

500 PROS HOLD SHOP SALE

By HERB
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Many thousand dollars worth of shop merchandise sold during national "Birdie Special" event

ESTIMATES made by experienced professionals in all sections of the U. S. indicate that the pro-shop income this fall will be increased by some sum between \$150,000 and a quarter million bucks of the legal tender, through the medium of the pros' initial late-season sale of golf goods conducted on a national basis.

The "Birdie Special" sale, planned by PROMotion after consultation with a number of the most successful pro merchants, is being conducted from August 27 through September 5 by approximately 500 of the country's liveliest pro businessmen. The idea of the sale was to convert shop stocks into cash before the season closed, and to remind shop patrons that as long as golf weather remained there was good reason for continuing to buy at the pro-shops, especially when bargains were offered on pro-quality merchandise.

Shops Can Also Offer Bargains

Another, and important, objective of the Birdie Special sale was to get across to pro-shop customers that the pro-shop was the outstanding spot for legitimate bargains in carefully selected merchandise at a wide price range. This point was emphasized in the planning by the successful pros who collaborated in establishing the basis of the campaign. These pros brought out the point that all the complaining pros can do about prices can't have any weight unless the pros demonstrate that they are smarter sellers than the stores. Furthermore, these sage pros say, there is a serious risk of alienating public favor from pro-shops by putting the loud pedal on pleas and threats of maintenance of golf goods prices on a top price scale. The public learns of such campaigning and promptly goes downtown, often ending up by buying some cheap stuff, thinking it a great bargain.

The problem of selling first class golf merchandise at proper and firm prices will have to be handled adroitly, say these men who are high above the average in pro earning and shop volume.

Consequently, they recommended a demonstration of live, smart pro bargain merchandising as an exhibition to the

public of the pros' awareness of the public's keen interest in careful spending. They figured such a campaign would be far more effective than verbal popping off which not only has been futile but dangerous, so far as the public is concerned.

Some Pros Didn't Need Sale

How right this analysis was, is attested to by the 500 pros who are putting on the campaign. An analysis of the credit standings of the 500 pros who are in the Birdie Special campaign shows an amazingly high rating, and plainly indicates that the first campaign was automatically selective in getting the foremost pro businessmen.

In planning the Birdie Special campaign, it was kept in mind that there are quite a few excellent and successful pro merchandisers who would have no use for such a selling effort, due to conditions at their clubs or involving their own shop stocks. Logically, such a campaign would have no application unless the pro were up against the problem of moving stock and making up for a drag in the year's business. Some pros, due to fortunate conditions at their clubs and to their own efforts, wisely might refrain from a sale as the season drew near to its close.

It was also kept in mind that the sale idea in pro-shops would have to be handled with discretion and foresight, for fear of establishing a precedent that might backfire. However, the present competitive sit-

More than a hundred veteran golfers had active participation in the Golden Jubilee tournament at French Lick Springs, Ind., Sept. 2 and 3. The event celebrated golf's fiftieth anniversary in the U. S. Some of the players have been at the game more than 50 years, having played prior to their arrival in the United States.

Many of the field have played more than 40 years.

Jimmy Anderson, pro at Pine Lake CC, Pontiac, Mich., and prominent in Michigan and national PGA affairs, for some time has been embarrassed by the advertising and sale in the Detroit area of clubs bearing the name "Jim Anderson." Anderson took action to stop the sale of clubs bearing his name as their brand. The case did not reach court inasmuch as the company distributing these clubs agreed to discontinue its activities in this direction.

uation permits the stores to make a big play of bargains, while the general tendency in pro merchandising passes up the sales drive idea, thus letting the public get the notion that the pros can't tackle store competition on a price basis, as well as on a quality platform.

However, these points were made obvious to the real pro merchants so the fellows who did not have surplus stocks or who did not have the need of a late season sales push, could skip the Birdie Specials idea.

The campaign was deliberately planned to help only those who were willing to help themselves, and to discourage any half-hearted waste of the expensive material in the campaign. Perhaps, consider the pros and the GOLFDOM staff who united in planning the campaign, that deliberate plan of sifting was a mistake. Many of the fellows who could make highly effective use of the Birdie Special campaign in working themselves out of bad financial situations, were not given a strong "come-on" in the campaign's solicitation. They were told that the success of the campaign called for use of the Birdie Special material together with plenty of their own brains and energy. The solicitation was pretty raw in this respect, and probably discouraged some fellows who have been led into the error of believing that some magic by the P.G.A. or the manufacturers will solve all pro-shop selling problems without making it necessary for a pro to stir.

Campaign Aimed at Public

What these boys don't appreciate yet is that the PGA, the pros and the manufacturers, all together, don't control the golf business. The public is boss. Therefore the Birdie Special campaign was focussed strictly on the public, at the recommendation of the pros who collaborated in planning the campaign. It was their thought that the pro who didn't see the wisdom of this basis for a campaign was out of

luck, but that it was the pro's own fault for hoping that the Seven Dwarfs would walk in and pour a basket of gold into his lap while he was sitting down.

