

How to Construct a DRIVING RANGE

By Walter Keller

SO you want to open a driving range! All right, that's fine, and it's a pretty fine business to be in, after you're really 'in' it—and have gotten the ideas you might have had about big money quickly, out of the way. I've heard a lot about what the driving ranges need to make more money, and I've tried some of these ideas, and others, myself—some working, a few proving flops—and after ten years in this business I've come to some pretty definite conclusions.

Taking it for granted that in order to succeed and make money you have, to begin with, a reasonably good location, sufficient equipment, enough driving tees, lights, etc., let me suggest a few additional things that I believe will go a long way toward making better conditions, and more money, for the driving range operators. First, I believe that where there are a sufficient number of driving ranges in a community, the operators, for their own protection, and because of the opportunity to get greater protection at less cost, should take advantage of group insurance rates, which are considerably lower than the cost to individuals.

Secondly, I believe that driving range operators should cooperate with one another to the extent of doing group buying of balls, clubs and tees. The ball problem, especially, is one of the range owner's major headaches, and often times he finds himself down practically to the last few pails, so to speak, because the sources of supply have been diminished by too much buying by certain individual operators. Group buying of balls, too, would open up new sources of supply of balls. The needs of a whole group would make a proposition attractive, whereas what one operator may need might not interest.

Shot Exhibitions Are Helpful

Another thing, I think we driving range operators should take advantage of the publicity value of any important tournament to be held in the vicinity, and make arrangements with the manufacturers to have one or two or more, of the star performers put on driving and shot demonstrations at our practice ranges. Exhibitions of this kind always attract large crowds, who get acquainted with what the

range has to offer, and who find it natural to want to go there the next time they get the urge to practice their shots.

Now, having set down the above thoughts, on which I recommend your serious consideration if you contemplate getting into this business in the future, I will list the physical requirements that are necessary, I've found, to successfully install a practice layout:

Location—well traveled street in or close to city.

Space—400' by 600', with fence in rear.

Parking Space—ample parking space is necessary because you have a lot of people who like to come and watch the players, and who in time become customers.

Building—build a fair-sized building, as a small one will defeat your purpose, and will allow no room to sell equipment.

Lights—install lights when you feel business warrants it. This is your largest item from a standpoint of expense. Light poles should be at least 20' high with a play-area floodlight on top, and two flood lighting projectors at the 15' level on each pole; set 5' in ground in concrete. Light poles should be 50' apart, and 25' in back of tee line. Illumination is the greatest medium of advertising that you can have.

The Fairway—

(a) **Drainage**—make wide shallow ditches for water to drain off quickly, otherwise in rainy weather balls will sink in ground.

(b) **Mowers**—any well known make of new or used three gang mower.

(c) **Mowing**—keep grass cut short; it will also make it easy to pick up the balls.

(d) **Greens**—one or two greens should be built on an incline to pitch to, with white board in back.

(e) **Yardage markers**—erect wooden signs with numerals from 50 yards to 250 yards painted on them.

(f) **Flags**—install bright colored flags for fairway and greens—such as red, yellow, blue, and white.

Tee-Line—If you are in a part of the country where there is much rain, the tee-

line must be built about one foot above ground level, and situated so that players do not shoot into the sun.

- (a) Platforms—make of boards 3' by 3½' and covered with heavy roofing paper.
- (b) Mats—use heavy leather belting (5 or 6 ply) 30"x12" or 15", to shoot from; put small slits in them so that tees can be placed.
- (c) Tee arrows—boards shaped like arrows 1" by 8" by 3½' brightly painted, and pointing toward fairway.

Golf Balls and Clubs—have good golf balls and clubs, and a sufficient number of each, as they are 'the backbone' of the business. (A 'sufficient' number of balls would mean approximately 100 balls per tee.)

Competitors—One of the Golden Rules of us operators in the Chicago District is never to irritate your competitor; he can do you more harm than any group of customers. Also, when the customers tell you how to run your business, you had better look for a new business, as you will never make money in this one. You must remember you have to live for 12 months from the proceeds of this five-month business, so you must save money whenever you can. Ours is a strictly cash business with no reductions, and we operators must all stick by it.

Driving range operators, if they are wise, will never 'fight' another in the same business. We should all strive to help one another so that the public will patronize us more often. I would appreciate hearing from other range owners, or prospective range operators, on this subject. We need all the good ideas we can get because we're in a tough business—but one that pays out if it's worked right.

Wilson Ad Campaign "Sells" Golfers on Pro Services

PRINTERS' INK, famous weekly of the advertising profession, featured in its March 8 issue a story on the Wilson Sporting Goods Co. 1940, golfer player campaign. Under the head "Promoting the Pro," Printers' Ink tells how the Wilson campaign running in national magazines, mentions no merchandise, but sells services of the club professional to golfers.

The advertising journal marks the Wilson campaign as a notable contribution to pro development as a powerful and popular

factor in the distribution of golf goods. Advertisements in the campaign already have run in **GOLFING**, *Life* and *Time*.

In telling advertising men of the campaign Printers' Ink says:

The average professional is a representative for the top-ranking merchandise of all leading golf equipment manufacturers, selling, for the most part, from sample displays. His market is relatively small, being limited, as a rule, to some three or four hundred club members. He can't afford to advertise, of course, and he naturally can't be overly aggressive in his selling approach to members. Further, he is rarely possessed of the salesman's temperament, for his basic qualification for his job is his athletic prowess.

At the same time, from the standpoint of the golf equipment manufacturer, the golf pro in the aggregate is a very important figure in the distribution picture. He is the sole factor in equipment salesmanship at what is often the point of greatest consumer accessibility and lowest sales resistance—that is, on the actual premises of the golf club. Moreover, he is particularly important in the sale of the higher quality of golf equipment, since members of private clubs usually possess a higher buying power than the average run of golf addicts.

Through the new advertising program L. B. Icely, president of Wilson Sporting Goods, proposes to build up the golf pro's business—to move his market in through the front door and up to the counter.

The job is a broad one and the benefit to the company will necessarily be indirect, but Mr. Icely is satisfied that the advertising investment will bring definite returns. A wider appreciation of the pro's importance to the golfer will inevitably broaden his opportunity to sell to a greater number of those who compose his market. And insofar as the advertising messages and the pro's coaching operations help to increase golfers' pleasure in the game, the combination will naturally favor the sales of quality merchandise. As a leading manufacturer of golf equipment, Wilson naturally figures to come in for its share of the increased volume.

Further, the activity is not going to do Wilson any damage in the pro's eyes. The fact that the company is conducting a major promotion effort in the pro's direct and exclusive behalf will inevitably create plenty of good-will. The advertising will, of course, be thoroughly merchandised to professionals throughout the country.