

Teaching Players the Habit of Coming into Your Shop

By **RALPH GULDAHL**

Professional, Medinah (Ill.) Country Club

SUCCESS of any of us in pro shop selling depends primarily on the number of people we can get into our shops. Volume and profits are in direct ratio to the amount of traffic attracted into the place where the pro's merchandise is on display. When we get right down to analyzing the fundamentals of our business we'd do well to make a market survey that really tells us what the prospects and the problems are for us. And one of the first items of information we should have is a check, compiled by the pro and his assistants, of the number of people who come into the shop. That figure, compared to the total number of rounds played as determined rather closely by the number of caddies engaged or by starting sheets, may shock us by showing that far too many who play at our clubs don't come into the pro shops.

The set-up at a golf club and at a pro shop seldom is such that exact figures could be determined. But, I am sure that the average good pro businessman could make a survey of this sort that would be more accurate than most of the market surveys that other businesses have found so helpful.

Without taking the trouble and time required to make a rather exact count of the traffic that comes into a pro shop the pro generally is convinced, when he thinks about this, that he's got to use his brains and effort in greatly increasing the number who have the habit of visiting his place of business.

Such services as registering for play so messages may be taken and delivered if urgent, securing caddies, getting score-cards, pencils and tees, getting a game arranged if one comes out to the club alone, helping conduct tournaments, or quickly told little tips on correcting faults, all help to establish the habit of coming into the shop. It is decidedly to the club's in-

terest to have each player registered and if that registration is required in the pro shop, the traffic problem is licked.

Then, after you do get player traffic directed into your shop, you have the responsibility of making this stop a preliminary as attractive and pleasant in its way as the 19th hole is after the round is finished.

Shop Up to Standard

There is every reason why the pro shop should be completely up to the standard of the course and clubhouse and no reason why it shouldn't, although some club officials and pros don't recognize this clearly. The clubs, in too many cases, put almost entirely up to the pro the work and expense of painting, decorating and supplying store fixtures for the pro shop. The pros have done exceedingly well in this matter of supplying the club with one of the identifying marks of a first class private club.

The golf shop must exhibit the personality of the club and of the pro. It must be a cheerful place. It must show plainly that it is in business for the member's pleasure and convenience and always get across the idea that it is in business, instead of merely a place where the pro or his assistant may be found because it's the custom of clubs to have pro shops.

What makes a pro shop look like a high class business establishment?

First, the stock in it; and second, the display of the stock.

The Pro Must Shop

Wartime shortages have impressed on all pros something that the most successful pro merchants learned years ago. That is the necessity of doing a lot of work in smart shopping instead of waiting until salesmen come out and sell the pro.

In the larger centers the pros can, and must, devote a good part of their weeks before the season opens, Mondays during the seasons, and—for advance ordering—time after the season closes, to lining up adequate stocks of the best merchandise procurable in various price ranges. In smaller places that's a tough task for the pros, but it certainly will pay them to watch the ads and make shopping tours to the cities where they can look over what's available, then order for their needs.

The days when the pro in a metropolitan district shop can say to his customers, "we haven't got it, but will get it for you in a few days," are over. You've got to have ample stocks to do big business and to give the service people now expect of the correctly operated pro department.

Furthermore, the down-town sources are not any too eager to send small shipments out to the pro shop. They've got plenty of demand from people who come into their places of business and they're not disposed to pay much attention to little and inconvenient accounts.

Study With Specialists

But don't regard this matter of having to shop around as a hardship and waste.

Ralph Guldahl believes that the professional's first task as a first class merchant is that of making the shop display and the spirit of service such that they'll attract members into the shop.

Photo by Van Fossen, Ill. PGA photographer

When you go into the offices of suppliers you get a chance to talk with specialists in the various lines and pick up many ideas that will help you in your own retailing. Thus the fight to get merchandise for his shop really has helped to improve the pro as a merchant. He's got to be on his toes or he can't get enough to sell to meet his overhead and make a profit.

In another way the shortages of merchandise have given the pro merchandising impetus. Before the war the pro depended largely on the rapid turn-over of his ball stock for enough of a volume and profit to keep him in business. He handled the accessories often in a rather hit-or-miss way. Now he's found that he can sell almost everything the golfer uses and wears, because he's had to learn that during the war or fail to make a living out of his shop.

In that expansion of shop stock he has brought himself to a basis of comparison with other merchants who handle what men and women wear when they go golfing. Whether that comparison is conscious or unconscious, the member is bound to make it with lasting effect on your business. The merchandise, the display, the prices, the attitude and sales knowledge of the pro and his assistants, all are cer-





Guldahl's shop at Medinah is one in which the member and guest can get practically everything used for golf without having to go "down town." Customers can feel the goods and see price tags. This is especially important with women, whose golf purchases have grown to important volume.