Alert manufacturers quickly saw how the Birdie Special campaign was bound to click with the public. They offered their own surplus stocks as clean-outs to pros at special prices, with the result that in at least three cases pros who beat the gun on the starting date of the Birdie Special campaign say that stocks of this bargain material, together with their own shop stocks, will run their August and September dollar sales volume ahead of their April and May sales income.

Takes Surplus Stocks off Market

This relief to manufacturers' stocks should have a favorable effect for pros next spring. No pro who knows what the score is can be unaware of the reason for many of the store sales that offer standard merchandise at cut prices when the golf selling season is beginning. There has been just enough of the goods returned unsold by pros to make it necessary for the manufacturers to unload at any price, for cash, in order to finance winter clubmaking expenses.

Additional "discontinued model" clubs have to be made up to care for the stores' sales requirements, and are made up because the manufacturer has to get rid of the returns. The curse of this virtual consignment selling has back-fired on both pros and manufacturers so the golf business now is in the sad and foolish plight of being a seasonal business that begins its season with a bunch of strongly ballyhooed "cut price" store sales.

It is difficult to estimate the cash value to pros of the reduction of next spring's "discontinued model" cut-price sales by stores, but some of the manufacturing authorities guess, on the basis of the early response to the Birdie Special sale, that about \$100,000 (retail price) of golf clubs that would have to be dumped against the pros next spring, will be taken out of the market by the pros' own autumn sale.

Basis for the estimates of the quick cash income to pros as a result of the Birdie Special sale at approximately 500 pro-shops is made on the varying estimates of averages from \$200 per shop to \$500 per shop increased business from the 10 day sale.

The 10 day limit isn't being closely observed. Quickly after the display of the



Here's the Fenway GC clubhouse at White Plains, N. Y., where on the evening of Sept. 25 some happy pro will take down the major prize money of the year, the first money in the \$13,500 Westchester Open which will begin Sept. 22.

Westchester district pros organized the event and have handled its details in a model manner. The idea of the biggest money event of 1938 was born when Myles Coen, Scarsdale pro, and genl. chmn. of the Westchester Open, got burned up by a baseball player putting up \$300 prize money for a field of pro golf stars last winter. The baseballer got thousands of dollars' worth of publicity. Coen groaned at the performance in making golf's stars pikers, but instead of contenting himself with warm words, got busy with the neighbor boys, and lol here's 13½ grand.

"teaser" signs about the Birdies coming, pro-shop customers got curious. They queried the pro and by discreet handling, the pros gave the nosy ones early "ins" on the sale. One pro, in an ordinary type of private club, reported that he had sold \$413 in wood and iron club sets, five days after the "teaser" signs were displayed, with the big business still to come during the set days of the sale when the full force of the Birdie Special advertising was put to work.

The staff of GOLFDOM and GOLFING has received many letters of enthusiastic thanks for the work of preparing and handling the details of this Birdie Special campaign. In acknowledging these, we want to make it plain that the credit should go to those pros who gave so liberally of their time and so deeply of their thought and experience, in providing us with the data and advice on which the brilliantly successful campaign was founded.

Outstanding Results

The Birdie Special campaign is proving itself to be by far the most profitable short-time selling campaign ever presented to pro golf, and by its unexpectedly great success has made itself a mile-post in pro merchandising progress.

It has proved, beyond all doubt in this world, that: (1) There are many keen, energetic pro merchants who form the

nucleus of a command of big-scale, foresighted pro retailing, and; (2) when the boys get a specific idea with definite selling helps, instead of just so many sweet words, they really go to town in selling.

Golf for Gym Credit—Alexander J. Stoddard, supt. of Denver (Colo.) public schools, and Willard N. Greim, director of the dept. of health education, are reported by Denver newspapers as discussing the substitution of golf instruction for some of the more formal exercises that now are part of physical education class work.

Prof. Stoddard says: "The teaching of golf probably would provide as much exercise as the traditional setting-up exercises. It is something we are considering seriously. Whether golf instruction can be introduced into the Denver public schools is largely a matter of cost."

Golf interest has been given a strong boost in Denver by the National Open and by the constant advance publicity that Fred Wood, Howard Mehlman, John Schumaker and other Denver club managers are pushing out on the 1939 Club Managers' Assn. convention which will be held there.

Another golf club monthly bulletin that rates as a model is the News Letter, issued by the Rhode Island CC, Barrington, R. I. Club dept. heads cooperate with one of the members in the publication of the News Letter. Among its items of bright interest in a recent issue is one concerning a historical spot on the course that is mentioned in an agreement signed July 25, 1685.