

Pro Star Businessmen Advise Postwar Planning

THREE OF CALIFORNIA'S most successful pros say that pro golf can't sit by and await developments of postwar, but for self-protection and public service, must put into action postwar plans right now.

Willie Hunter, Harold Sampson and Olin Dutra express themselves in recommending to pros individually and to pros collectively in the PGA, action to prepare for the expected big business in golf after the war.

The industrious and canny Hunter, whose club, Pacific Palisades, is filled and has been run by him during the past two years, takes time out from his hefty and competent job to say:

"If the tremendous increase in golf during the current war is any indication of what is to come when Victory arrives the PGA should be formulating plans to cope with the formidable competition which will inevitably come from retail outlets other than the pro shop.

"The PGA has unquestionably been weak in dealing with the manufacturer and has at all times been out-manuevered, despite the strong position the pros occupy.

"Pros at private clubs with memberships composed of wealthy people have not had too much difficulty in holding their trade when an alert professional is on the job, but even at such clubs there is a considerable loss of business to other outlets.

"Public golf clubs have players who shop for prices and as their players are strictly transient they do not have the private club loyalty incentive to buy from the pro.

"The manufacturers of golf equipment should do their part to protect their best outlet bearing in mind that the professional outlet is not only lucrative from a strictly monetary view point, but also the "trial horse" for any innovation in models. If the professionals get behind a piece of merchandise it is over commercially, but unfortunately the success of professionals in successfully merchandising is capitalized by the other outlets who are under another name.

"The profit on golf balls has been low because the manufacturers do not make hard and fast rules on retail prices. Own-name golf balls have been one of the worst devices to beat fair merchandising.

"Most of the aspersions cast on Professional merchandising hardly bear water. The criticism should be directed at our association who should spend more time on formulating hard and fast policies with the manufacturers.

"There is no question that golf shops at the clubs are the finest advertisement for any golf goods that come out, and there is little doubt that golf professionals have improved their displays in recent years to such an extent that sales must increase. There is little or nothing anyone can do to alter a negligent professional who does not take advantage of his opportunity.

"Amongst the points I would bring up for the P.G.A. to get busy on would be the following:

"1. Agreement with the manufacturer to curtail production and sales of private brand golf balls to companies that are not in the golf business, but who buy to distribute amongst customers at prices ruinous to basic business.

"2. Agreement with manufacturers to stop selling quantities of goods to stores at lower prices than those given to golf shops at the clubs.

"3. Agreement with the manufacturers to stipulate retail prices for all standard goods."

From Harold Sampson, California CC pro, and one of the California pro group which has been especially vigorous and foresighted in campaigning for more and better golf instruction: Golf will see quite a postwar boom but the professional is going to have to be on his toes if he expects to cash in on it as he has a right to.

"I think that everything possible should be done both in an individual and national effort to raise the standard of instruction so that prospects who take up the game will learn to play well enough to get pleasure out of playing the game and thereby continue to play instead of becoming disgusted to the point of giving up golf. Many have given up the game for that reason.

"We should continue our advertising through PGA-sponsored tournaments and exhibitions. Through them we can encourage the public to take more instruction by tying in instruction pictures done

in such a way as to impress upon the public the value of instruction and the futility of trying to play without it.

"We should continue to enlist the aid of celebrities such as Hope and Crosby to say that their activities have caused more non-golfers to take up golf than any other promotional work in connection with the game has ever done.

"Every effort should be made to aid the servicemen and veterans to keep them interested in the game and keep them as devotees of the game.

"We should modernize our shops; staff them with high grade personnel and stock them with a complete price range of merchandise so we will be competitive with the stores and so that a patron can buy within his means and not be driven from our shops because he cannot find the merchandise to fit his pocketbook.

"We should establish an educational program which will offer training in buying, selling and efficient shop management.

"We should lend our support in the promotion of club activities and elaborate on events which encourage professional club relations. An example is our own professional-president's tournament, an annual event wherein the president of each club is the guest of his professional for that day. The pro pays all expense, entry fees, caddie fees, refreshments, dinner, etc.

"We should make a real effort to improve professional-manufacturer relations by establishing a better credit rating so the manufacturer will prefer to deal with us.

"And we should at all times lend our efforts to the promotion of public activities such as charitable and other events which advertise the game and attract the public in a dignified manner.

"That is a pretty large order but it can and must be done if we expect to fill the bill as we should."

Olin Dutra, who has been as highly successful in the business end of pro as he was in the playing end when he was active in big-time competition, declares:

"There are so many ramifications of postwar business problems that I am really skeptical about venturing out into the open with some idea that won't even hold water. There is no question in my mind but that we have a lot of deep thinking to do in order to get our share of the business. The stores are already laying plans for postwar sales and we must realize that they are top merchants who will take a big bite out of the pros' business unless the pros get busy early.

"It isn't easy to combat the big stores

who have tremendous assets behind their purchasing power. The manufacturer realizes that and will make a play for that big business and there is nothing we can possibly do to avert that idea. They're not bad risk like some pros have been in the past. Thank goodness most of the boys have improved tremendously along that line. Nevertheless, we must face the music.

"I don't have the complete answer but I do believe that the one big solution is for the pro to start selling himself early to his members by means of personal contact through means of properly designed letters, by word-of-mouth and by any other type of publicity and sales propaganda he can possibly conceive.

"He must go out of his way to impress the golfing public that he is interested in equipping him with the proper type merchandise with personalized salesmanship behind it. In turn he must be on his toes to see to it that he is properly and adequately stocked when the new merchandise starts flooding the market and must make it known to his clientele in order to sidetrack the business at the very outset from the downtown market.

"There of course is the angle where the pro and the manufacturer pull together in order to give the pros buying power (maybe collectively) so that the merchandise goes to the pro shops right now. I don't know exactly what the answer is there but it is time the pros get together as soon as possible and have some comprehensive understanding.

"One thing that definitely hurts the pro business is the tremendous amount of merchandise that goes into the stores with the names of top-notch golfers. This has been a practice of long standing and I can not conceive how we can stop it. As a matter of fact a couple of the sections offered an argument against such practice at the annual meeting. Most of the boys felt that the top notchers deserve all they can make while they are on top and then again we felt it inadvisable to mess with or dictate too much to the manufacturer.

"It simmers down to the point where the pro must resort to his own resourcefulness by plugging through the mail, by selling himself at his club and by selling his instruction and using it as a means of selling his merchandise to his pupils. The last recommendation would be for the pros to hold free clinics at driving ranges, thereby selling the pro and using and utilizing this particular period to convince all golfers that the pro is their friend and that he is in the best position to outfit him properly and counsel him at all times."

COLLECT USED BALLS AFTER EVERY GAME!