

Keeping Old Pro Distinction in Modern Shop Selling

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If a lot of pros thought as much about scoring par in salesmanship as they do about getting creditable scores on the course they'd be better off.

Each day of the present period they're going to have to think of balancing their business with their games. If ever the pro needed to be a successful merchant in order to get his income up to standard it is today. Competition from stores is becoming keener all the time. Twenty years ago when the pro made his members' clubs he had few worries about the drugstore ball and the cheap club that could be bought on almost every corner. That time has passed forever.

The pro can't sell everything. There are many courses where there are no pros. That business has to be cared for and eventually those buyers will graduate to come within the scope of pro shop merchandising. In the meanwhile the pro shop has to be developing so it is a distinctive business establishment. Many of the points of modern store merchandising it should adapt to its own field but there are many fine old features of pro shop operation that should not be abandoned. They gave an in-

timacy and an authoritative atmosphere to merchandising.

Shop Has Warmth

The shop of the first class old-time pro had, and still has, a warmth to it that appeals to the customers. It does not look like a transplanted corner of a department store's golf section.

Many years ago I was greatly impressed by a little Scotch professional for whom I worked. His gray eyes were always twinkling and he listened attentively to the golfer's woes with a pleasant, sympathetic smile. He was interested in everyone's troubles and made a sincere effort to let them know it. One of the first and most important lessons learned from this merchant pro was, as he put it, "You've got to be a better salesman than a golfer, lad, to be a success in this business".

Let's turn back the clock some 20 years and visit this wise little man and his neatly kept shop. We walk up a gravel path from the clubhouse and just beyond the first tee stands a small frame building resembling a summer cottage. As we enter we receive a most cordial welcome and are asked to

(Continued on page 86)

John Shorey's shop has an air of service, simplicity and welcome.



Modern Shop Selling

(Continued from page 82)

look around the shop. It is neat, well lighted, and the showcases are full of every possible golf accessory.

The shop boy is changing the merchandise from one case to the other. This gives the appearance of new equipment and breaks the monotony of seeing the same thing in the same place day in and day out. The clubs on the racks are moved for the same reason. All articles are marked with a fresh, legible sales tag.

Friendly Air of Golf

On the walls are pictures of the golfing greats of today and yesteryear. The then Open Champion, the graying Armour, takes the space over the cash register; with Hagen, P.G.A. Champion, on one side; and jittery Diegel, Canadian title-holder, on the other. On another wall we see the "Old Master" Harry Vardon and his countryman, Ted Ray, with his big black pipe.

The American amateurs, Jones, Evans, Ouimet, are there also. Little Johnny McDermott, 2-time winner of the Open, is smiling down at us; Mac Smith is scowling beneath his checked cap; and sleek, sturdy Sarazen is looking proud and stoical—cigar and all. There is also a painting of old John Morris surrounded by such old-timers as Gil Nichols, Travers, McLeod, and others. We are definitely in an atmosphere of golf. On the table are golf magazines and two books on golf, one by Barnes and the other "The Gist of Golf" by Vardon. By the door hangs a huge bulletin board which is used for club handicaps, tournament dates, etc.

We ask our host, "When do you play golf?" "Oh, never on a week-end or holiday," he replies. "I spend that time on the first tee or in the shop, listening to complaints, arranging matches, making suggestions and offering advice. You see, by visiting with my members I can study their golfing needs and later on make suggestions which lead to sales." "But, don't get the idea that I never play with the members. I make it a point to play with everyone in the club 2 or more times during the season. It's bad business, you know, to play with just a select group."

Over in the corner is a small cabinet with the sign—"Did you leave it at home? Maybe it's here." If a member forgets his sweater, umbrella or something, he can borrow one from the supply kept in this cabinet.

We find that the pro doesn't take a day off except for shopping and an occasional tournament. He uses his time to give free lessons to the junior members and the members wives who are beginners. He tells us that the juniors are the grown-up members of tomorrow. "They will need clubs, bags and balls, and someday they will buy them in my shop."

Pro Is Prime Merchandise

That old pro was a magnificent merchant

because the first item that he sold was himself. He was quality merchandise for quality merchandise in every case is that which serves the customer best.

The next thing in order of stock after the pro as first class merchandise is the material that the members need and can afford. Whatever the price may be the product must be the best for the money so that it does the pro's reputation good instead of taking a chance with a good name for the fleeting element of a long profit.

The long profits come and stay when the pro makes his character and business operations obviously directed at supplying the member with something that can't be obtained elsewhere.

There is an old saying that an institution is the lengthened shadow of one man. The properly operated pro shop is the extension of the pro's fine character, his authoritative knowledge of the playing and business of golf, and his genuine desire to have all his members, their families and friends, enjoy the game.

When you went into his shop you were going into it with your heart and head high because you knew you'd find there a true friend of yours. When you bought you knew that you were getting only what one of your real friends would let you have.

In these days when all vigor and can-niness and allure is used in pushing the sale of golf merchandise by stores maybe the method of that fine old Scotch mentor of mine might seem too easy and slow. But don't think that he ever missed a bet.

Anything in golf merchandise and golf merchandising that was good enough so his friends—his members—should have, he was quick to present.

He made a pro shop one of the unique and appealing places of business that very few commercial establishments could copy. Hundreds of stores would like to have the selling atmosphere that this sort of pro shop was given by a man who knew his business.

Go modern with your pro shop merchandising but don't go so "modern" that you sacrifice the power of business personality that a smart businessman pro accents.

SHELDEN OPEN AT ROCHESTER,

MINN.—Walter D. Sheldon Memorial Open for \$1500 will be played at Rochester (Minn.) G&CC, Aug. 10-12. Pro entries will be limited mainly to pros in Minnesota, Iowa and Wisconsin. Amateur entries of 9 handicap and under will be accepted. Pro field is limited to 75 and amateurs to 50. Rochester's pro, Art Ingleson, Box 473, Rochester, is handling entries. Entry fee is \$10. The Rochester club membership includes the MD celebrities of the Mayo clinic and other noted Rochester medical establishments.