Photo by Van Fossen, Ill. PGA photographer

tain to be compared with store retailing practice.

People don't like to have to ask prices then feel embarrassed if the price is more than they want to pay—or can pay. Have your goods plainly priced. And have them priced competitively with stores. A man who buys something from your shop and finds that he can buy it for less downtown is not going to be much of a customer of yours. A woman who makes such a discovery is going to spread the news about and damage your business. This is some-

thing pros must watch very carefully, especially since so much pro shop business now is being done with women.

Meet Competition

I've looked into this matter of competitive prices very closely and have come to the conclusion that instead of our complaining that the price-cutters are taking an unfair advantage, we pros would be much better off to shop around and find that we could offer the same goods at the same price and make a profit. The stores give us warning by advertising their cut-price sales. By watching those ads or looking around the stores, we can prepare ourselves to meet the competition. In the majority of cases it won't mean stocking up on much as the cut price goods seldom makes much of an appeal to private country club members. So it won't burden your inventory to get set to meet price-cutting. And you must watch your inventory carefully; probably doing some price-cutting yourself to see that you aren't stuck with an over-stock of slow moving merchandise. Keep your money moving.

In buying from a pro shop the customer wants, expects and should have something besides the best merchandise for

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Here's one of Guldahl's ads in his club's magazine. He changes the ad copy every issue to keep members aware the shop's always got something new.

MEDINAH GOLF SHOP

Ralph Guldahl PROFESSIONAL

I think we should all be proud of our Medinah Golf Shop. I personally feel that it is one of the finest in the country. Its location affords a wonderful view of the courses, with their lovely lakes and weeping willow trees.

I'm particularly proud this year of the quality and amount of merchandise I have secured for the enjoyment of the members. Everything is available in golf equipment and accessories.

For the Ladies

100% Nylon Golf Hose
All-Wool Sweater Sets
By Chesterfield
The New Elasti-Glass Rainwear
Free-For-All Golf Shirts
Brown and White Moccasin-Type
Golf Shoes
Patty Berg Woods and Irons
Head Covers, Jockey Caps

For the Men

Cushion-Foot Golf Hose
Elasti-Glass Rainwear
Free-For-All Golf Shirts
Hand-Stitched California Shirts
By Thomas
Tailored Dobbs Caps
Foot-Joy and Wilson Golf Shoes
Fine Leather Golf Bags
Spalding and Wilson Clubs

Golf Accessories Make Ideal Birthday Gifts

growing grass under golf's exacting conditions make the veterans cautious. Most of these veterans made enough mistakes in hopeful eagerness when they were younger. They learned.

Two things you'll generally see emphasized by the work of experienced people who are conducting long range plans in golf course operation. One is a steady campaign of fertilization. The war interrupted most of those programs, but now they are being resumed. At Plum Hollow our program calls for about 25 tons of fertilizer this year, and lime where needed. The other point you'll see at clubs with experienced turf management is considerable care of the bent nursery. At Plum Hollow we have resodded the entire 18 with Washington bent and maintain in fine condition at all times a nursery of from 6,000 to 10,000 sq. ft.

Due to wartime lack of manpower our greens became somewhat matty. I did not have good results from vigorous hand-brushing early this season. But I devised equipment that did get the greens into condition that has brought much favorable comment. I took an old Jacobsen power mower and put a 38-in. steel brush back of it, with a set-up that enabled me to get the amount of pressure conditions required. I have used this brush only a few times on our greens and the improvement has been remarkable. Next year I will start use of this brush early so I'll not have to brush in hot weather and the putting surfaces will be brought into top condition early.

Teaching Pro Shop Habit

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the price, and properly fitted merchandise. The customer should get thanks, and glow with a realization that he has the appreciation of the pro for being a faithful customer. The pro has to show that attitude and so must his assistants.

The selection and training of assistants is one of the most important jobs in the enlarged picture of pro business. Getting smart, loyal assistants is one of the toughest shopping jobs the pro has. Again because of the increased volume of women's business, the performance of assistants is more important than ever before.



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in the pro department. Honest, ambitious young men who can be trusted to do a fine job in the shop when the pro is out on the lesson tee or in other work away from the shop are a tremendous asset to the pro. They must respect the pro's own sincerity in serving the members and help to build up the customer confidence that's essential to pro success in selling.

Plan and work your pro department with the objective of having your members thinking, "I don't have to go downtown to buy; I can get everything for my golf game right here." Then you're doing a business that's a credit to your club and profit and job security for yourself.

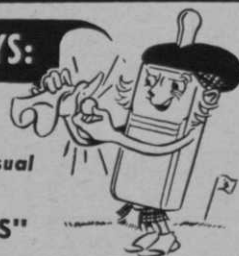


Both feeling great. Fred Corcoran, PGA Tourney Mgr., left, and Sam Snead, proud possessor of the British Open Cup.

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