

# The Pro Examines His Business

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[In Two Parts: Part Two]

I'M sure that most of us will admit that the pros were originally most directly responsible for the great strides that golf made in America. They made the equipment, taught the public how to use it, and in a truly professional manner instilled in this country the desire to play the game. Well and good. They created their own market and the market was their own. At the time, nobody seemed to consider challenging them.

As the game caught hold of the public's fancy, however, and exhibited a remarkable tendency toward rapid growth, alert and progressive manufacturers cast a discerning eye toward the possibilities of a new market. And before many moons had passed they were turning out a quite desirable, and in many ways superior, product.

Well, the pros gave way to the inevitable. The handwriting was on the wall and there was nothing else for them to do. But they made one bad mistake in doing so—they gave way too far.

Before long the demand for golf equipment was tremendous. It was in demand everywhere. And where could it be bought? Anywhere! (Still can, for all of that).

## Manufacturers' Road Rough

Common sense tells us that the manufacturers must have done well for a few years. But like the long lane, there was a turning. And whether the pros are aware of it or not, the fact remains that the manufacturers reached that turning some years ago. And since that turn the road has been anything but smooth for them.

There are plenty of pros who will scoff at the idea that manufacturers are suffering any nervous chills over the golf equipment market situation. But if you want to convince yourself, just look over the yearly audited report of the golf department of any leading manufacturer. The story is there—not in black and white—but in cold, cardinal figures.

What have the pros been doing through these years? We formed an Association and thought, by cracky, that would turn the trick. But it didn't. So we took off our high-hats and got down and mingled

with the common mob. That didn't seem to bake the biscuits, either. So some of us have finally just given way to belly-aching like a kid whose nursing-bottle has just fallen on the floor—and hoping meanwhile, without visible effort to assist, that some kind person will happen along and hand the bottle back to us.

What about the manufacturers? Well, they are wishing fervently and sincerely that they had one (instead of ten) good, reliable outlet for every \$1,000 worth of equipment they make.

There's the situation. The golf equipment market is a tough affair viewed from any angle. What's to be done about it?

From what information I can gather, the manufacturers would welcome with open arms any one major outlet for their product that would allow them to operate at a profit. If that's the case why don't they put their eggs in one basket and give it to us? Here's why—we're not smart enough to handle it.

## Pro Education Is the Answer

The situation simmers down to a dire necessity for pro education. We're not competent to intelligently handle and dominate the retail distribution of the very market we ourselves created. Until we mentally equip ourselves to handle it intelligently we'll not get it, either.

Yes, there's the answer in one compact nutshell—education. Whip these pro ranks together and make competent pro-business men of them and you'll find the manufacturers greeting us from all angles with open arms—and the golf merchandising mess smoothed out as pretty as the Caribbean after a hurricane.

What should such an educational program include? Here are some of the major subjects: buying, selling, bookkeeping, budgets, stock control, teaching, group instruction, advertising, radio, publicity, playing programs, tournaments, merchandising methods, credits, caddie problems, club and public relations, intelligent training of assistants, clubmaking, club care and repairing, club and ball construction, winter schools, manufacturing methods (clubs and balls) coopera-

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tion with other club departments. And last but not least: how to stock a pro-shop, at a profit, to meet the needs of all classes of golfers.

Those are some of the important subjects that should be and *could* be covered.

If you are a successful pro perhaps you will say: "Well, I'm pretty thoroughly versed in most of those subjects." We'll assume that you are, as related to your profession, but the successful boys represent a minority percentage of our ranks. I'm wondering how many of us are acquainted, actually, with the hosel construction and thoroughly familiar with the principles of the head design of Flub's new 1939 Commander Irons? If someone were to tell on us we would all blush with shame. But whether you are operating successfully or not has no bearing on this matter. The program would be for the good of the entire pro ranks, individually and collectively—in order to salvage a merchandising gem we lost in the distribution hazard years ago. And what helps Bill Jones will help you too, directly and indirectly. And the manufacturers as well.

#### Manufacturers Will Help

Now if you don't think the manufacturers would go for this thing, you're crazy. Ask 'em! I have. And they'll go for it—big. Even lend some financial aid. Why shouldn't they? They've been spending plenty of money trying to find an answer to this problem.

