

SHOP SALES LAG

By HERB
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*Play was well ahead in May, but
not sales; pros hold remedy*

GOLF play up to the last week in May has been ahead of that of the corresponding period of any other year within the scope of GOLFDOM's records and the memory of veteran observers in the golf playing equipment field. Part of the big play is due to the favorable weather early in the year and a steadily increasing departure from the old tradition, in some sections, that the season should not start until almost Memorial Day. Another reason for the big play is the national trend toward participating recreation rather than dependence on the spectator phase of sports for recreation. Increased promotion by energetic and wise club officials and pros also is beginning to show definite results.

But—and here's the cockroach in the ointment—golf ball sales are shy of an increase corresponding with the increase in play, and golf club sales of some brands are sharply off from last year's figures, not only in pro-shops but in store dollar-and-cents volume. Part of the failures to keep sales apace with the greater play is attributed by pros to the failure of some manufacturers to co-ordinate advertising efforts with the sharply defined market. It's no good to blow a wad of advertising money to reach people who don't play golf when there are only approximately 1,500,000 constituting the active golf market, and of these probably not 600,000 can be expected to buy woods, irons or putters during phenomenally good years. With the golf market thus sharply defined, the pros who are studious and successful merchandizers wonder at the thin and brief advertising treatment their club members are receiving.

However, the pro has to make most of

his living by the profit on ball, club, bag and accessory sales and does most of his selling during a period of not more than 6 months. In a large section of the country three of the liveliest months of the selling season already have passed. The pros have seen, in numerous cases, how the house business at their clubs has increased substantially over last year so they can't altogether explain the lack of corresponding increases in the shop to lack of money among the members.

Pro Must Follow Through

The stage of the season has been reached now where the pro can't wait for explanations. He must sell. When he's a merchant he knows that, naturally, the best advertised brands are going to have the quickest consumer acceptance, so they'll push these lines strong so they can cash in on the persistent advertising that is sharply focused on their members.

But there's no advertising that will do a 100 per cent selling job of golf balls and clubs for a pro. The pro has to do the following-through himself. If his shop business is off, he can't hope to make it any better by taking the afternoon off by going out to play with a pro comrade at a neighboring club. He can look through the bags in his rack and pick out a few members who ought to have new clubs, or whose ball purchases haven't been up to par. He can begin telephoning these members for a game, to be sandwiched in among lesson times. If the time is to be a dead loss anyway, the smart pro will take a chance on getting close to some member who should be a better customer. The personal interest thus shown is the greatest sales come-on that a pro can use. I've had that tip straight from some of the best of pro merchants—fellows who do business right through any slump.

Another tip is to watch the bags of members for outside ball purchases. I

Shawnee-on Delaware where the 21st PGA championship will be played July 10-16, is regarded as the birthplace of the pro national organization. During an evening at the first Shawnee Open, 26 years ago, pros formed the nucleus of the present PGA. Among those at that meeting were Freddie McLeod, Alex Smith, Gil Nicholls, Jimmy Donaldson, Tom MacNamara, Jack Jolly, Jim Barnes, Jack Hutchison, Tom Boyd and Jack Hobans.

Atlanta pros have been getting deserved good breaks in publicity lately. Charley Yates, winner of the British Amateur, is quoted in cables lauding the teaching of his mentor, George Sargent. Jack Troy, acting sports editor of the Constitution, in a "Break O'Day" column tells about "Grandpa" Howard Beckett's 20th anniversary at the Capital City CC. Jack pays high tribute to the service Howard and his comrade professionals have given Atlanta. He mentions Dot Kirby and a number of young man golfers as examples of the Beckett expert tuition.

know one smart pro who saw that a member of his was getting an advertising premium ball by the dozen, not only for the member's own play but for friends who also were club members. The club had given the pro assurance that members would patronize the pro-shop so the pro could make a living, but club officials had failed to notify the members and they didn't realize they were giving their pro a bum deal. It was too late for the pro to come right out and raise hell, and it certainly would have been a tactless and futile thing to do.

Shows Outside Buys Are No Bargain

What this pro did was to quietly hand the member a new ball, asking the fellow to play it and give the pro his opinion. The member, flattered, came back with a highly favorable report on the ball. The member shot over 100, so you can imagine what his opinion, as an expert, was worth. The pro, in a private talk with the member, told the member that the ball was a three-for-a-dollar ball. The member was surprised. He thought he had been playing a 75 cent ball. "How much have you been paying for those advertising balls you've been playing with?" the pro asked. The member remarked that the price was \$6.00 a dozen. "Well, you see I can beat that price \$2.00 a dozen and can give you a ball that is better for you than the one you've been playing. We ought to get together on your ball buying." The pro made that comment and laughed. He made no further selling talk at the time. But that member and his friends have been buying balls, three-for-a-dollar, 50 cent, and 75 cent, at that shop since that time.

If that pro hadn't kept a close watch on what his members were using when they played he'd never have been tipped off to sales possibilities right under his nose.

The moral is that plenty of slack in shop sales can be taken up by a pro who

will keep a close watch over his players' equipment and see what they need. The biggest point in selling is to know what the customer needs, and very few retailers are in the pro's fine position to determine the requirements.

When you know what they need your selling becomes 50 per cent easier. Look through the bags in your shop today and make a list of the men and women who could use new equipment. Then ease up on them. You're smart enough to be able to make the correct approach or you wouldn't have been able to make money in pro golf this long.

Indiana Town, With WPA Help, Gets Modern Golf Plant

LINTON (Ind.) golfers hardly recognized their own course this spring when they played their first rounds over the course which has been transformed into one of the finest golf plants in southern Indiana. Some energetic planning by city officials, plenty of hard work by the "faithful," and some WPA cash have provided a greatly improved nine-hole course, and a beautiful \$30,000 clubhouse.

The course was formerly the old Linton CC, a private layout which found the Depression too much of an obstacle and which for a few years operated on a fee-course basis. The city of Linton was finally impelled upon by the "never say dies" to make it a public course, a part of the city park system. It was purchased on option by the city in 1934 and WPA labor obtained to transform the sand greens into nine bent grass greens. In November, 1936, the option on the property expired and the city, by ordinance, purchased the course for \$4,000 with a down payment of \$800 and yearly payments of \$500. Additional WPA cash came along in 1937, and work on the clubhouse was begun last September.

The clubhouse is of stone construction, measuring 42x70, with terrace work and landscaping in proportion. There is a basement under the entire flooring, with showers and lockers for men and women. On the first floor are a dining room, lounge, three fire places, a fine kitchen, pro-shop, and caretaker's room. The building will be ready early in June.

Course officials announce a record membership has already "joined up" and plenty of play is expected from golfers in adjoining counties. Membership fees are reasonable so that most townsmen can enjoy the course.