

Pros Report Business Is Well on Up-Grade

By HERB GRAFFIS

DESPITE A TEMPORARY set-back due to murderously hot weather, pro business this year is nicely on its way up. There are many indications that the pro percentage of golf merchandise sales volume has taken a substantial jump over the division the pros received during the four years previous.

The way things look at mid-season, pros this year are certain to do very much better than half of the dollar-and-cents volume in the golf goods field. Prices are reasonably set on clubs so the stores that have specialized on cut-prices are not doing nearly as much as in previous years. The pros have stepped into the cheaper ball business, too, this year. Consequently it may be that 1934 business for the pros will bring their volume in units of clubs and balls over the 50% mark in national business. If this happens, it will be the first time in many years that the pro annual business in units has exceeded that of all other outlets combined. As near as can be estimated the pro business was over 50% of the total volume in units in 1927. Then came golf's great popularity and a big market for cheap goods which were retailed through outlets other than pro shops. The smart pros have always been fussy about selling the customers value, not junk "bargains," which is the basic reason for their present comeback to control of the market.

General improvement in business conditions naturally has had much to do with the decided pickup in pro sales. But, if that had been the only factor, the store business in golf goods would have hiked greatly, also. Since store business hasn't improved anything like the business of the pros, the conclusion one must arrive at is that the pros are working harder and wiser.

Now, if the hustling pros are not handicapped too much by the lads who want to park on their posteriors and whine about things being tough and moan about the curves that are being thrown into them by stores, club members, manufacturers and destiny, the pros are going to be in indis-

putable command of the golf goods merchandising situation in a couple of years.

It is no cinch for the pros to continue this progress. There is no getting away from it, pros are hard to sell. They are scattered over wide reaches; they are often busy teaching when a salesman calls, some of them have had a tough time accumulating the dough necessary to keep their credit in good shape during the last few troubled years. Because of this combination the salesmen of some manufacturers prefer to do business with the downtown guys who are easy to reach. The downtown guys know this and play one manufacturer against the other and go to extremes to offset the advantage the pro enjoys with his shop at the point-of-use convenient location.

One little thing that all the pros can do to make the manufacturers jump eagerly to pro service is to recognize that it costs dough to sell the pros, hence the manufacturers' salesmen deserve prompt and considerate attention even though they all can't be given orders.

You can expect spottiness in any business, so it's no surprise that the improvement in the pro business varies. At the National, Western and St. Paul opens, and at the PGA championship, GOLFDOM interviewed almost 200 professionals and, to check up earlier reports, secured by mail statements on sectional conditions from competent pro observers.

Twin Cities Volume Good

In the Twin Cities district business was held back by a late spring and considerable winter kill on the courses. Such fellows as Len Mattson, Willie Kidd, By Chamberlin and Orville Chapin report an increase in women's business of about 15%. Entire business is about 10% better than last year. Larger clubs are in good shape and the smaller, newer clubs are coming out of the struggle, scarred but cheered.

For the Pittsburgh district the veteran Fred Brand says that club, ball and lesson sales are better than 1933 but only about 50% of the greatest year's business in the

district. Store competition affects mostly the small club pros but in places like Allegheny, which is Fred's spot, the cheap sales menace doesn't strike. There are many new players in the Pittsburgh territory and the fellows are working the lesson "in" strong. Women's business is fine, Brand says.

Club and ball sales with the pros in the New York metropolitan district, according to John Inglis, Fairview pro, and another PGA veteran official, are up 15% over 1933. Lessons are 50% ahead of last year all over the district. Store competition is negligible compared with what it has been in recent years, even though there are many new players in the district. Players are buying much better equipment. Women's business is great.

Arthur Jackson of Lincoln Park GC, Oklahoma City, reporting for that district, says club, ball and bag sales are slightly better than in 1933; lessons are about the same. Heat and drought are playing hell with the golf business and the pro troubles with store cut-prices in this territory are numerous. There is some increase in play but unless the hot weather breaks and the boys get a chance to catch up on a lively fall play, this district will be lucky to have same amount of men's and women's play as in 1933.

