

Pros Big Market Is Surveyed

—Plenty Room for Sales

A GOOD DEAL of illuminating dope on the golf market and the pros' status in it is to be had from the field survey made by the Curtis Publishing Co., publishers of the *Saturday Evening Post* and the *Ladies' Home Journal*.

The study was confined to pro-shops in Cleveland, Columbus, Indianapolis and Chicago, to player interviews in Indianapolis, Cleveland and Columbus and to sporting goods stores, department stores, hardware stores and wholesalers, drug wholesalers, miscellaneous wholesalers and miscellaneous outlets in Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. The survey was made late in the 1931 season.

Bags inventoried at the private clubs showed an average of 2.6 woods and 7.8 irons per bag. The largest class of irons was in the 9-iron sets which constituted 27.30 of the private club total. About 87% of the players carried 6 or more irons. Special irons, such as approach and trap clubs were only 3.9% of the iron contents of the bags.

About 38% of the irons and 13% of the woods were in brands almost entirely confined to pro shop distribution. Players questioned replied that 88% of the private club players and 79% of the daily fee and public course players had bought their newest clubs in 1929, 1930 and 1931. Replacement accounted for 60% of the sales at private clubs and 50% at fee and public courses.

At the private clubs matched irons made up 75.5% of the inventory and matched woods 75.2%. Bags with both matched irons and woods were 65.7%. Steel shafts were in 61.17% of the 29,275 clubs inspected in the survey.

Pros Stocks Varied

The Curtis survey figures blast one of the general ideas about pro shop deficiency in range of stock. Only 2% of the pros carried but one brand of clubs while 36% of other retail outlets carried only one brand. Outlets handling only 2 lines were: pros, 8%; other outlets, 16%. In the pro field, 20% handled 3 lines, 20% 4 lines,

12% 5 lines, 20% 6 lines and 12% 7 lines. Among the retailers, 25% handled 3 lines, 13% 4 lines, 2% 5 lines, 4% 6 lines and 2% 7 lines. One pro handled 8 lines of clubs and another 12 lines, but no retailer handled more than 7.

Reasons why clubs sell best, as given by the pros: 26%, player demand; 20%, advertising; 34%, because they are pushed; 20%, because clubs are good; 20%, because pros and leading players use the clubs; and 8%, because the clubs are not sold in stores. Reasons given by other outlets: 4%, demand of players; 2%, advertising; 29%, because store pushed them; and 27%, because store has exclusive sale. Slightly more than 10% of the pros advanced exclusive pro-shop sale as a reason for clubs selling better. On price as a sales factor, 2% of the pros and 29% of the other retailers responded naming the selling figure as a major item.

Pros and other retailers have decided differences of opinion as to who makes the best clubs. Pros said that 77% of their customers come in asking for a certain brand of club; other retailers said 89%.

1931 Sales Prices

Pros interviewed said that about 30% of their 1931 business was in irons selling for \$10 and more, and 52% of their wood sales in this class. In 23% of the pro shop irons were sold within the price range of \$6.00 to \$7.00. The most popular price for irons at the other outlets was between \$5 and \$6, at which price about 42% of the sales were made. Next biggest class was under \$3, at which price 20.93% of the store irons were sold. The most popular price for store woods was between \$5 and \$6, this price accounting for about 23% of the total woods. Next came 20% of sales in woods between \$7 and \$8 at the stores. In the \$3 and \$4 class there was 13% of the store wood business done and an equal amount under \$3. Pros sold only 8% of their woods under \$5.

That the pros are doing a rather good selling job is indicated by the fact that 67% of the pros had sold more than half of the clubs they were servicing, but room for

considerable pro sales expansion is plainly indicated by this figure.

The survey asked pros and other dealers whether they felt there would be a swing back to hickory with 87% of the pros and 89% of the dealers replying negatively.

On golf balls, as in the case of woods and irons, the pro shop carried a larger variety, as compared with store extent of stock. More than 20% of the stores handled only 1 brand of ball. More than 25% of the stores handled only 2 brands of balls, while only 4% of the pros handled as few as 2 brands. Number of makes carried by percentages of pros interviewed: 3 brands, 18%; 4 brands, 18%; 5 brands, 22%; 6 brands, 18%. In stores, 3 brands were carried by 23%, 4 by 11%, and 5 by 16%. About 70% of the pros said that the buying trend was for the 75c ball, but only 32% of the stores declared for this price of ball. One-fourth of the stores said the trend was for a 50c ball and the same number of stores were for 3 for \$1.00 balls.

Women's and Junior Play Greater

Substantial increases in women's play over 1930 was reported in the majority of cases. Eighteen per cent of the daily-fee courses said women's play in 1931 was 75% greater than in 1930. The average increase at the private clubs was around 25%. Women's play at the municipal courses was reported as being about the same as in 1930. Approximately the same figures prevailed on junior play. Seventy per cent of all the outlets reported an increase in women's club business, but only 9% reported an increase in juniors' club business over 1930, showing there still is a big market among the kids.

One of the discoveries of the Curtis survey was that 73% of the pros in the districts covered were under 40 years of age.

It will be surprising to many of the pros to learn that while 79% of the pros said golf ball sales represented 50% or more of their total volume, 85% of the other outlets said balls were less than 50% of their volume. This seems to indicate that despite stiff cut-price competition, the convenience of the pro-shop remains the strongest element in ball selling.

Stores that had an increase in golf goods sales during 1931 attributed most of the increase to more interest in golf. Sales push and special prices came second. In the cases of decreases in 1931 sales, 25% of the stores and 13% of the pros blamed "greater and more unfair competition."

Cut price was rated as "hardest competition" by 55% of the stores and only 22% of the pros, showing the pro that reducing his prices is not the answer to his merchandising problems. Wholesale selling to customers, "gyp" stores and purchasing departments of large corporations were prominent in this "hardest competition."

Players reporting on why they bought clubs said "pro's advice" in 22% of the cases at private clubs and 5% of the cases at fee and public courses. Those reporting the places where they usually bought clubs said "from pro" 57% of the times at the private courses. At the fee and public courses 52% of the clubs were bought from sporting goods stores and 17% from pros, the rest of the purchases being made from other outlets. Private club players bought balls from the pros 67% of the time, and from the sporting goods stores in 14% of the cases. Pro ball sales were 28% at the fee and public courses, and sporting goods store ball sales at these courses, 27%. Rest of the balls were bought from other sources.

"No Caddies for Cash" Is Hoosier Club Policy

MERIDIAN HILLS C. C., Indianapolis, will not permit members to pay caddies in cash. Not only does this prevent caddies making excessive charges, but club and member are protected against suit.

Members are advised of this policy by cards on which appears:

The Club Will Not Furnish Caddies for Cash! You must sign charge tickets.

Why? Because of Insurance. These service charges must get on our books to protect members and club.

If you pay your caddie cash, and later he claims injury, neither you nor the club is protected. Yet the club is liable. One such instance cost an Indianapolis club \$2,500.00 last year.

Therefore, the club insists that you sign tickets. Otherwise no caddie.

Thanks for your co-operation.

HERE IS something to cheer up pros who are worried about cut-throat price competition: B. H. Weiss of Gimble Bros., big merchants, says, "Nobody ever won a price war."