

Service is Key to Successful Pro Shop Operation

By **WM. C. JACKSON**

Pro, Camargo Club, Madeira, O.

"There is nothing new under the sun," is an old adage oftentimes repeated without due consideration to the meaning of the words. Similarly, among those of us who make a livelihood from the business of being a golf pro, there are those who contend, "There is nothing new in this game," or "There isn't anything I don't know about being a pro," or "What is there that is new in this business?" Little or no thought is given to these utterances and the lack of imagination on the part of the pro making such a statement is evidence that there is room for improvement.

Being a successful pro, to my way of thinking, demands being a capable individual with abilities in several specialized fields and whether he measures up or not, the modern pro must be a combination department store manager, salesman, teacher, bookkeeper, good will ambassador and, of course, a good player.

The emphasis on service cannot be too great. It should become the byword of every pro. Put service on a higher plane. Make every phase of operation akin to service.

Proper approach to serving the membership calls for a little imagination. Put yourself in the place of one of your members. It is a week day afternoon and you are in a downtown office sitting at a desk with your feet propped up across the corner. Your thoughts, for a moment, turn away from the work-a-day world, the trials and tribulations of your business, and you start day-dreaming of an afternoon of golf at the club.

What are your thoughts for the moment?" Are you thinking, "Wonder if there are any caddies this afternoon? I need some new socks, should I get them downstairs or will Pud Pro be able to find my size if I wait until I get to the club? I hope he has the handle on my seven iron repaired. . . . said it would be ready the last time out, but I had to borrow Bill's." Are these the thoughts that are running through your head or are you off to a pleasant afternoon of golf with the full assurance that everything will be ready for you when you arrive and that you can get what you want from the shop without any trouble or delay?

Let's get back on the job now, and re-



Wm. C. Jackson, pro, Camargo Club, Madeira, O., center, with his champion caddies, Jerry Purdy (left) winner, Cincinnati Caddie Championship, and Darrel Reed, Co-medalist, National Caddie Championship.

member — that business man whose place you assumed momentarily, is coming out for an afternoon of relaxation and pleasure. Your job of service starts with his arrival at the clubhouse. Every human being likes to be or feel important. Your every move, every word, from the time you first see him must be pointed toward making him feel that he is the most important man in the world as far as you are concerned. When he walks into the shop, give him a greeting and a smile that makes him know you are glad he has come out to play. His golf bag, clubs cleaned and in repair, with an efficient caddie are ready and waiting on the first tee. Any essentials which he might need or have forgotten, such as socks, underwear, shirts, caps, plus complete golf equipment are available in a clean, well arranged shop. If he should want some pointers on his game, be ready. Let him know that you are at his service.

Care of Clubs

Continuing with the above premise in mind, let's follow through with the several phases of pro shop operation. The care of clubs is important. Any pro that fails to give this special attention, who does not adopt some routine for the efficient handling of club needs is handicapping himself. Aside from thorough cleaning, stringing and minor repairs I have followed the practice of stamping the owner's name in small

white letters on each club on the sleeve connecting the club head to the shaft. This eliminates to a large extent the lost club problem and has brought forth more favorable comment than any other item of shop service.

Too much attention cannot be given the problem of a satisfactory caddie program. It is a long story and it would take a book to cover the subject completely. First of all, one must have a caddie master of high calibre—the right one is an asset and is worth the necessary expenditure. He will pay for himself many times over in improved service. Most clubs overlook this important point, thinking that most anyone can fill the bill. We have a complete program at Camargo. Caddies are provided with games to play in their idle time such as ping-pong, horseshoe pitching, basketball, softball, etc. We also allow them to play golf late in the afternoon after all members have teed off. I give them group instruction and to the six most promising I give individual instruction. This program, I am sure, had much to do with our winning the Greater Cincinnati Caddie Team Championship, the individual championship, and the fact that one of our boys was co-medalist in the National Caddie Championship at Columbus, O. The attention given our caddies and "our living with them" has paid big dividends in courtesy and efficiency in return.

Selection of Merchandise.

Successful merchandising is an art and a science. The extra service you give in the selection and presentation of merchandise for your membership may be the difference between a profitable operation and a losing proposition.

Intelligent selection of merchandise for the pro shop varies with each club. It takes at least a year of association with the members to sense their needs and the grade of equipment which will meet their demands. Some clubs are composed of very wealthy individuals which gives the pro a rather exclusive clientele while other club memberships are made up of individuals of the average income group.

Gauge the quality and quantity of purchases accordingly, but never sacrifice quality.

If you use good judgment in buying, two important factors remain upon which you must rely heavily to put yourself in the class of a successful merchandiser. Ingenuity in making attractive and appealing displays and the development of a sales technique in which service to the membership is the underlying motive will go a long way in putting you in the win column.

A letter in the Spring and before Christmas discreetly explaining the shortness of

your season, the value of professional selection adapted to the member's particular requirements, and your appreciation for purchase of gifts from the pro shop will do much to activate your sales and serve as a reminder to them to support the man who has served them throughout the year.

Do not try to sell out your complete stock without replenishing it in the Fall of the year. This is a year-round business with you. It is your livelihood, so don't give the impression you are living from hand to mouth; that it is an in and out proposition with you.

Art of Teaching

Teaching, from your standpoint, is more of a service than a profession even though you need to be well versed in the art. Golf instruction is highly psychological. A deep knowledge of human nature is essential to be good at it. Most pros today know the proper fundamentals and mechanics of the stroke—few know the art of teaching or how to impart knowledge acquired through experience. Personally, I do not stress the mechanics of the swing, but emphasize the feel of it. There is only one book published, in my opinion, that would be of any benefit to a pro learning how to teach and every teaching pro should get it regardless of his playing ability. It is "How to Learn Golf" by Percy Boomer and it should be read and reread until it is thoroughly understood. I think it is by far the most intelligent book on the golf stroke that has been written.

Finally, building up and maintaining general club interest is a "must" if you are to continue a successful operation. It is a service in which you have a definite selfish interest. Briefly, the definition of a club is, "get together." When your club is composed of individual groups or cliques it is on the way to deterioration. You can be the prime mover in "busting up" any tendencies of this nature in many ways such as running a two-man team tournament thru the playing season where each team plays every other team.

Our most successful "get together" at Camargo is a tournament held in the Spring and again in the Fall. It is a Mixed Scotch Foursome, played with selective drives, alternate shots with one-half the combined handicap. Every man and woman in the club who plays golf is entered, regardless of ability. Interest runs high and we have a complete "scrambling" of the membership as the tournament progresses. All of our membership is "together" for another successful season.

I suppose some will say, "There is nothing new in this." Maybe so, but improving on the old has taught me that "in serving others I serve myself."