

John Stevens Beats the Slump With a Branch Pro Shop

By BOB CUNNINGHAM, JR.

IT IS cheering to see that for most of the problems in the pro business the pros have the answer when they go to the trouble to work it out.

John Stevens, pro at the Mount Vernon (NY) CC, worked out the answer to his problem of cut-price competition. John has been at Mount Vernon nine years and operates on the policy that a pro to warrant employment by a good club has to make himself so necessary to the club it would hurt the club and its members to lose him.

Stevens knows that this policy cannot be worked out if a pro simply sits around and complains loudly to members or to other pros about cut price competition. He also doesn't believe that the pro should expect members to tumble all over themselves in giving business to pros if prices are lower elsewhere. It may be inferior goods that are advertised by stores at cut prices and possibly such goods, considering their value, are not real bargains, but the member may not know that and may have to make fairly little money go a long way in buying golf requirements.

It's up to the alert pro to give the member what he or she wants. That's only part of the cut price competitive job for the pro. He has to make sure that the member always knows that the pro merchandise proposition is attractive.

At the start of the season golf merchandise wasn't moving as it should for Stevens, so he decided to do something besides waiting and worrying.

A Branch Store for \$60

Stevens' shop at Mount Vernon is adjacent to the first tee at the club, and, although it is handy, it seemed to him that not enough of the members came into the shop for supplies. They didn't realize that he had the good merchandise they wanted and at the right prices. So the first thing for him to do was to make sure that they saw his stuff. Since the members weren't coming to him, he decided to go to the members.

He had a carpenter build an outside showroom facing the first tee as an addition to the pro shop. The place cost Stevens \$60 and it kept an unemployed carpenter busy for a week.

Stocking Up on Bargains

Then Stevens started out on an expert shopping tour. He bought up close-outs in bags, clubs and balls. He carefully examined this merchandise for quality. Each type of bargain ball he bought was stripped down. John showed his members comparisons between store cut-price merchandise, the Stevens bargains and the standard price merchandise. This, too, calls for work, but when it's done as Stevens did it, it gives the pro a member confidence and high rating of expert buying ability.

Part of the plan was to have frequent leaders of different kinds of merchandise, and after members began to realize that just so much of this goods was available due to John grabbing valuable close-outs, the sales jumped.

Bulletins to the members aroused buying interest. One of the Stevens sales bulletins, which listed the usual retail prices and the Stevens shop price on clubs, bags and balls, had the following message:

When you read your paper every morning you see various advertisements, selling golf supplies at low prices. Discontinued models in clubs and cheap golf balls. These goods are not always the best and much of this advertising is misleading. However, you feel that it is a saving and even though loyal to your home pro, every dollar counts.

I am going to take advantage of your feelings along the same lines and offer you the best legitimate bargains that you will ever find anywhere.

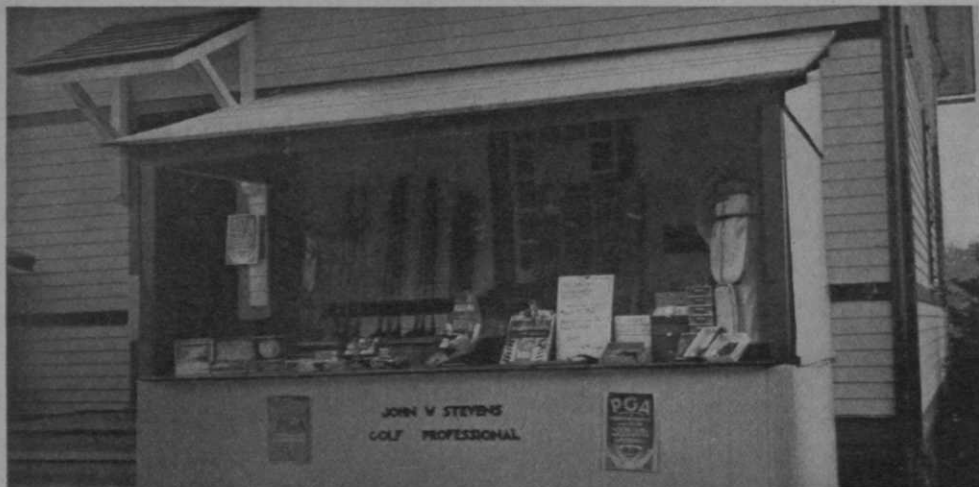
So from the 15th of July until the 1st of August you can outfit yourself for the rest of the season with the Finest Clubs, Bags and Balls—1934 Models and 1934 Goods—

GET IN ON THIS BUY AND

SAVE MONEY

REMEMBER—Until August 1st Only

Patronize Your Pro—IT PAYS



This outdoor shop, at the first tee, cost only \$60 to build; it has returned many times that amount this first season in added profits.

Business Jumps 60 Per Cent

The result of this shop addition and the buying and selling campaign was to increase John's merchandise business 60%.

One thing that Stevens points out that generally is overlooked is that each new club sold and each sale of balls in dozen lots not only benefits the pro but makes business better in all departments for the club. The player with new clubs or plenty of new balls is going to give this equipment active use.

All of the Stevens lessons are given on the course basis. He figures that this is the way to really show results with instruction.

A feature that Stevens stresses in pro merchandising is the education of the right sort of kid as an assistant. His assistant, Frank Antonelli, started with John nine years ago as a raw rookie. Today he is a first-class clubmaker by Stevens' own expert judgment and does a swell job of handling the shop. He's done his work so well that he never has had a salary cut during the depression.

An important feature of the Stevens service to his members is club repairs gratis unless new material is required.

John emphasizes a service policy of handling each member's slightest wish promptly and doing a lot of experienced and accurate guessing in seeing that many things the member wants done are handled before the member even has to go to the trouble of mentioning them. Meeting store competition was one of the things Stevens'

members wanted done, but didn't mention it, and the way that the Mount Vernon pro took care of this job for his folks made them happy and brought the pro shop into a profitable year.

British Caddies Get Ingenious Wet Weather Uniform

CADDIES of the Caversham GC are supplied with a serviceable and inexpensive wet weather uniform worked out by club officials and the Silvertown Co. Outfits of this kind have a place in club budgets.

The uniform is described by *Golfing* of London as follows:

"The uniform consists of naval pattern leggings, to keep the trousers from getting soaked in the rough, a cape made of light waterproof material, sufficiently voluminous to allow of the golf clubs being protected at the same time as the caddie himself. If the clubs are slung first, and the cape put on afterwards and buttoned up, by leaving one button undone it is possible to select a club and push it through the opening so made, with a minimum of risk of the grip getting damp. There is a hood to the cape, buttoned at the back of the collar, and capable of being raised as a protection to the head. In normal weather the uniform is set off by a neat blue beret upon which the monogram or badge of the club could, with advantage, be displayed. The cape can, when necessary, be rolled up, put inside the hood, and carried on the back as a form of rucksack, maintained in position by the cross straps which fasten the cape."