How can such an educational program be handled? How can we get it over to the boys, intelligently and effectively, and at a price they can handle?

It seems to be the concensus of opinion among the smart boys I have talked to that the PGA is the logical body to sponsor such a program. And it is their idea that if the organization would take over the idea and sponsor it, pro golf in the U. S. would be making the biggest step forward in its history.

There are plenty of smart boys in our profession. But the day these boys, the PGA, and the manufacturers get together and draw up definite plans for nation-wide pro education—such as was introduced by The Illinois PGA—that's the day that pro golf and golf equipment merchandising will start its long trek out of the tall and uncut.

In drawing up the plans for such a program, it might be wise to bear in mind that one of the greatest evils in pro golf is the fact that we have no recognized

standards by which the clubs and the public at large may judge us. If a man is a fine player, that speaks for itself, of course. But tell me, just how is a club to determine whether a club pro is a competent, patient and understanding teacher; a sober, reliable business man; a skilled professional craftsman; a good organizer; and a man in whose hands it is safe to place the golfing future of that club's younger set? Is he industrious? Does he cooperate fully with the other club departments, such as the greenkeeper, the manager, and the various heads of the various committees?

Theoretically it would seem quite a simple matter to obtain any or all of that information by going through the man's past employers. In actual practice it is not.

Yes, the PGA is undoubtedly the logical group to sponsor this educational program. The organization could, by soliciting advice and cooperation from the manufacturers, the USGA, and all other available intelligent channels, whip the idea into concrete form and release same through their sectional PGA organizations. As a starter it might not be far wrong to slice the country into sections and hold one-week winter schools in each section. As the profession takes hold of it, and I sincerely believe it will, the sections could be narrowed down, more schools held, and the time of attendance lengthened. A nominal tuition could be charged.

Experts to cover the various subjects would be available to us through the manufacturers, the press, the radio, and organizations associated with golf. If we are forced to face the issue of a deficit in conducting such a program, financial aid should not be too hard to find. The PGA has a good substantial treasury. After all, this thing is not alone for the pros—it would benefit the entire industry. And unless I am badly mistaken, the entire industry has for some time had its ear attuned to us, awaiting patiently that first sloshing sound that will denote our initial efforts at pulling our feet out of the mud of professional ignorance and cocksureness.

#### Credits Should Be Given

Credits should be given for the completion of such studies. Additional credits should be issued to the man who applies such principles to his job. And further credits should be awarded for results obtained on his job. And they should all be compiled by a central rating body—that



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all the golf world might see that here is a pro who knows his business. You just can't get around facts.

No, you certainly cannot get around facts. We pros, as a class, can't get around the fact that we have allowed the merchandising plum to slip through our fingers simply because we have been too indolent and cocksure of ourselves to look in a mirror and recognize what we see there. And the manufacturers can't get around the fact that they, in their eagerness to get profits, overstepped themselves. And when the thing kicked back at them they retreated to the wholesale—wholesale exit—only to find it was not an exit, after all.

Would such an educational program assure us that every man emerging therefrom be competent and a credit to our profession? Certainly not. Such an assumption would be asinine. If a man is not endowed with good old-fashioned guts, education is merely a horse for him to ride—and fall off of.

It all boils down to an application of sound business principles. In a recent conversation with one of the best informed figures in the golf industry, he said:

"The pros are worried so much about running the manufacturers' business and the manufacturers are worried so damn much about running the pros business that in my opinion both of them have neglected to realize that it is the ordinary player who runs the whole show."

We had all better get that latter fact firmly in our heads—and now! And the sooner the pros convince the manufacturers that we have reformed, reconnoitered and regenerated, the sooner the manufacturers will reciprocate by tossing the golf merchandise market back where it belongs—In the the pro-shop!

### Tom McNamara, Veteran Pro, Dies at Age 57

TOM McNAMARA, one of the most widely known and beloved figures in pro golf, died suddenly at his home at Mount Vernon, N. Y., July 21. Tom was 57 at time of his death. He was born at Brookline, Mass., and in 1892 began caddyng at The Country Club, where his brother Dan was pro. Rapidly Tom devel-