

Pros Show Strength and Brains Out-smarting Cut-price Sales

By HERB GRAFFIS

NO FURIOUS dub after a sadly messed shot ever threw golf clubs like the stores have been throwing them around in sales this spring.

The hatchet-men have had a field day cutting prices because they had the buying situation just where they wanted it with discontinued lines of clubs. Manufacturers have been unable to finance through the banks and had to turn their surpluses into any amount of cash they could get.

For two reasons it has done the pros no good to cry about these sales. One reason is that practically all the stuff on sale was discontinued lines, and the pros ordinarily don't sell much of this type of merchandise. The other reason was a lot of the merchandise that had to be thrown overboard was stuff that the pros had tossed back to the makers too late in the season for re-sale.

The boys who don't consider an order a definite business deal like other retailers do, are helping a lot to continue this spring store sale business that knocks the pros out of some business right at the beginning of the season.

Looking over some of the thousands of store advertisements on golf club sales, we are convinced that the pro who is any sort of a merchant and worker doesn't need to worry about store competition.

The advertising copy of the stores was almost altogether a very poor grade of merchandising effort, wherein each store hacked at its competitors with price alone. Seldom was there any reason other than price advanced as a buying urge. "Dizzy prices," "Gigantic," "Sensational" and such trite headlines, feature most of the store copy. Once in a while some store came through with a slight improvement on the heads by such a line as, "A Blessed Event for Sportsmen," or, "Discontinued Models, but What Do You Care," but most of the stuff is terrible cheese and certainly wouldn't make anyone hanker to buy clubs at any price unless the urge for new clubs

already was keenly in the customer's bosom.

The sale advertising copy goes to emphasize the point that the pro makes the golf market. The other dealers come along and cash in. Why? Well, the tough, smart pro merchants can give you the answer without any whining for quarter. The answer is that the pros can't expect to get ALL of the business, but they can get more of it than they now are getting if they put across to the players the fact that they can meet all competition.

Just as an example: Pat McDonald, shrewd young pro at Rolling Green C. C., clipped some of the big store advertisements from his local newspapers, pasted them up in his shop, with the store signature cut off, and put over the advertising a sign reading, "All these bargains and some more, right here in this shop. Get your clubs *fitted to you* by an expert." Eddie Loos, one of the best business men in pro golf, takes the attitude that the store advertising is advertising for him if it makes people interested in buying. Eddie figures that if he hasn't made himself closer to his players than a store can make itself with advertising, it is his own fault.

Another alert pro who keeps an inventory of the contents of his players' bags, called up the people he knew needed clubs when the local newspaper advertising appeared with store sales. He sold six sets of irons one dead Monday at no expense other than telephone calls and time. He met the store prices, as any pro can do by cash buying and watching for the manufacturers' offerings of surplus and discontinued merchandise.

As a matter of fact the stores are cutting each others' throats on the price deal. They slash at each other until they have given away the margin they get from the manufacturers. A number of store golf departments have operated so decidedly in the red that the department managers of leading stores are swinging over to fea-

turing one first class line of clubs at standard prices.

The spring sales are demonstrating that it is plenty hard to sell the cheap stuff. Who wants to buy a cheap iron club at \$1.25, even, when some of the discontinued high grade irons can be had for as little as \$2.50? You might think there would be plenty of beginners or women players who would go for this \$1.25 difference, but it hasn't seemed to make many sales.

Manufacturers say they want to get away from the vicious circle in which the store sales figures, but they don't know how they can get to the public course player in any other way. This, unfortunately has some basis in truth, and will continue to have so long as many of the public and fee courses refuse to hire able pros on a basis that will give the pro a living, attract play to the course and serve the players.

One of the most interesting developments in changing this situation for the better is the engagement of Abe Espinosa by Cog-Hill club, a 36-hole fee establishment in the Chicago district. The operators know Abe as a well known pro instructor whose services are freely available to the course's patrons.

Even a superficial study of the spring sales by stores shows that the position of the able pro is unassailable in golf. The only merchandise that is selling is that for which the pros have built a reputation. Eliminate the pros from the deal as builders of the game and of brand reputation and you cut down the golf business to an extent that would very seriously, promptly and permanently affect every golf course and every manufacturer.

There has been no brilliant stroke of genius shown by the stores in putting on their spring sales. Not a dozen lines of copy in all the store ads is devoted to building up the game or developing the market with any other factor than cut price.

A couple of pros at a fee course in Massillon, O.—the Bonnie Brae course—put more selling stuff in their newspaper ad than any of the big stores in the metropolitan districts. These two boys, Sandy Hannah and Jock Taylor, headline their copy, "A Round a Day Keeps the Doctor Away." They invite the golfers to see a new line of first class clubs they have on display. They tell that "Saturday, April

15, will find our course in perfect playing condition."

Where they feature price is on a deal suggesting that the players "Have Those Golf Clubs Repaired Now! 50c a bag. For a limited time only."

Where clubs are beyond repair Jock and Sandy will offer the owners bargains in new clubs. It's a great feeder for business.

So, looking it all over, even the murderous prices at the store sales haven't put the pro up against a proposition that he can't beat without much trouble if he uses his head, his arms and legs.

Green Section Meeting at Midwest Garden, June 9

A NNUAL meeting of the USGA Green Section will be held at the Midwest turf garden Friday, June 9. The garden is on the estate of A. D. Lasker at West Lake Forest, Ill., about 8 miles north of the North Shore golf course where the National Open will be played June 8, 9, 10. Lasker's private 18-hole golf course, which the garden adjoins, is pronounced by many experts to be the finest 18-hole private golf course in the world and an inspection of it, as well as attendance at the Green Section meeting, will be well worth while.

Meeting will start about 1:30 p. m. There will be no golf tournament as the session is to be strictly business.

Dr. John Monteith, Jr., of the Section will explain the various tests at the garden and comment on the results. This year there will be a good chance to show the effects of various mixtures of organic materials in soil for topdressing. This series of experiments was started last year but was checked by reduced funds and bad weather after delayed planting.

Especially this year, when curtailed budgets are leading courses into many sad and lasting errors in maintenance, will the Green Section meeting attract the attention of those who are anxious to learn what is true thrift and what is expensive shortsightedness.

I NSIST THAT a soft fiber brush be used for scraping dishes in the dish-washing department. When a hard scraper or knife is used, the china suffers unnecessary breakage and scratching.