

MASTER of the MARKET

By HERB GRAFFIS

*Montessoro Makes His
Shop Golf Buying Center*

IN THE golf business, like in every other business there are some pros who couldn't sell the Normandie to a drowning man. But there are other pros who probably would be super-salesmen and written up in the success-story and salesmanship magazines if their work were being done in a broader field.

You don't have to go to the big city districts to see some of these selling stars who make a good living out of golf and have some fun too, because they know how to sell on the basis of giving their members service every time they buy.

One of these fellows is at a club which is one of four clubs in an Illinois city of 60,000 population. His stock at the start of the year is all the way from 90 to 130 sets of irons and 50 to 60 sets of woods. His stock at the end of the season is practically nothing. He has sold all this stuff—not sent it back to reappear in town the next spring as merchandise in a store cut-price sale of "discontinued models."

He starts his season with a golf ball stock in excess of \$1,500 cost to him, and he turns over this stock frequently.

There are 270 members in his club.

Do you think I am lying to you? That no pro can do business like this in a town of 60,000 population?

All right. The pro is Bert Montessoro. The city is Decatur, Ill., and the club is the South Side CC.

The catch in this story about the business that Montessoro does is that he stocks clubs that other pros in the neighborhood

can get quick. He helps the other fellows sell their players and he and the other pro split on the profit. Montessoro makes his good credit rating and thorough business ability work out to the profit of the other pros as well as for himself.

Seines the Community

There are about nine small courses outside of Decatur where there are no pros but in the aggregate a goodly number of golf enthusiasts. Good living doesn't cost much in the smaller towns. A fellow with an income that does look big to a big town guy can live high in a small town, play a lot of golf on a modest but satisfying little course and have plenty of money left over for buying good equipment. Montessoro does missionary work among the men and women in these outlying clubs. When there are women's guest days at South Side, Montessoro sees to it that these neighboring club women come on over.

He is not only a business getter, he is a business developer. When he went to South Side about five years ago there were only 160 members at the club and only 22 women playing. As has been noted there are now 270 members of South Side and 68 women played regularly during 1934. This year Bert expects to have 100 women playing. Remember, this increase took place during the depths of the depression when the average outsider would be figuring that things were deader than Adam at a town like Decatur.



A corner of Montessor's shop. Regularly stocked are close to 100 sets of irons, 50 sets of woods, and an ample stock of bags, balls and haberdashery.

Montessor is one of those fellows whose looks are liable to fool you. He is a big, stoop-shouldered bushy-haired guy who appears to be just one of those nice country boys. Get him talking about business and watch him spark. His eyes and vocal chords flash with a David Harum gleam and he lets you know that he enjoys business. He is a trader, but not the sort of a trader that lets the customer come off second best.

Here is Montessor's policy: "The only reason for playing golf is to spend a little time and money for enjoyment. So long as I see that their money gives them a lot in enjoyment, they are getting what they pay me for."

Bert gets them right at the start. He has been responsible for bringing a number of new members into the club and always sees to it that a prospective member gets attention that makes him want to join the club. He spreads his own golf around among a lot of people. That tips him off to sales and service needs. He keeps a lookout for equipment requirements and his shop boy is trained to keep an eye open for sales possibilities.

This practice of playing with many dif-

ferent people has been an especially big producer of business. Montessor sold his own set of clubs four times last season. He cites this as an instance of how he shows his customers that he insists on giving them the best. The members reason that if the clubs are good enough for the pro's personal use, they are good enough for the member.

Out-selling Competition

At South Side CC and in a town like Decatur you would think that competition for the business of club members would be intense. It is, although Montessor has it well licked for the simple reason that he keeps selling and talks business. There are plenty of members of the club who live very well and enjoy a lot of golf but for one or more of several reasons are not given to throwing money around loosely.

The discount buying through the purchasing department of a large local manufacturing company hits at Bert but he beats that by handling lines that are not discounted. Because he has made his golf business big and sound he does more volume than all other local retail outlets combined. He has been able to get exclusive in Decatur on three prominent brands.

However, he has a broad stock of leading brands and a thorough price range in clubs and balls. He makes a strong point in his sales talk on the volume he does assuring him the best the manufacturers have to offer. He also makes it plain that each club coming into his shop is personally, expertly inspected. He gives the customers "the works" on that line to the effect that they are sure when they buy from Montessoro and may be taking a chance when they buy from stores, where golf is just one of many lines.

On the golf bag business Bert does very well. He shows and explains the difference between bags. He shows them a good bag that he has had 17 years and compares it with some of the cheap and worn bags that members have fallen for. He points out the differences in leather, stitching and design and ends up with the clincher, "I'll give you this good bag if you can point out any detail where a cheap bag is anyway near as good."

Shop Looks Like Business

With all the stock Montessoro has there is a tendency to cram the shop so full of merchandise it would look like a warehouse instead of a shop. He avoids this by arranging his displays with the idea of featuring a wide variety of brands and prices so his prospective customers realize they can get anything they want. The shop is well lighted and it is kept as clean as a hospital operating room.

Displays are changed frequently so the shop visitors don't get accustomed to seeing the same old stuff but expect to see something fresh and new.

The thing that stands out about Montessoro's success for and at the South Side club is that it is no accident. It is the result of thought and work that Bert previously proved were along the right lines. Prior to coming to Decatur he was at Oregon, Ill. for four years. Oregon is a town of only 2,000 people. When Bert went on that job the club had only a few members. When he left it had 210 members and he had sold 210 sets of woods and irons. Remember in both the Oregon and Decatur cases that while Montessoro did all right by himself as a business man on these jobs, his first thought was to see that the clubs got members and that those members got great value from their club dues because of the golf service given them by the pro department. That is the tip-off to why officials and members of the South Side club who have been around know that

it's better business for the club to pay a salary to a real golf business man like Montessoro than to take a chance with some simple fellow who would eagerly offer South Side the Denver and Philadelphia mints, 210% of the shop profits and meals at all hours, for the South Side job.

Liquor Companies Muffing Club Influence Chance

RAN into one of the famous old-time liquor salesmen the other day and got to talking about the club liquor situation.

Said he confidentially: "The club manager these days is the chief teacher of the proper use of liquor. He alone can present the stuff properly in a way that fits into the right sort of an atmosphere of refinement and conviviality. Prohibition has ruined drinking elsewhere, even in the finest hotels. Look at the loose women in these good hotel bars if you don't think so."

To which your correspondent responded: "Then why doesn't your company advertise its liquor in golf magazines and give the managers a hand in this responsibility of education?"

Again he talked frankly. "Because my company and most of the other big liquor companies don't know what in the hell it's all about. I'm glad I'm getting to be an old man and won't have to see prohibition again but it's coming, sure as anything you know, if the club idea of sensible drinking isn't encouraged among the public that doesn't belong to clubs.

"What do you think would be the best liquor company service idea to work in the golf field?" the veteran was queried.

"I don't know for sure," he began, "but maybe it would be to have some well-trained women on a service staff going around to work with managers on the best ways of liquor service to women at golf clubs. That's the one spot where most of the old-time and new managers are pretty much at sea. But where in the hell would you get the women? It looks like the managers will have to work out most of the answers on liquor themselves. The golf clubs are about the most important spot in the liquor business today, but that's only one of a thousand things the new people in the liquor industry don't know."