

# Sportswear Selling a Booster of Pro Shop Volume

By W. C. (Bill) GORDON

Pro, Tam o'Shanter Country Club, Niles, Ill.

**L**IKE most other pros who now have established their shops in the minds of their members as a first class store at which to buy sports apparel as well as the best values in strictly golf equipment, I had to learn the hard way about the selling of sportswear. But, also like many others in pro golf, I have found during late years that the sportswear volume was a life-saver. I further am convinced that making good at selling sportswear has accounted for developing the good habit of pros studying with great thoroughness and care the retailing methods of the highly successful specialists in that field. The observations made in that study can be applied to pepping up the display and selling of golf goods. That's something we'll need to the limit after the golf goods production has caught up with demand and smart merchandising again will have to be used in order to keep the pro ahead of store competition.

Not so many years ago pros looked at sportswear as something they did not have room for. They had a lot of reasons they did not carry this merchandise. I was one of the boys who felt somewhat the same way about it.

The past few years sportswear and golf

accessories have accounted for up to 50 per cent of my sales. This was due to the inability to get enough golf clubs, bags and balls while the overhead went on just the same.

In selling sportswear I have considered many policies and methods of presenting my merchandise to the customer. These points stand out in my findings.

Quality has no substitute. Buyers recognize good merchandise and many of them know values probably far better than the pro does.

The first sale should not be the last. An unreasonable high price on a single article may ruin the pro's chances of future business with the buyer. A fair profit on any item is the best policy. Build for volume.

Merchandise set up in show cases or kept in drawers so the customers do not have a chance to see and feel the quality, hurts the sales. My showcase has electric lights that I installed. It is interesting to watch people walk into my pro shop and walk over to this show case and then turn around and look at the merchandise displayed on the tables and buy. I make it a point to change my arrangement of

(Continued on Page 26)

Bill Gordon's shop at Tam o' Shanter shows results of Bill's industry in shopping around for merchandise. Display that invites member close inspection and feel of the merchandise account a lot for this shop's big sales volume.



## Sportswear Selling

(Continued from Page 22)

merchandise frequently. Move merchandise to the stock room that does not sell and put fresh stock for display. I consider the display of merchandise the most important factor in selling to the consumer today, regardless of what the product is. I have three spots in my pro shop where I change the display very often so prospective buyers cannot say, "he has had that shirt for three months."

Be sure that the merchandise is clean, that it is shown to best advantage, and see that the displayed merchandise is placed at a convenient spot as customers are bound to notice it. *Change it often.* So your pro shop visitors think you always have something fresh and new.

### Get Expert Advice

Buying merchandise that is salable is the most important part of good business for the pro in sportswear. I always consult members of my club who are in positions to know the market well. One of my members told me to buy from my jobbers every T shirt I could lay my hands on as he would take them off my hands if I was long at the end of the season. This merchandise was sold in lots of 6 or 12 to a customer and was far short of demand by the time fall arrived. A wool buyer advised me to load up on sweaters, sox and shirts and with rising prices found this to be a good investment.

I have always set up a budget for my golf shop every October to November for the following year as to my purchasing during the fall and winter. I used to carry over about \$500 worth of merchandise prior to the war. The past year my inventory Dec. 1st was \$7500 and by Feb. 1st I had on hand a \$10,000 stock. This merchandise was sold by June 15th and then it was very hard to obtain any of the following items: women's golf clubs, leather bags, leather head covers, men's irons and woods, T shirts, pussyfoot sox and white shirts of any grade.

Many buyers have told me in 60 days the market will be plentiful on some of these items. It looks like golf clubs and bags will be available from leading manufacturers for a Christmas business, but not much volume before then.

A survey of 1947 seems to indicate more standard merchandise, but a fair backlog of necessary items still should be planned.

### Set Up A Stock Budget

When a shop operates on an annual sales volume of \$5000 to \$10,000 the pro should get up a budget for about 25 to 40 sets of irons and woods - -

25 Sunday bags

- 50 dozen pr. pussy foot sox
- 50 doz. pr. wool sox
- 20 leather golf bags
- 150 gloves
- 75 sets head covers
- 35 to 40 windbreakers
- 150 T shirts
- 100 sport shirts
- 50 to 100 pr. golf shoes
- 24 belts
- 25 shoes trees
- 12 sweaters
- 100 bathing caps
- 40 Spinaker shirts
- 24 ladies zipper jackets
- 50 bathing clogs
- 100 caps
- 100 sport hats
- 50 to 100 neckties
- 25 rain jackets
- 12 duffle bags
- 24 supporters

Golf shops that sell merchandise that runs \$10,000 to \$20,000 a year should double this at least. In some spots, of course, the pro will run ahead on one item and behind on others.

Service to customers is perhaps the greatest sales medium of all. A pro cannot load up his pro shop and expect the merchandise to sell itself. His biggest job is to stay there and sell by doing all the nice favors he can for his customers and use his entire golf personality to see that all sales are made in a sincere determination to give deep satisfaction. Then every customer will return for more because he knows that at the pro shop he is sure to get a square deal and be treated well.

Naturally members of a wealthy club will buy more expensive sportswear. No pro or other merchant was ever born who guessed everything right. Unload at a sacrifice when you discover you have made a mistake, but explain the circumstances to the buyer. Fancy trades and sales at cost price to persons anxious for bargains is smart merchandising and permits a buyer to appear a lot smarter than he really is by recognizing the proper way to proceed after he has learned his judgment has been wrong.

When prices are going up a good heavy buyer is a smart man but when the quality is poor and the market is too high, then play close to your chest.

Every pro job is different. Every customer is different; a lot are very much alike—but watch their desires and give them a chance to let you know what they want. Don't be too good a talker in the pro shop. The best salesman I ever met was the sympathetic listener who helped straighten out his customers after they gave him an opportunity to do so.