

# Pro Shops Are Clubhouse Architects' Blindspots

By **HERB GRAFFIS**

**M**OST PRO SHOPS are architectural after-thoughts. The clubhouse architect seldom knows much about the function of the pro shop as a merchandising and service point of the club. The pro isn't consulted until too late, if ever. Or, as has happened in numerous cases, the pro who does get a chance to have something to say about the location and design of the pro shop may take this opportunity too casually because of indifference, laziness, or reluctance to be dealt a hand in one of the many arguments that usually pop up when a clubhouse is being designed.

The location of the pro shop often is the source of lively arguments. Whether the shop should be part of the clubhouse building or detached and close to the first tee, with caddie quarters in connection, depends mostly on where the first tee is with respect to locker-room doors. It's preferable to have the pro shop as part of the clubhouse but with women's busi-

ness becoming a substantial part of pro volume the tough job is to get the pro shop where it will be convenient to the men's and women's locker-rooms both. In most clubs if a shop is handy for the men it's out of the route from women's locker-rooms to the first tee.

The big thing for the pro, the architect and the club officials to remember is that the basis of the pro business and service is merchandising convenient to point of use. The majority of members rush from the clubhouse to the tee, dashing into the pro shop for balls and tees. Their shopping is not deliberate. Furthermore there are limitations of sales pressure that can be applied. Although the pro's income usually is largely dependent on sales of merchandise he must be discreet about keeping members reminded that they are expected to buy.

## Pro Shops Are Handicaps

The result has been to severely handicap pro sales work. That's one reason you

Nice looking, but notice how the wood display window dividers interfere with effective display of apparel and luggage display is far above eye level.





The display, identification cards, and price signs on the bags do real merchandising work. In this shop the pro had to crowd in bag storage and bench but kept it neat.

see so many golfers with clubs not suited to their builds or swing. These golfers have gone to some store where they have been sold instead of getting the proper clubs at the same price as part of the service to which they're entitled by their membership in a club.

Consequently the club should be interested in getting traffic routed through or alongside the pro shop. Even in the latter case, rarely are there show windows which would give the pro an opportunity to acquaint members with what's new in golf equipment and to remind the players of what they need.

There have been plenty of debates among pros as to the advisability of show windows. Some pro shops are too frequently burglarized. A show window wouldn't look attractive with bars protecting it, as other windows around pro shops are. Lack of bars would mean the

pro or an assistant would have to take the display out of the window each night. That's more work. Some successful pros maintain that this extra work would be worth all the time it demanded because it would remind pros to change their displays and make them bright selling news.

On this matter of pro shop thefts; necessity has forced the building of well-protected storage space in pro shops as well as theft prevention features to keep the insurance rate normal in all phases of shop operation. But seldom are such provisions made in the original design and construction of the shop.

#### Adequate Display Space

Space for adequate display and arrangement of merchandise should be provided in the architecture of the shop. But again you get into a problem that keeps the pro and the architect apart. The pro

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Remember the days when so many clubs would be displayed. It's an inviting display of clubs, but observe how space limitations have bags across window.



## Pro Shops Are Blindspots

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usually owns his display cases and other fixtures and unless he is pretty solidly set on the job he is reluctant to invest heavily in display furniture that fits into a handsomely constructed shop. He moves in what cases he had on his previous job and makes them fit as best he can.

In display fixtures pro shops are beginning to go more for showing of merchandise, especially balls, gloves and other apparel, and accessories, on tables. At the recent National Open at Canterbury I had a discussion about this sort of display with Matt Kiernan and Gene Dahlbender of Spaldings. Matt long has been an advocate of the tables for pro shop selling. He maintains that when club members handle goods they are readier buyers, often apparently unable to resist buying anything new.

Further, he declares, there is a danger of installing fancy specialty store type of show cases in pro shops so selling gets on a too restrained basis. I said that quite a number of pros had told me that members picking up merchandise from these tables and walking away without signing for it had cost them a lot of money, especially at shops where the pro had to be out on the lesson tee a good part of the

time and the assistants were not the most vigilant. Dahlbender pointed out that stores did considerable merchandising of lower priced items from tables and didn't suffer undue losses although they were exposed to the operations of shoplifters and the pro shop loss was due simply to haste or carelessness of members.

Reluctantly I had to concede their case for tables listened stronger than mine for showcases, although Matt and Gene by no means were for the complete elimination of showcases. In checking up, later, with some pros at the open I learned that their experience with table display had been quite successful in pushing some items, especially gloves, hats, shirts and shoes.

