

# DEALERS AIR WOES

## Annual Sports Conventioneers Admit Pros Hold "In" in Golf

**A**FTER the Sporting Goods Dealers convention and exhibition ended in Chicago, the manufacturers and their salesmen sat around expressing some post-mortem opinions that are worthy of pro notice.

Orders booked at the convention indicate the panic is over. Advance bookings are big on dealer business. The manufacturers are confident 1935 will be the first year of good sales for some time. Development work in the sport's market has been started by the Athletic Institute, a promotion organization with headquarters in the Republic Bldg., Chicago. C. O. Brown, formerly of the municipal recreation commission at Cincinnati, is the managing head of the athletic promotion organization.

Brown is a good friend of the pros. His work with "Red" Strauss, Cincinnati muni pro, in taking golf to office and factory workers by the group class method, identifies Brown as a fellow who knows what the score is in the golf business and who is competent to organize and direct a great golf promotion campaign when the Athletic Institute gets around to it. In the meanwhile the pros had better go ahead with all the promotion work they can think of, because a revival of hard baseball is the first job the Athletic Institute is tackling and there's no telling when this body will get around to golf.

### Sports Dealers Air Woes

Pros think they have troubles. Well, the sporting goods stores and manufacturers, to hear them talk informally during the evenings of the Sporting goods convention, can spot the pro five bisques on trouble before it's an even affair. The dealers are over the barrel in two ways so far as the golf business is concerned. The pros have a natural "in" on the higher quality golf business and are getting smarter and more energetic every day; so the dealers' problems in this respect are weighty. On cheaper stuff the competition that stores must meet is brutal. Here again the pros are showing great improvement. Muni and fee courses now have a number of first class business men pros who know what their players will go for

in price classes and are selling it to them by aggressive merchandising and advertising methods instead of sitting on their sterns and howling when the buyers don't come up in droves and lay it on the line.

Added to this competition the dealers have the institutional sales buyers (about which the pros also have squawked), the drug stores, the filling stations, the mail-order houses that are increasingly strong and active by mail and their own stores, and the premium business, whereby golf goods is given as added reward to commission or other salesmen. Even the distribution of golf balls as punch board prizes is giving the dealers a little woe, although as long as humans are humans there will be enough phoney punch boards so the guy who buys the board and its key will get most of the balls.

### PGA Ball Forces Margin Boost

The business of selling at discounts to company employees holds some hope for dealers under the new jobber arrangement, so it was spoken softly around the convention. Some dealers will take on jobbing functions and get themselves enough margin to sell companies for their employees. The jobber list extension, Sporting Goods convention comment ran, was forced on the manufacturers as an outcome of the PGA ball deal. It was argued that if pros get an extra dollar a dozen for selling golf balls that are not of the manufacturers' own Number 1 brands, the manufacturer in fairness to all legitimate outlets and in protection of his own brand sales has to make an equalizing concession to non-pro outlets.

When the pro angles responsible for the PGA ball deal are presented in arguing with the dealers, the dealers laugh in ribald manner. They are of the opinion that the pro weakens his case by over-emphasis on squawking instead of on selling. They further state that the reason the manufacturers nowadays are standing on their heads to do right by the pro is because the pro has done a much better selling job during the last five or six years, and not mainly because our boys have lifted their voices in bellyaches. Without sales, the squawks wouldn't have meant any-

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thing to the manufacturers, so the dealers point out.

One thing dealers don't overlook when putting heat on the manufacturers is that the manufacturers book a lot of business with dealers by simply setting up sample rooms to which the dealers come to shop and buy. Pros business must be obtained by going out to pro shops, and taking a chance on finding the pro between lessons. This adds to selling costs. When the pros in metropolitan districts get in the habit of doing more shopping they will add another strong point to their case as the most desirable and profitable outlet for golf goods, it must be admitted.

The old gag about pros returning unsold goods at the end of the season instead of considering an order an order and keeping the goods as the stores do unless they go completely broke, again was talked about. Buyers for big stores say that picking up this returned merchandise at low prices gives them the biggest merchandising edge they ever get over the pros. They take this advantage at the start of the season when it does maximum damage in backfiring on the pros. Returned goods from the pros is getting to be less each season but still gives the pro competition an opening that costs the professionals many sales, according to reports on previous spring sales made by dealers at the convention.

**Golf Goods Prices Seem Firm**

The price situation in sporting goods has the manufacturers nervous on some lines but not especially in golf. Club prices promise to be firm. The mail-order houses again will get clubs at pretty low prices for their store sales because the volume of this business helps the manufacturers meet overhead costs, although manufacturers admit they seldom make a nickel on this business. The sticks are said to be no bargains and can be beaten for price and quality by other retailers, but this statement is made by manufacturers who do not now happen to be getting the business, so you can take it for what it's worth.

Some dealers intimidated the pros are giving them and other retail outlets a big opening by actions inclined to move out

the 75 cent retail price as the standard on best quality golf balls. Dealers hope these pros will succeed; the dealers figure that the pros merely will be cutting their ball profits without appreciably increasing quantity sold and will be giving dealers a chance to compete on a price basis by offering other private-branded and not widely known or accepted balls. It's something for the pros to think about.

As a general thing the legitimate and established sporting goods dealers consider the pro a fellow to play ball with. There are so many smart pro merchants now that the pros are in command of the golf market and the good dealers reason that they'd sooner play with the pros than have the golf goods business go into the hands of many cut-price outlets that would handle golf as an outside line and handle it as a come-on, even if it only broke even.

**F. W. NORRIS**, pres. of the famous Oyster Harbors club on Cape Cod, announces selection of Gene Anderson as pro. Gene, the release said, was selected from 170 applicants on the basis of "ability and personality".

One thing that stuck out in the press dope was reference to Gene's training as assistant under Willie Hoare, George Bowden and Harold Gammon. Club officials recognize that training under a first class master pro is reasonably strong assurance a young fellow will make a good pro. Come to think of it, the veteran pros who are most successful are those who can point to the most good younger pros they have trained as assistants.

Apparently then this business of selecting and training assistants is one of the very important phases of the pro job. When you see a pro with an assistant who is not right or who isn't being carefully and consciously tutored in all details of the master pro job, then the pro for whom that kid works is missing a chance to identify himself as a fellow who knows and handles his job thoroughly.

**R. W. (DOC) TREACY**, secretary of the PGA, has long been pro and greenkeeper for the Woodmont CC, West Allis, Wis. This year Doc has a new title at Woodmont. He is business manager. So far as we know this is the first time a private club has named a business manager by just that tag. It looks like a good idea and it makes its debut with a good man.