples from Other Fields

"Look around your kitchen at home some time. Look in the ads in the magazines that you and your wife read. You will see an oval emblem on your range, on your ice-box, on your sink and on scores of items from Swansdown Flour to tooth-picks, signifying that the product is approved by Good Housekeeping Institute.

"Possibly you know how this proposition originated. It started as a stunt to sell advertising space in *Good Housekeeping Magazine*. It grew in strength because of vigorous promotion. But at its start, and today, it hasn't any way near the strength in its field that the P. G. A. brand should have in the golf field.

"There are many of these authorities that certify the value of merchandise. In few cases have these authorities the qualifications and the standing the pros have. Have you read that book the soviet school authorities are putting out to the Russian children as a primer on economics? It is available in an English edition, "The Red Primer." Well, I'll tell you, any pro or

any other business man who wants to have his thinking dusted off and get back into the straight channel of business cerebration ought to spend a little money for that book. The laugh of it is that it is practically a rewrite of a book by a contemporaneous American economist, Stuart Chase. Chase and another fellow organized some kind of a buyers' league to investigate and certify the value of merchandise and they are cleaning up.

"The American Medical Association carries in its journal only the advertising of medical supplies and equipment that it can officially endorse. The dentists do the same. And this point is capitalized in other national advertising by those manufacturers whose products have received this approval.

So much for the professions. The American Petroleum Institute has standard specifications on oil production equipment and supplies, and unless you have the A. P. I. mark you have a hell of a tough time selling anything to the drilling departments of any oil company, large or small.

"And you, you boys I think are so bright, you go into hysterics trying to deny yourselves—and worse than that, the players—the value of your experience and acknowledged authoritative position by trying to smother the biggest business thing you have!

### Fine Weapon Against Cut Prices

"You have put on a grand belly-ache to me about how the downtown stores have been giving you a spanking in golf goods sales during this last season of violent price cutting. You have the one certain corrective power right under your control but you do everything you can, from what you've told me, to make it hard for this control to be exercised.

"Let me tell you something about a lot tougher merchandising problem than you'll ever have and how it was whipped:

"Some years ago the gas companies were having a hell of a time getting gas used, because plumbers and hardware stores and department stores were selling cheap equipment that was wasteful in its use of gas. Moreover a lot of this stuff was positively dangerous.

"The gas companies had the alternative of going into the appliance business or being left with no market for the use of gas. What did those bright babies do? Just the same damn thing the P. G. A. is ap-

parently trying to escape doing. They established an association testing laboratory. After a little while it became almost impossible to sell anything that didn't have the approval of the American Gas association. The result was that the gas companies were doing so much of the gas appliance business that states had to pass laws to enable the other retailers to get a cut at the volume of sales on goods bearing the American Gas association approval mark.

"And listen, before I forget it, the biggest quick money stunt in recent years was on a trade-marked item in the golf business. The Townsends collected almost \$2,000,000 in one year on the trade name "Tom Thumb."

"So much, at length, for the background. You wanted my honest opinion and I'm giving it to you as a golfer, a president of a golf club, an alleged, but solvent, merchandising expert, and certainly as a friend of pro golf.

### Testing Laboratory Is Needed

"What you fellows ought to do is to extend tremendously the scope of P. G. A. approval, on a very modest license cost basis. Any merchandise that would pass muster with the P. G. A. proving laboratory should be allowed to advertise with the P. G. A. mark. I think you legally could exercise some control of merchandising policies with respect to honest prices in connection with this approval. You have a very able lawyer as your business administrator and he can advise you on how to work this.

"That would mean simply this: The income from that little license fee would operate a testing laboratory that ought to be the greatest thing of its kind in golf; the excess would provide the P. G. A. with the necessary additional operating fund and an advertising fund that would really do the much needed job of selling the pro to the playing public.

