



The pro-shop at Recreation park is in strategic location to get the maximum of through traffic from course patrons.

## HE DOESN'T LET BUSINESS GET BAD

By D. SCOTT CHISHOLM

**R**ECENTLY I motored from Los Angeles to Long Beach in search of something unusual in the way of a story from a chap named Harry Bassler, who holds forth as professional at the municipally owned and operated Recreation Park golf course at that city by the sea. En route I recalled the time some ten years ago when I volunteered to drive the eminent Damon Runyon to the first Long Beach Open tournament. We got lost among the oil fields and took four hours for an hour's ride. Eventually we arrived at the golf course as the last threesome was approaching the home green—and Damon never muttered a word of reproach or rebuke. I recalled these facts most vividly this beautiful Easter morn as we drew up at Bassler's ultra modern shop atop the hill.

Knowing Harry as I have done for a number of years and the close attention he has always paid to his business of running his shop for profit, it was not necessary for me to telephone in advance to learn if he would be there. It was on

Easter Sunday and I knew he would be on the job. I caught him selling a two-bit pair of garters and from the undivided attention he gave that customer one would get the impression a complete set of clubs was at stake. He didn't run away from his man to shake hands with me nor any of that stuff. He finished his transaction with his customer first and then and only then did he give me the grip of friendliness. I think the last time I had seen Harry was when I had the pleasure of announcing that he had won \$800 for taking third place in the 1936 Seattle \$5,000 Open tournament which Macdonald Smith copped in a streak of amazingly fine golf. I stood on the last green at that event, acting as announcer of scores, when Harry closed his final round with four birdies in succession to pocket the jack.

## HARRY BASSLER



addition to selling his tickets, when occasion demands. I think having my own man there is of vital importance," said Bassler.

A golfer recently asked Harry how business was. Without a moment's delay he answered, "Business is always good. I never let it get bad." Famous words, indeed, and worthy of analysis. This remark interested me very much indeed, so I threw a few inquiries at Harry—such as, "How do you keep things moving all the time—in wet weather for instance? How do you get them out to the course when they know the course is unplayable through rains?"

Here are some of this very clever lad's replies and explanations: "First of all I try to turn over my entire stock of clubs every 60 days. I discount every bill that comes into this shop which puts me in right with the manufacturers. At the end of 60 days, if I find a set of clubs that has not moved, I have an arrangement with every manufacturer whereby I can exchange that set for something that is more likely to sell. That privilege comes through my bill discounting. The new merchandise that takes the place of the old makes my stock look as fresh as paint every two months and my customers notice that. I don't leave it to an employee to mail checks in payment of bills. I do all that personally and then I know I am paying them within discounting time. You would be surprised just how much cash I clear by discounting from month to month.

#### Plans Rainy Day Activities

"In wet weather a great many of the regulars who play Recreation Park know that I generally run off motion pictures of the stars and also, at times, of our own players and they hate to miss a show where their own pictures might be running. I do this in my shop where they sit around and are in constant touch and view of all my merchandise. You would be surprised how much I sell on wet and unplayable days in this way. The boys have lots of time to handle clubs and inspect my stock and I see to it that all my help is on the job every day, rain or shine. I try to keep them as busy on an off day as on a Saturday or Sunday when

Harry Bassler has a finely arranged shop. I would imagine it is the professional's ideal because every player who tees off at Recreation Park has to enter his shop to purchase his starting ticket. There is no other way out of it. And if he enters the locker-room, as the great majority of them have to, he has to walk clear through and past all of Harry's merchandising display. He is bound to almost rub shoulders with all sorts of club sets and bags which are tastefully displayed in abundance along the walls and on the shelves.

Players cannot help but be halted by boxes of merchandise that form an attractive alley en route to and from the locker-room. The arrangement is uncannily cunning and would do credit to any merchandising magnet of the modern order. The entire environment is inviting. The walls are profusely decorated with photographs of famous golfers which create much interest and add a decorative attractiveness to the whole surroundings.