Lessons to men are off 10% from 1933 but women's lessons are up 25% in the New England district, estimates Lewis Myers, N. E. PGA official. Myers says that ball sales are up 25% over last year and that store competition is getting less serious because the PGA members are on their toes as merchandisers. Women's play is 60% greater. More factory workers and boys and girls are playing. "There is every reason to believe from 1934 business that golf will be back to normal in 1935," concluded Myers.

Chicago Sales Booming

Great gains have been registered in the Chicago district, observes Jim Wilson, president of the Illinois PGA. Down state, a good increase began but was checked by the heat wave. In numerous cases pros in the Chicago territory are doing from three to five times last year's business. Store competition is much less than in previous years because the firm prices of standard merchandise and the pro hold on the better class market doesn't leave enough business to stir stores into vigorous competitive effort. One large store for men, Maurice L. Rothschild, has entirely discontinued its

golf department. Several other stores have practically let up in pushing golf. Weather has brought a recent set-back, but play this year at private and fee courses will be well ahead of last year.

C. H. Perkins, Wampanoag CC, West Hartford, Conn., telling of the Connecticut situation, says: "Sales are 50% better than in 1933. PGA balls 'over the top' here. Store competition is unfair on cheap lines. There are more new players than ever before. Women's business is great. It's the pros' bread and butter, but it's hard to make some of the fellows see this."

Jimmy Anderson, well-known Michigan PGA official, reports that club sales are up 30%. Ball sales only slightly better because of store competition over which manufacturers do not seem to have exercised much control and which threatens to kill the standard prices of 75c, 50c and three for \$1, thus ruining chances of retail profit for pros and other established outlets and eventually sharply curtailing manufacturers' ball income. Sales in this district are 45% under the greatest year. Increase in private club memberships is marked. Women, especially young girls, are taking to the game more than ever.

Ball Gyps Cause Trouble

Ball sales cut-price competition that is giving the Michigan pros misery also is causing agony to the Kansas City district men, reports Al Collins. One big drug store carries standard 75c balls at 59c, and is making the pros bleed internally. The KC pros are planning to work out this situation with the Ball Manufacturers' association. Lessons are greater but are slumping during hot weather. Club sales are slightly less. More golfers are starting this year than during any year in the last four but many of them are joining private clubs on a shoe-string which may become untied. Club rosters are nearly filled all over the district. Top clubs like Blue Hills and Milburn are full. Women's business, for some reason, is not what it should be in this district.

Stars Aid Nebraska Golf

Martin Walsh of the Omaha (Neb.) CC says pros in that district are doing better than during previous two years. Achievements of Goodman and Bliss have encouraged many youngsters to take up the game and have given it a general boost. Store competition is not serious as members are loyal to the pros. Although general increase in play is O. K., women's business

Beginners' Golf School Big Success in Cincinnati



Bill Jackson of Camargo instructing his free group golf class.

S PONSORED and publicized by the Cincinnati *Post* and given the instruction efforts of five of the Cincinnati district's well known pros, a beginners' golf school has been a highly successful promotion effort for the same in the Ohio metropolis.

Six group lessons were given, with each of the professionals being responsible for almost 200 beginners. Pro co-operation was excellent. Robert ("Red") Straus of the Avon Fields muni course, Wm. Jackson of the exclusive Camargo club, Ed Brophy of Western Hills CC, Jim Brophy of Brophy's Driving Range and Art Smith of Summit Hills CC were the professionals who did the teaching.

The entire plan was handled on the order of the Chicago fee association-Chicago *Tribune* free golf school which this year attracted approximately 20,000 pupils.

Cincinnati's first year at the free lesson promotion stirred keen interest among those who have been intending to take up the game but never have been extended a helping hand at the start. It brought out new players to such an extent that the play at Avon Fields muni course this year is 60% over last year's figures.

It was smart reader service for the alert *Post* and was handled from both the sports and general promotion angles.

continues the same because of hilly courses, muggy climate and stiff winds.

Dewey Longworth of Claremont CC, Oakland, Calif., reports sales are $\frac{1}{3}$ above 1933, and about $\frac{1}{2}$ of 1929, the top year. Store competition is not strong and players are buying better equipment. Many new players are coming into the game and those who have quit are resuming. Women's business is about half of the total.

