

After Hot Weather Beating Pros Plan Autumn Profit

By HERB GRAFFIS

THIS year, such as it has been to date, has been a pro year. But that is not saying very much.

Starting out at a rate promising to break all recent records in rounds of play and in club and ball sales, the season ran into a spell of hot weather that was a stopper. For heat, duration and drought, the 1934 golf season was miserable from the middle of June until the middle of August. Only a few sections of the country escaped this sharp curtailment of the golf business caused by adverse weather conditions.

Store business has been a flop almost since the start of the season. Cut-price ball sales kept the stores doing some business, but not enough to bring many of them out in the black with their expense of handling golf sales. Club prices stayed pretty firm, the manufacturers having been fairly well cleaned out of excess stocks to toss out to the store boys in return for urgently needed cash on the line. Then, too, the clubs that have been bought have been of the better grade which people are educated to buy from pro shops because of greater certainty of correct fitting.

Despite the pros getting a goodly share of the business the dismal drop of play and sales during mid-summer made a lot of the boys gasp for breath. But don't think that being burnt out in mid-season has ruined hopes the smart lads still have for making 1934 the best year since 1930. Interviews, letters and newspaper clippings GOLFDOM has picked up from the middle of August to the deadline date of this September issue show that the bright boys are beginning to make that mid-summer tropical heat wave a blessing in disguise. The unbearable mid-summer weather has forced both players and professionals to cram a lot of action into the finest golfing months of the year in the eastern, central, near south and southwestern states. September and October have been slowly coming into their own as high spots of the golfing season and this year it looks like they are going to arrive.

The pro may hear plenty of moaning

around the locker-room by members who wail their uncertainties about prospects for general business, but if he is a successful veteran he recalls that he always has heard some belly-aching. The rich who have 80% of the dough howl because they haven't 90% or because they may have 10% taken away. The poor growl because they have so little dough and then shoot that by going on strikes called by some mugg who is getting his. The pro is in the middle and has such a hard time to collect his cut that he's a sap if he wastes time by letting the wailing divert him from his job of serving and selling.

Pros Have to Live, Anyway

So, forget the groaning you may hear about general business conditions and figure out some way to get the people to spend money for fun. The country probably won't go to hell because Roosevelt is the luckiest guy in the world—so lucky that after he traveled through the drought belt rain began falling in torrents. Plenty of the code dope is dizzy, but not as dizzy as the stock market in 1929. The brain-trusters may try to do stunts butter-fingered on the flying trapeze, but they can't fall any harder on their noble and hopeful buckets than the bankers did a few years back; so what?

The only "what" we can make out of it is that the whole thing is over the heads of the pros and golf writers, but inasmuch as we have to make a living in the golf business our first job is to see that we make a golf business to make a living in.

Hot Weather "Fire Sale"

One wise pro tells GOLFDOM he is sending out notices of a "fire sale" to his members. The notice reads:

FIRE SALE

ON

FINEST GRADE GOLF CLUBS
AND BAGS

The heat wave burned up my chances of doing the usual amount of business on best quality of golf clubs and bags during June and July.

Now I'm having a fire sale to turn my shop stock of these fine clubs and bags into cash that will carry me through the winter.

Now is the time for you and your wife to get that set of great new clubs and that new bag that you've wanted. Prices on golf merchandise are bound to go up next year, but you can be sure there will not be any noticeable changes in design.

Drop in and see the attractive reductions on the clubs you want. The best golfing time of the year is still ahead of you.

This sort of advertising going to the members will stir up business. There is plenty of money in circulation still and people are beginning to get the idea that it is good judgment to get some fun out of their dough instead of worrying about losing it or having it taken away.

Providence gives the pros a break after bouncing them around in June, July and part of August by handing them September and October. The customers are itchy to make up for lost time by smacking the ball around. The pros have to make this itchiness acute by seeing to it that the schedule of events for men and women is continued at a lively pace during the sunshiny, pleasant days of late summer and early autumn. If the regular schedule of events does not run far into September it will be a good thing for the club interests if the pro will consult with his golf chairman and head of his women's golf committee about events that should be added.

Lively Autumn Schedules

Many of the clubs during the latter part of last season learned that novelty events for men and women and mixed events draw larger entry lists than the early season items on the calendar. Events for the entire club sponsored and arranged by groups within the club—for example, the occupants of certain rows of lockers—drew very well and brought in a competitive element in staging such events as each group was anxious to have its affair more interesting than that of any other group.

One of the spots where many pros fall down and hasten the curtain fall on their selling season is by letting the shop run down. You can tell that the pros think the show is over by the way a lot of shops begin to look early in September. Merchandise is not kept clean and well displayed, the ball case is full of blank space, and generally there is an "Oh, what the

hell's the use" look around the establishment. It takes thinking and effort for a fellow to make his place look like business still is in full blast and it's not too late to buy when this appearance has to be maintained with shop stocks depleted. Some skillful arrangement of the remaining stock will do the job.

Another thing that pros and club officials may not count on but which is making late season playing more pleasant than it used to be is the greenkeepers' work in keeping the woods cleaned up. A few years ago leaves were left to blow whither the wind listeth over the course. Now, even during depression, keeping the woods cleaned out and the leaf situation under control is something that is almost generally done as an exhibition of greenkeeping genius in making the most of sharply restricted budgets.

This autumn the liquor situation certainly is going to have a favorable effect in continuing play. Bar profits even with sharply reduced service staffs will make it worth while for the clubs to encourage attendance clear up to the time the snow flies. There are those among the sturdy patriots who will take good advantage of the crisp days following the sweltering summer to catch up on their drinking out at their clubs.

There is a good prospect of the aftermath of the long and blistering heat of the summer being a marked extension of the club's period of attractiveness and usefulness to the members. It's an opportunity for the pros who think and who are eager to work in making a sprint in the stretch to overtake the business that passed them during the heat wave.

ONE MANAGER who is a pal of the pro at his club went to his board of directors and asked permission (which was granted) to charge pro guests unless they were guests of the club's own pro. The manager had learned that some members were inviting outside pro guests to get free playing lessons.

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GERMAN Tourist Information Office, whose press agent outsmarts the American guys in this work by calling his section the "literary department," is featuring growth of golf in Germany as a tourist attraction.

Wannsee, a half hour by auto from Berlin, is playable to patrons of leading Berlin hotels on payment of a 10 shilling fee.