Where to put the ball case is often a perplexing subject. In normal times balls constitute a large percentage of the pros' total sales and a steady staple business. Whether to locate the ball case right by the door where the players will rush in, grab a few balls and rush out without giving much attention to the rest of the merchandise, or to put the ball case back where the members will have to walk past displays of other goods is debatable. Some pros have changed ball case locations with surprising results in total sales volume.

But, here again, the space and window and wall arrangement of many pro shops don't allow much latitude for thoughtful

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display location. Clubs, bags, apparel items, pictures and advertising signs have to be put not where a smart merchant would prefer to have them displayed but in the only spaces available.

Window location in pro shops, when it is given thought by architects, usually is considered on the basis of the minimum of light and the maximum of burglary protection. Some display experts say that golf clubs look best in a light from the south. They point out that furs, for instance, as a cold weather item, look more attractive when displayed in a north light. On the same principle, the clubs, which look cold and stiff, need a warm light to show them at their best.

Wall space for display of clubs should be ample. Club stocks aren't always going to be hard to get. The pros who do the most business in selling clubs display clubs so visitors to the shop instinctively feel an invitation to handle the items. On observing that interest the pro who knows what clubs the member owns can begin his adroit sales talk on the new clubs.

Whether or not to have lounge space for members in pro shops is another subject pros have discussed. Generally the answer is "no." Members waiting around the shop may buy something but often those who hang around the shop simply to visit keep the pro just chatting instead of being able to show prompt and full attention to some other member who's in a hurry or who shows possibilities of buy-

ing. Many pros have found that it's a good idea to have handicap card racks in the pro shop to get members to come in. Watching the cards is good business practice for the pro.

However, the pro shop certainly must be an attractive place in light, color, arrangement, merchandise display, cleanliness and color of paint, floor covering and window curtains. In many shops ventilation is such that dust from club cleaning blows onto the counters and displayed merchandise, as well as collecting on cleaned clubs in bag storage.

The provisions for a pro's office where he can handle his business paper work seldom are anything to facilitate work.

Location of club cleaning facilities so the clubs can be taken in, cleaned, stored, and taken out for handing to caddies is another functional feature to be carefully considered by the architect, pro and club officials.

Club storage racks offer plenty of room for improvement. Tendency is toward smaller bags, but by the usual set-up compartments are all the same size and considerable space is wasted. Compartments generally are difficult to clean or drain and quite a few of the home-made designs of compartments mar the bags.

Whether the pro has supervision and assignment of the caddies along with his other duties is another determining factor in pro shop layout. If he does, the ar-

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rangement has to be such that the pro can keep an eye on the shop and the caddie windows too. If there is a caddiemaster there may have to be thought given to location of a counter from which the caddiemaster can sell soft drinks, candy and sandwiches to the kids as a sideline. At too many clubs the caddiemaster has to depend on these sales to bring his revenue up to the point where it will attract and hold a man who is good for the kids and the club too.

At larger clubs the caddie department usually is in a separate building, as it should be. But in no case that I can call to mind is the pro department in a separate building for any reason other than a belated discovery that the pro service and sales facilities hadn't been properly provided for in the original architectural plans.

Some of the older clubhouse pro department facilities are makeshift rearrangements of pro shops that were built in the days of handmade clubs. Now the bench work is limited. Most steel-shafted clubs in need of major repairs must be returned to the manufacturers' shops. The bench work required these days is mainly

that which is accessory to club-cleaning work.


Architects and building committees on new clubhouse jobs will earn the undying gratitude of pros and greatly facilitate the type of service each able pro wants to give every man and woman member, if they'll pay attention to the hitherto usually neglected design and construction problems of the pro department. The pros also need to be writing notes on what their shops should be, for reference just in case somebody suddenly does wake up to the fact that seldom does the location or design of the pro shop measure up to the rest of the service facilities of the clubhouse.

Henry A. Boury, is new mgr., Century CC (N. Y. Met district). . . Hugh R. Watkins, formerly mgr., Topeka (Kan.) CC, is new mgr., Ulen CC, Lebanon, Ind. . . Extensive remodeling is being done at the Ulen C. . . . Don R. Boyd, formerly mgr., Sieberling CC, Barberton, O., and widely known for greenkeeping work, is new mgr., Shawnee CC, Lima, O. . . Takeichiro Nakanishi, World War I, veteran, recently was presented wrist watch by members of Oahu CC, Honolulu, for his 35 years service to the club.



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