Pro Hope of Regaining Ball Sales In Standard Brands

ONE OF the effects of the withdrawal of the PGA and other pro trademarks from golf balls that promises to make the ball business better for the pros and manufacturers, is the curtailment of private brand ball manufacture by the leading ball makers. Prominent manufacturers have gone on record against the practice of selling balls for use as advertising by makers of other products.

This abatement of the ruinous competition pros were getting from packers, shoemakers, insurance companies and others who were handling balls on a basis of trading dollars and hoping for some advertising from the balls thus put into circulation is welcome news to pros. Pros who had to make a good part of their none too easy living out of ball sales rightfully felt that the volume of ball business in give-away balls of cheaper grades was getting to the point where it was threatening the future of the standard good ball. Manufacturers who have spent millions of dollars establishing a reputation for quality balls, also were imperiled by the flood of cheap balls each one of which meant that some good and fully identified ball was not going to be sold.

When the PGA agreement was made it gave both sides an "out." The manufacturers could withdraw from the private brand give-away business and devote their efforts to protecting and extending their investment in their own brands of merchandise. The pros had a better foundation on which to base protests against the give-away balls because they could disclaim any interest in a private brand ball of their own and could state that for the protection of the customers they were handling golf balls on which the name of a leading manufacturer was marked.

Another slant the pros got on the private brand ball deal was that it was helping to ease the pros out of their shop sales privileges. Balls with the pro's name, or the club's name marked on one pole had a good play for a couple of years. The backfire was that club officials got the idea that if there was enough ball business at the club to warrant a special marking for that club, then the volume was something that the club should take over in its attempt to keep out of the red. Although a pro might have sold only a few dozen of privately marked balls at his club the officials got the idea that there must have been many gross of these balls sold. The branding kept some of the boys busy explaining when their 1932 and 1933 contracts came up for consideration. The worst part of it was that some of the fellows didn't have a chance to explain—they just lost out and no questions were asked.

According to the statement issued in connection with the PGA-Manufacturers' deal for the elimination of the pro branded balls, it was expected that this elimination in itself would so sharply reduce the number of special brands that the pro would be in a better position to command the market because of his practice of stocking the established standard brands. The more private brand balls there are, the more competition there will be.

"This condition," continues the statement," if carried far enough, would—first, practically transfer the golf ball business from the hands of the golf professionals to the lowest cut-price stores; and second, react most unfavorably on the total business of the golf manufacturers."

Introduction of lower priced balls bearing the names of recognized expert and established makers of golf balls, the foremost manufacturers say, has done away with the reason for the pros having to compete with cheap, privately branded goods.

Further evidence that the pros are in fine position to regain full command of the golf ball market even in hard times, is found by many in the report of ball sales for last year. The 50 cent ball sales slumped 40%, while the falling off in the 75 cent ball sales was 30%. This better showing of the 75 cent ball in a year when many had forecast the 50 cent ball would be the biggest seller indicated that the people who buy balls want to know what they are buying.