#### Handles Ticket Selling Himself

Harry Bassler has left nothing to chance in the selling efficiency of his shop. There is no city employee selling the tickets to the hundreds of players who come every day in the year for a round at Recreation Park. Harry sees to that. He has his own man handling that job. Harry pays that attendant out of his own pocket and in this manner perfects the efficiency and completeness of his sales staff. "A city employee might be O. K. but I'd prefer to have my own man at that post as he can also make sales from my stock in

we sometimes handle as many as 600 in one day.

"The players spend hours looking at the action pictures of the big professional players that decorate the walls of my shop and I have to do a lot of explaining this grip and that stance to them.

"I believe every pro-shop should be decorated in this way as it creates added interest to the general surroundings and keeps your prospective customers mighty close to the things you want to sell him. Of course in fine weather our business is made good because of the fact that I carry in stock everything a golfer needs and there is no need of his having to visit a down town store for anything.

#### How Cut-Price Competition Is Met

"Stores don't bother us in the Long Beach district. We've beaten them to that and I'll tell you how we did it. Up to three years ago these big stores did most of the golf business and the pro-shops were well nigh starving. I gave the matter much serious thought and one day I told Larry Gleason and a lot of my brother pros that I thought I had an idea that would lick store competition for all time. We formed the Associated Golf Professionals of Long Beach and took in 21 pros in and around the district. A sort of protective organization, you understand. We were out to give fight to the downtown stores who were muscling in on our game. And here's how we operated.

"If a certain store advertised or if the information came to our ears that said store was going to sell, or had sold, a set of irons made by the Goofy Manufacturing Co., for any cut-throat price, the Goofy Manufacturing Company's merchandise was out of luck in pro-shops right there and then. That at once killed off stores' loss-leader and price slashing competition with the result that the pro's business increased to a very marked degree in our section, and all of us are happy and contented.

#### They Post Other Pros on Allowances

"The case of golfers wanting to dispose of old clubs is another point our members took up with much seriousness with the result that we've also solved that dangerous business. If a player asks Larry Gleason at his shop how much he could get on his old set of clubs and if Larry told him he would allow \$20 on

them, Larry at once telephones my shop at Recreation Park regarding this bid and states the price. Being the center of the Association for our Long Beach district, we telephone every other member and inform him of Larry's \$20 bid for the old clubs so when the player goes ashopping—and they generally do—and asks the same question at Al Gruber's Palos Verdes shop some ten miles away, he gets the same bid as he received at Larry's Virginia shop, maybe only twenty minutes intervening. In this way we protect one another and are on our guard against any chiseling, and it helps a lot to create a fine spirit of comradeship amongst our local pros.

"Much business is created in our district by staging amateur-pro competitions twice each month throughout the year. And we also team up with the women players in the same manner. Prizes taken from stock of the member whose club we happen to be playing at are put up for competition. Usually it means that the pro sells somewhere in the neighborhood of \$60 worth of stock at each event. If any pro absents himself twice in succession from any of these events, we will not play at his club for a period of months. That is the punishment for want of interest.

#### Teaching Youths Pays Dividends

"I am a great believer in teaching the youth of our country even if it has to be done gratis. When any of our district pros are slack at their clubs it is an understood fact that he must offer his spare time to teaching of public school boys and girls without fee. This pays dividends in the end.

"No less than 70 juniors I taught some years ago are now to be counted among my best cash customers and my most loyal word-to-mouth salesmen and women. There's money—and good money—to be made in the golf shop if you treat your golf shop as it deserves to be treated.

"Carry reputable merchandise made by reputable concerns who stand ready to treat you in a reputable way, pay attention to your business rain or shine, engage competent and courteous help, display your merchandise in an attractive manner, keep it fresh and new looking and you're bound to do good business.

"Business is good. I never let it get bad."