"From a strictly technical standpoint this testing laboratory should be the last word in golf. Some of you might have a quick criticism that this laboratory would be subsidized by the manufacturers. Quite the contrary. It would be subsidized, in the last analysis, by the players and it would build you up as the guardians of the players' interests. Any store that would try to sell anything for golf not having the approval of the P. G. A. as evidenced by this trade-mark would be strictly out

of luck, because this operation of yours would be conducted primarily as a matter of player protection.

"Through advertising you could promote the sales of the professionals as fitters of golf merchandise. After all, the fitting of golf clubs and other equipment is about as important as the merchandise itself, but the pros are a million miles away from getting this story over.

### Plan Will Control Gyps

"From what you have showed me in your business papers, the manufacturers of first grade golf clubs have been having trouble with the 'woodshed' manufacturers. You could control this by withholding the P. G. A. stamp of approval from these 'woodshed' manufacturers and it probably would be a great thing for the growing army of new golfers, for they would buy clubs that would last them and serve them for a number of years instead of being lured into the purchase of cheap, worthless stuff that is poorly designed and poorly made.

"You tell me the pros have done a business of \$26,000,000 this year. The other outlets must have done equally as much. Say, that on balls, clubs, bags and tees alone the gross annual business from all sources was \$40,000,000. I think that figure is conservative. Take a half of one per cent as the license fee on goods bearing the P. G. A. mark of endorsement as being value for the players' money and you would have \$200,000 a year coming into the P. G. A. treasury for use in promoting golf.

"Tell me that golf is a Scotch game, and then overlook a proposition of good business and golf promotion like this!

"What you fellows need is to have your officials and members study the possibilities of this sort of a plan for building the game, building the good pros, building the good manufacturers and commanding the market. With that P. G. A. stamp built up along these lines, membership in the P. G. A. would become an absolute necessity for any pro who claimed to be a competent pro. You would be controlling pro personnel as well as the store business by this stamp and the advertising it would finance.

"I'll make you a bet at even money that you can say 'P. G. A.' to 80 per cent of today's golf players and they don't know what it means. And you, with the answer pawing right at your doors, apparently are trying to scare it away.

"I've worked with some of the biggest

manufacturers in the country, some of the biggest chain store systems, and some of the largest department stores, and none of them ever had the wide open merchandising opportunity you have.

"You may resent this, and tell me that it is the national pastime for everyone to tell the pro how to run his business. Well, a lot of your fellows are mighty anxious to learn how they can improve their business, and so are you, or you wouldn't be listening to me. So like it or not, this is my idea and I think that it's not only an opportunity for the Professional Golfers' association but it's one of their responsibilities as I read the very first part of their constitution that you showed me."

We've told the yarn that was told to our pro friend. Now, if you have any penetrating criticism to advance, for or against, shoot and GOLFDOM will print it gladly. We're not going 100 per cent for the idea as extemporaneously expressed but, at the same time, we are convinced that there's a vast volume of good in the hunch as it was set forth.

### Jersey Greenkeepers Close Season with Big Party

**G**REENKEEPERS' ASSN. of New Jersey finished its 1931 schedule with its annual election and the customary wind-up dinner and ladies' night. The party was held at Newark A. C., December 7.

Officers elected for 1932: J. Anderson, president; M. Finley, vice-president; E. Stroud, vice-president; A. Burton, treasurer; E. Stroud, secretary.

Speakers at the dinner were the retiring president: H. T. Isleib, Dr. Howard Sprague, Prof. Evald and Messrs. Hayes, Taylor and Arnott.

Among the women guests who graced the affair were Mesdames—J. Anderson and daughter; R. Bullock, E. Stroud and daughter; Howard Sprague, C. Snelka, P. Flynn, J. Hoile, E. Fogerty and H. T. Isleib. The girls managed to pry their spouses onto the dance floor in concluding the evening with a merry session of hoofing. The feature dancing of the evening was done by Messrs. Miller and Riley. According to GOLFDOM'S star under-cover man who reported the party, Riley's dancing was especially active and reminiscent of a bending gentleman being suddenly hit in a vulnerable spot by a wild drive. But then, the rest of the boys are apt to be too harshly critical of a good dancer.