

PRO BALL SALES

Official 1934 Sales Figures Show- Pro Hold on Profitable Price Level

THERE are some interesting angles for pro study in the official report on golf ball sales in 1934, as compared with 1933. Sales for 1934 up to August 31 of the leading makers' balls were 2% ahead of the entire 1933 sales, with the fall business going a bit stronger than in 1933. Private brand sales fell off, authorities estimate, more than 15%. The smaller manufacturers didn't do any better in 1934 than they did in 1933, which wasn't much.

The grunt comes when the 1934 figures are compared with the 1932 ball sales figures. The drop was more than 35%. Weather accounted for a lot of this and you can also figure in that 1934 was the worst year of the depression so people were wearing out the brushes on ball washers rather than following the practice of buying at least one new ball a round as in brighter years.

Percentages of sales in 1934 went about as follows:

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|-----------------------|-----|
| 75c balls | 56% |
| 50c balls | 14% |
| 3-for-\$1 balls | 21% |
| 25c balls | 9% |

The picture then looks O.K. for the pros because the big percentage class, the 75 cent ball, is where the pros do by far the greater part of their business. That is, the pros can see some consolation in the picture even though 75 cent ball sales were off 25% from 1932. The 75 cent ball sales in 1934 jumped about 10% over 1933. The only other price class to jump in 1934 from 1933 was that of the 3-for-\$1 ball which hiked about 12%.

The pro who doesn't sit down and study these figures, comparing them with his ball sales in various price classes, is missing the best tip-off to correct business policy in his shop operation. In normal years the ball business is about 50% of pro shop income and if a fellow really wants a check on how he is handling his business or how his members finances stand, he can compare his ball sales for a few years past with the number of caddie tickets issued at his club. It is to be supposed that a business man pro has his

ball sales segregated by price classes in his books. If he hasn't, he'd better make that one of his resolutions for the new season.

What Do Figures Prove?

The old gag about figures lying and liars figuring can't be put in as a rap against this yarn because its author is not so sure what the figures do prove. He gives only his conclusions which seem logical to him. If you have another conclusion, write us. It may help you and the other pros, too.

In the first place the national figures seem to indicate that the pros would be suckers to do anything to cut down the acceptance of 75 cents as price of the popular standard first class ball. The folks who keep playing golf through the depression periods and who play the most of it when times are good, obviously show in these lean year figures as the greater part of the golf market. Since the pros can't have it all they might as well take the most of it and make sure that the most is that part of the market where some dough can be made. It is no secret that the 3-for-\$1 balls give the manufacturers just a little more than an even break; on the two-bit ball, the chances are the manufacturers are out dough. It takes a lot more ball sales in the 3-for-\$1 class and the quarter class to make up the pro profit that's made on the 75 cent ball. The customers can benefit on the cheap balls just so long as the manufacturers are willing to lose dough and the pros lose dough to make it possible for those with very small incomes—the kids for instance—to become exposed to the golf bug. One of the manufacturers has made some interesting tests on the life of a 75 cent ball as compared with that of 3-for-\$1 and quarter balls, under actual playing conditions at private, daily fee and municipal courses. On the basis of cover life, the quarter balls stay in playable condition only one-fifth as long as the 75 cent balls. The 3-for-\$1 ball remains in fair condi-

tion one-fourth the number of rounds the 75c ball stays in good condition.

On the basis of those tests, the customer is away ahead financially, barring loss of the ball, if he buys the 75-cent product. So the pro is not strong-arming the customer when he pushes 75-cent ball sales, providing he does so without scaring the trade that hasn't got the dough. If a customer wants steak and hasn't got much jack, he will have to eat hamburger.

The other angle is that 3-for-\$1 hike in sales last year. It was enough to warn the boys that while their main play is to protect their 75-cent ball market, they don't want to be blind to a price range that lets the customer know the pro can take care of them. Drug stores and department stores gave the 3-for-\$1 plenty of push last year and it was surprising how well this priced ball sold in pro shops at a number of top grade clubs. Some pros report they sold almost as many 3-for-\$1 balls in dollar and cents volume to certain players as these players used to spend for 75-cent balls, but these cases are few and far between.

In the news, the other day, that one of the most astute of the department store sporting goods buyers had gone over as sporting goods buyer with one of the big drug chains, there seems to be a threat that there will be hell to pay in cheap ball retail competition this year. That guy is smart. His chain is big and they murder prices although the expert who "shops" their stuff and compares prices often sees that their offerings are excelled by standard brand merchandise at the same price. The pro isn't the one who has to fear this promised increase in competition. That will just cut the downtown buying up into smaller hunks and while the downtown boys fight it out among themselves the pros should be working wisely and persistently as sales missionaries among the folks who come out and play their courses.

Possibly one of the brightest indications that the pros either have the inside track on whatever good business is available or are improving as merchandisers comes from comparing the ball price class percentages of total volume in 1932 with the 1934 figures. The 1934 figures are given earlier in this article. In 1932, sales by classes were:

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|-----------------------|-----|
| 75c balls | 49% |
| 50c balls | 19% |
| 3-for-\$1 balls | 12% |
| 25c balls | 20% |

Therefore it looks like the pros increased their percentage of business (represented by the 75-cent ball class) 7% while the entire volume of ball business slumped off more than 35% in 1934 as compared with 1932.

So brethren, the box score doesn't show you up as dummies. Maybe you really are as good as we have been proclaiming. Well, if you can hike your percentage standings this year in the price classes where you can make some real dough and the customer gets a fine break you stake a firm claim to being the master minds and controlling powers of golf goods merchandising. If ball business in 1935 comes back even to the 1932 figure and the pros keep that 75-cent ball sales percentage of theirs up to 56% it will mean \$336,000 more pro profit than there was in 1934, or about \$100 profit average per pro retail ball outlet. And one part of all this figuring you can't deny is that \$100 is \$100.

Big Attendance Expected at Massachusetts Conference

ANUAL recreation conference and exhibit of the Massachusetts State college is to be held at Amherst, March 15-17. Success of the initial event last year was such that this year's sessions should be very well attended.

A main feature of this three-day session will be the annual Greenkeeping conference. This affair winds up the famous annual short course in greenkeeping conducted at MSC under the direction of Prof. Lawrence S. Dickinson. The exhibition of greenkeeping equipment and students' work together with a number of other sports equipment exhibits again will be held in the institution's large indoor athletic field. An increase over last year in the number of exhibits will be permitted by the college authorities and available space has been in keen demand.

Taking prominent parts in the conference are New England Greenkeepers assn., Massachusetts GA and the New England PGA.

Last year's conference proved to be of great benefit to golf club operating officials in view of the definite trend toward extending the field of country club sports facilities. It was brought out that the recreation business is New England's second biggest industry. The country club operating men got close-ups on general athletic policies and heard authorities in various fields of sport tell of the problems and possibilities of their particular sports.