

Member Service Is Prime Point of Pro Shop Design

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I've been seeing in GOLFDOM from time to time plans for new clubhouses to be built when conditions permit and have studied especially the location of pro shops. It is plain that the function of the pro shop and where to put it still is generally in a minor place among the factors architects consider in planning the clubhouse that will be a model for years to come.

Usually in the older clubhouses the lockerrooms and the pro shops are dark, poorly laid out for service and not at all in keeping with the theme of "class" and service which should prevail at a private club.

The background of the pro shop explains why so many pro shops are too small, inconveniently located and too dark for the proper display of merchandise to be used in a game played in the sunshine. Originally the pro shop was built around the clubmaker's bench. Members had to find their way to that shop when a hickory shaft broke. The apprentices, assistants or clubmakers were not of a disposition to demand good light for their workshop. Then too the caddie situation was casually handled and nothing like today's tie-up of the pro shop merchandising, club storage, club cleaning and caddie management existed.

But such great changes have been made in golf that the club with an out-dated type of pro shop today is not giving its members what they're paying for.

Pros, in many instances, at their own expense have modernized and brightened shops as far as rigid architectural limitations will permit. The pros, of course, have done this work in the hope of attracting more business into their shops. And it would interest club officials and members to know how often such improvements have gone so deeply into the pro's income that he actually has lost money in providing a service that is essential to first class club operation.

A Dividend on Membership Fee

The thinking pro looks at his job at a private club as something that theoretically and actually gives the member a definite profit on what the member pays in initiation fees and dues.

The member of a private club by pay-

ing the charges necessary to secure and hold membership is buying the privilege of spending his money under the most pleasant circumstances.

The well-run pro department gives the member, for nothing, what can't often be bought at any price elsewhere. The pro's genuine and expert personal interest in the member's game is expressed by free, specialized advice on playing and by conveniently arranged paid lessons when the member so desires.

The pro at a private club has to make careful study of what his members need and can afford in equipment for their games. The difference in the pro and store policy is that the pro buys to serve while the store buys to sell.

Supervision of handicaps, caddies, arranging and conducting tournaments and arranging games for members who come out to the club without having spots in foursomes, conducting juvenile classes, and seeing to a number of other details for assuring the member's enjoyment of his club, are duties which center in the pro shop.

Architects' Blindspots

Yet how rarely does the location and construction of the pro shop indicate the vital importance of the pro's functions.

However as the pro considers the architectural errors in lockerrooms he is not inclined to complain that he has been discriminated against but to be constructive in hoping that his ideas may help progress toward the perfect clubhouse.

The first point in properly fitting the pro shop into the clubhouse general scheme is locating it where as much traffic as possible would pass through. From the pro's merchandising viewpoint such location of course would be highly desirable but a location for maximum traffic and convenience would be even more desirable for the members.

The ideal spot would be one correlated with the men and women's lockerrooms, the first tee and the eighteenth green. For convenience of all involved the handicap board should be located in the pro shop so the cards could be kept up to date and easily consulted.

Golfers need to be reminded of their requirements. That's one of the services the pro is expected to render. He must do his selling by wise selection of stock, attractive and easily inspected display and swift service rather than by any high-pressure selling. He is at the club to serve rather than to sell, but he's got to sell and support himself to a considerable extent or the club won't be able to secure the character of pro service required by a first class private organization.

There is a lot of paperwork to a pro's business; far more than the architects, club officials and members realize. But space for a pro office is a rare thing in pro shops.

Also a rarity is adequate storage space for merchandise. The pro today is expected to have on hand an inventory far larger than most members would imagine. The old days of the member being content with having the pro send away for something the member wanted were about gone before the war. Now that merchandise is getting more readily available the members expect the pro to have it on hand.

The burglary risk at pro shops having inadequate storage of stock is a factor architects very seldom consider.

Light from windows, skylights and electrical fixtures is a primary need in the pro shop to give it the cheerful atmosphere every part of a golf club should have. That element is as necessary to the member's pleasure as it is to the pro in the proper display of merchandise.

Not often is there enough wall space for display of pro shop merchandise. The architect must remember that the member of a private club expects his pro to have available for his inspection and possible purchase a wide variety of merchandise. What the architect doesn't know is that generally the pro at a private club stocks and displays more lines of golf merchandise than a high grade down-town store does.

If the architect can figure out how to serve the member without having wall space for the display of this variety, he will be solving a problem that has kept many a pro puzzled for years.

The showcase, except for balls and some small accessories and as a place for the sales books, is on its way out at pro shops.

But in changing to the open table display so merchandise can be seen and handled easily (in most instances protected by cellophane wrappings) the pro again has a problem of inadequate and poorly laid-out floor space. He needs help here and a lot of it from the architect.

Layout for Complete Service

Caddie control often has to be centered in the pro shop. It may be necessary to

serve soft drinks and sandwiches to the boys from a place adjacent to where they receive and pass in bags. This the architect also has to bear in mind, and to consider that with many members to serve and many functions to perform the pro department not often has more than a pro, an assistant, a club-cleaner and a caddie-master and usually has some of those jobs combined as one fellow's duties. Hence the layout of the shop must be such that all parts can be watched by one man.

Club storage and cleaning will get back to the former standard as more young men susceptible to training become available. Facilities must be provided so a good and complete job can be quickly and conveniently done.

Club storage facilities seldom are adequate or properly placed. I believe that the best club storage racks are those simple ones made of pipe so the bags can be set in horizontally and at a slight angle. Division pipes would protect further against damage to adjacent bags. Such racks have no sides, top or bottom to collect dust. The storage should be separate from the cleaning room.

I believe that a main reason for the architectural inadequacies of pro shops is a mistaken belief that the good pro shop is only for the pro. It is mainly for the member. It should have some loafing and waiting facilities so the member could stay there and chat until his foursome showed up and not feel that he was in the way.

The pro will be very surprised and highly content if his shop is designed for making service to the member as easy, complete and bright as is humanly possible. Then the pro will get his own profit and satisfaction in due course.

GEORGE CHRIST DIES—George M. Christ, 52, pro at Country Club of Rochester, N.Y., died at his home in Rochester, June 26, after a long illness. George succeeded Walter Hagen as pro at the club in 1918. Prior to receiving a back injury George was an excellent golfer. As a club pro he was a fine pattern of a friend, host and businessman. George had considerable to do with the development of pro and amateur talent in western New York. He was a grand character who'll be missed by golfers all over the country. His widow, a son and three daughters survive.

FLORIDA GSA ELECTS—O. S. Baker, Indian Creek CC, Miami Beach, Fla., was elected pres., Florida Assn. of Golf Course Supts. during the business meeting that was a part of the organization's first annual turf management conference. Ralph Linderman, Mountain Lake (Fla.) CC was elected vp and Ward L. Wood, Palm Beach (Fla.) CC, sec.-treas. The new organization has a membership of approximately 60.