

HE'S A **LOW**-PRESSURE SALES EXPERT

By HERB GRAFFIS

AL. WATROUS



IF you want my opinion, the best job of club selling done at any golf club in the United States, is that done by Al Watrous at Oakland Hills CC where the 1937 National Open will be played. Should you follow the popular custom and say I am dizzy on this one, I will welch to the extent of saying the boy who beats Al in this line is the champ club seller.

A very good average age of the clubs in pro-shop storage racks is four years. This means that a pro sells about a quarter of his market limit in clubs if he is doing better than the general run. Frank Walsh, some other fellows and I went over Al's storage one night and although an actual count was not made of all bags in the racks, my judgment is that Watrous' members average a new set per in less than three years.

How does the guy do it? He is probably the world's lousiest high-pressure salesman. There is no more slug in Al's selling than there is in a custard pie. But the members buy and buy; when Al has something for them they are more anxious to get it than Al is to sell it, which is what many of the boys would call heaven.

I've got the answer for you and it's an important detail of the expert pro's job about which very little has been written or said. It's something that distinguishes a thoroughly qualified pro from a fellow who still has something to learn to be worth the most to his club members.

The answer to Watrous' superb selling is that he loves clubs!

He Seems to Hate to Sell

I have seen wealthy dealers in rare books and art operate. Those fellows so highly prize what they have to sell that honestly, they almost cry when someone buys something from them that shows them a swell profit but takes it out of their stock. They know art values and they are responsible for developing a cultured and affectionate interest in these works among their clientele. It's a clien-

tele, not just a bunch of customers. Same way with Al's members who buy clubs. They're clients. Of course that attitude isn't developed in one season, but it's certainly worth cultivating.

Al loves clubs because he knows them. So do you. That's the biggest thing you as a pro merchant and member counsellor have over the store competition, but do your members know that you are the same sort of an authority on clubs that Dr. Rosenbach is on books, Duveen on art?

Chances are that most golf club members can no more tell the difference between golf clubs than they could tell the difference between the Kohinoor diamond and a phoney you could get for three bucks at Uncle Moe's. That doesn't hold good at Oakland Hills. Al has those folks so they probably are the best judges of club construction and design of any club membership in the world.

Part of the explanation for that is the mechanical influence bound to prevail in a club having many of Detroit's motor magnates among its members. Such members are M. E. Coyle, Chevrolet president; John Oswald, Oldsmobile chief designer; C. Harry McAleer, auto polish plutocrat; Bert Lyon, auto bumper inventor; and Chris Brinke of the Allegheny Steel Co. But there are others of non-mechanical training to whom Al has carefully and repeatedly explained the niceties of club construction and design so that they consider themselves experts, and not without license because they can hold up their conversation end on club technicalities in almost any pro argument.

The beautiful part of it all is that the games of these men reflect interest and possession in the fine club line by scores

considerably lower than those you expect from extremely busy men. Their enjoyment of these clubs brings them out for a lot of golf, and that's to the benefit of any executive under the pace they maintain in Detroit.

Extension of this appreciation of club-making artistry is by no means without its angles of hard work, expense and responsibility. Watrous makes two factory trips a year at his own expense to see that clubs are made exactly to the requirements of his members. Some of these requirements are special and involve extra cost in the selling price, but to a buyer who really knows, it's worth money to get clubs exactly right, and nothing but perfection to the prevailing modern standard will do.

Club Must Fit Or It Is No Sale!

Watrous will not sell a club that is not exactly right for the player who is to use the club. If Al hasn't the right club in stock, the player either will wait until Watrous can get it from some manufacturers' stock or get it made special, or the player can buy elsewhere. Now and then some of them do buy elsewhere, but they come back to Al eventually with a tale that's an advertisement for his policy.

An important effect of the Watrous practice of educating his members in fine club appreciation is that sharp seasonal selling does not fold up his business after the early spring sprint. When a player sees and feels a new club or a new set that makes a lively appeal, that player buys, even if it's September. Again, there may be the automotive business influence because the automobile people have been smart in easing off the seasonal selling curse which still tends to choke off club selling after June despite the fact that numerous first class pro businessmen have shown both pros and manufacturers that golf clubs can be sold while golf is being played.

The greater part of the golfing public undervalues the difference that clubs make in a game. You hear the remark that regardless of what clubs the star pros have, there wouldn't be a difference of two strokes a round in their individual games. The pros themselves know that's the baloney and are their own best customers in the ceaseless hunt for perfect clubs.

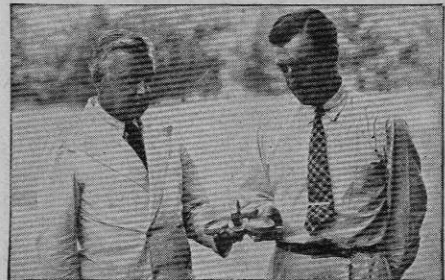
However, the pros will admit from their extensive observation that clubs make more difference to the poorer player's score than

to the games of the stars; hence, there's a greater reason for the poorer players being given conscientious expert advice in club purchasing. On that basis the Watrous policy has worked out happily for the Oakland Hill members. Al's own profit results from the service members of a first class club are entitled to get.

The public does not realize the vast and significant improvements that have been made in golf clubs during the last three years. Counting each development in head design and construction, shafts and grips of fourteen of the clubmaking companies supplying the pro trade and the five steel shaft makers, you could conservatively estimate that there have been 5,000 changes in golf club design and construction in the period 1935-36. It stands to reason that each of those changes is an improvement in the opinion of some qualified expert or the change would not have been made. Hence there are 5,000 reasons why a club bought in 1933 is enough behind the times today to be costing its owner strokes and enjoyment—and probably money.

But to get the golf public aware of that, constant change and advance requires their education in clubs as works of art. Watrous has been teaching his members in that respect and it has been mutually pleasant and profitable to the members and Watrous. It's something for you to think about.

Manero Given Wrist Watch as Reward for Open Win



TONY MANERO'S timing is under good control. The Gruen watch people gave the National Open champion one of their handsome wrist watches in appreciation of Tony joining them as a high-priest of good timing.

Lou DeGarmo, who handles the Gruen advertising, engineered the presentation, which was made by Bill Richardson.