More good news of increase on the Pacific slope comes from Willie Hunter at Fox Hills, Culver City, Calif. Willie advises club sales are up 20% and ball sales are 30% above 1933. Store competition is nothing to worry about but always something to watch and guard against. There are many new players, especially among the youngsters. Lessons to women are good but sales to them are only fair. Sales

of merchandise are 30% under the greatest season.

John H. Lord, up-state New York pro notable, says in that territory pro sales are up 25% and lessons have increased 40%. Sales are 20% under the best season. Store competition is still keen. There are many new players and women's business is especially good.

Wendell Kay and Alf Campbell, western New York PGA officials report that business in clubs and balls is about 25% better in that district. Play is increasing and women's activities in the game are far greater than ever. New people are coming into the game more this year than ever before. Store competition is being stopped by personal solicitation on lower priced balls in cases where the pros have seen that the members have been buying else-

where. Generally the high-priced market is nicely on the increase and lesson business with its great "in" for the pros, is in fine shape.

Up around Tacoma, club and ball sales show better than 20% gain over last season, but for some reason, Jack Martin, Fircrest GC pro reports, lesson business is off almost 20%, and there does not seem to be a marked increase in the number of new players. Martin further comments that women's business is holding up and that since "very few women here have good equipment, they offer the best future sales outlet for the pro, just as soon as they get in the buying mood."

Jacobus Hails '34 PGA as Best Yet

By GEORGE JACOBUS

THE PGA CAN BE truly proud of our 1934 championship, one of the finest Championship events ever staged. At no tournament have I found more satisfaction and enthusiasm on the part of the players, the sponsors, the host club and the gallery, and not many tournaments have furnished more interesting and thrilling matches.

Every detail tending to contribute to the success of the tournament was carefully planned and arranged. The Buffalo Junior Chamber of Commerce and its fine leader "Hank" Comstock are entitled to sincere congratulations and thanks for their wonderful work and co-operation, and we deeply appreciate the extreme consideration and many courtesies extended to our professionals by the officers of the Park club.

I believe that a place and dates should be arranged for every PGA championship from eight months to one year in advance so that the underwriters and sponsors, as well as the PGA, may have ample time to make preparations and work up enthusiasm to the point that will assure the complete success as attained at the Buffalo championship. The importance of our championship and the publicity it receives increases every year and this year's event was the most widely acclaimed and publicized.

The gentlemanly and true sportsmanlike conduct of our boys at Buffalo made a deep and lasting impression on all who witnessed the tournament and resulted in a tremendous amount of favorable comment and publicity. I was happy and proud to be acknowledged president of a group of such fine, clean, high-type men.

"Old Timers' Day" Honors Long-Time Members

WESTWARD-HO Golf Club, Melrose Park, Ill. (Chicago district) is planning to give its members some day this month the opportunity of paying tribute to the long-time members of the club. Fifty-three old-timers, in which classification all members of at least ten years' standing fit, will be the guests of honor on that day.

Speaking of the event, the club's monthly bulletin, the *Breeze* says: "On that day we will pay our respects to those stalwart men of Westward-Ho who stuck with the ship and carried on when the going was rough. A program of golf has been arranged for their participation and will be followed by a sumptuous barbecue dinner served on the lawn in real barbecue style. After dinner there will be dancing and cards. This will be a great party, different from any we have had and every member should make a real effort to be there."

Pros Condemn Stymies at PGA Championship

THE STYMIE, wormy relic of the feather-ball era, was so thoroughly condemned by the playing pros at the PGA tournament at Buffalo you can expect some feelers will be sent out by the PGA in the direction of the USGA with the object of securing official elimination of the stymie in the United States.

Pros state that very rarely are stymies played in match-play championships at their clubs and that outside of the major amateur championships and PGA championship, there certainly is not enough use of the stymie to warrant its retention as croquet's contribution to the science of golf.

Unjust and unwarranted comment like that following the Marston-Munger match at the National Amateur last year and the lack of practice of both amateurs and pros in playing stymies are two of the tip-offs showing that the stymie may be dispensed with on this side of the water without any flood of tears.

Unquestionably nothing in the way of official statements will be forthcoming until after George Jacobus, president of the PGA, has had an opportunity to lay the pros' views on the matter before Herbert Jaques and other officials of the USGA.