

Selling Taught Me To Sell

I WAS a pro for quite a few years. Then, for four years I was a golf manufacturer's salesman. Now I am a pro again. The reason I am back at pro golf is that the pro's job is easier than the salesman's job, and the pro who knows the answers the golf goods salesman knows and uses these answers on his club members, makes more money than a golf goods salesman.

From what I have seen on both sides of the fence I have decided that in selling golf we all—pros and manufacturers—waste too much time complaining.

In my pro job I have store competition. My members aren't especially rich. They have to be worked on constantly by me, or some store sells them for less money . . . once. After they have used a set of cut-price clubs a month or so, I ease up

to them and say, "Mr. So-and-so, those shafts are much too stiff (or limber) for your swing. Just for fun, let me loan you a set that's right for you."

It is about 11 to 3 that a store won't sell a man the right sort of shafts for his clubs. How can they? They don't know his swing.

Well, the store sucker or the buy-it-wholesale chiseler takes me up and about 4 times out of 5 my loaned clubs work pretty good. The psychology is all for me. The ordinary golfer remembers a few good shots, and credits them to the clubs instead of to the help of heaven. Incidentally, when I let the guy take a set I usually manage to slip in a teaching tip that helps him get away from the fault that it is easy to see is his worst and

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and undoubtedly the most costly.

I have these fellows now talking around the club that they got stung. They are campaigning for me against other club members buying away from the shop. They are making themselves "horrible examples" of suckers. Two of the fellows who bought store sets this spring gave them to their kids after I gave them the trial treatment with a set that was better for them.

Members' Psychology Is O.K.

People don't like to be cheap skates, or to be stung. They buy away from the pro-shop because they think they are smart and getting something as good as the pro-shop has, for less money. Who's fault is that? If you were them, and didn't have any too much money, what would you do? Would you pay more to buy from the pro just because he is at your club?

The office-to-office ball peddling racket started to cut in on my sales last month. I murdered that, and quick. Four of the fellows who bought balls from an office peddler were in the locker-room drinking after a round. I eased up and said to the loudest-mouthed one, real shy and apologetic-like, "Could I have a word with you. Nothing confidential, but I want your advice?"

The guy swelled up like he was Hitler and Mussolini together. "Shoot," he said.

"I have been sort of thinking about going into a sideline. I see some fellows are selling golf balls to offices, and I thought I might as well get a few kids to peddle and get in on some of that easy money. I would give them a better deal instead of being a hog about it. I would give them a 3-for-a-buck ball instead of the two-bit balls the trimmers are giving the suckers for a half-dollar, saying it is a 75 center. Do you think there is a chance in this business? It doesn't call for much investment." Then I acted very interested like my whole future depended on his answer.

Another member butted in.

"A two-bit ball, you say they are selling to offices?" he asked.

"Yes sir," I answered. But what scares me is that the suckers may get wise before I can get in on some of this easy money and give the people a better proposition."

"No wonder I couldn't hit that rock the length of my putter," one guy says.

That session ended with me getting into a swell little educational session on the ball business. Due to having sold golf

balls and clubs I knew ten times more about ball-making and the tricks of ball selling than the average pro. The average pro doesn't go to a lot of trouble to smart himself up on these things. So I came out finessing these wise-guys into buying 15 dozen 3-for-buck balls for themselves and their friends, at a cute price. For 15 dozen balls that will keep competition out, I would trim the price a bit any time.

If some of the pros think they have competition they ought to get a close-up on the competition between the salesmen who sell to them. The salesmen really have tough competition, but have to sell despite it, so they just listen and act like they are sympathetic when they hear how a store is taking sales away from the pro. The salesmen wonder why the pros don't think more about taking away business from the stores.

After I was selling a year, one thing that never got me stirred up like it did at first, was pros' threats to boycott my company. When I had been a pro I used to pull that one myself and thought I was doing somebody dirt. I was—myself.

The funny part of it is that the pros don't make a bid for low-priced business, and if a store sells a guy low-priced clubs the chances are the buyer eventually is going to wind up buying from the pro. Also, the newspaper advertising the stores do on cut-price clubs get a lot of people thinking about buying clubs, who end by buying from the pro. If they hadn't seen the ads, they would be using the same old tools.

I saw several cases where I was practically boycotted by pros in towns, and having to sell some clubs or lose my job, I did just exactly what any pro would do, if we were trading places.

Boycott Generally Backfires

I picked out some stuff that the factory was anxious to turn into cash, being overstocked, and I talked business on a cash basis with the store buyer. Instead of being dead in the town we did a good piece of business that wouldn't have come my way if the boys hadn't got bull-headed and put the chill on me. After a few of those experiences I saw how a boycott, worked smartly by a salesman who gave a good proposition to just one store instead of thinning it out, turned out to be a dumb thing for pros.

There usually is enough bargain stuff available for stores due to some pros still having the habit of turning back merchan-



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dise instead of paying for it. The manufacturer who is stuck with this stuff has had his dough tied up for some time, so he even makes some more of it if there is a store demand at a price that will enable him to dump enough of a quantity to make up the loss on his idle investment while the clubs were in pro stocks.

Certainly I am all for the pros. They are the best qualified people, as a general proposition, to serve the public. They are my kind of people, anyway. A thing that is holding a lot of them back is hating to be told the truth. I could see what the answers were plenty of times when fellows were not paying their bills, or doing much business at their clubs, or on the verge of getting canned. But do you think that it would have done me any good to tell those boys? They would have been insulted and knocked me all around the territory.

There are a great many pros doing a pretty fair business these days, and doing it just by using their heads and hands and feet on their jobs. They are not the guys who are hoping that some magic can be worked out to make the pro rich. They are doing all right by minding their own business.

That is what I am trying to do, so if anything in this seems to you like I am trying to run your business, forget it. The best thing I have learned about business, as a golf salesman and a pro, is that the only guy who can do any tricks to make you money in this game is yourself.

C. R. Riley, Steel Shaft Pioneer, Dies at Age 64

CHARLES R. RILEY, for more than 30 years an official of the Horton Mfg. Co., and one of the finest gentlemen golf ever knew, died in the Bristol (Conn.) hospital June 17. He was 64 years old. He is survived by his wife, a son, and two sisters.

He had been in poor health for several years, and 10 years ago relinquished the general management of the Horton Mfg. Co. into whose employment he had gone in 1906.

Riley had a great deal to do with introducing the steel shaft to golf and was a pioneer in the steel fishing rod business. It was his easy, straight-forward way that did much to overcome early suspicion of the steel shaft. By golf officials who knew him, by pro and amateur players