

Study Women's Buying as Key to Bigger Pro Business

By JERRY GLYNN

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Any professional who hasn't been paying considerable attention to development of women's business at his club had better begin making up for lost time. Due to the inability of manufacturers to produce enough clubs to supply the men's market the first two seasons after the war ended, the women's business lagged. In a way that's been a good thing for the pros for when the supply catches up with the demand for men's clubs there'll still be tremendous potential sales in the women's field.

Beyond the shop sales view of the women's market there is a broader reason for paying a great deal of attention to the women golfers. Nobody knows when general business conditions are going to tighten up and the clubs again will run into a series of lean years. The club that has the mothers and daughters enthusiastic about golf is going to retain its membership. The female of the species is marvelously skilled in prevailing on the males to spend money. If they are educated to regard golf as one of their social essentials and become keenly interested in their games and scoring there won't be the slump in club membership that there was after the stock market dive in 1929.

A woman's magazine in its advertising promotion has the slogan "never underestimate the power of a woman." That's something for the golf pro to keep in mind. He will not only find that women's power exerts itself favorably and directly on his shop and lesson volume but indirectly—and forcibly—upon the husbands who are officials or rank-and-file members of his club.

About 16 years ago I began giving particular attention to the women golfers' business.



Skycrest professional Jerry Glynn looks on approvingly as apt pupil Phyllis Otto addresses ball and Dorothy Germaine waits her turn. Both students wear golf shoes from Jerry's well stocked pro shop.

ness. At that time the women's trade volume in pro shops wasn't very much but it wasn't primarily for development of volume that I watched the women shop; instead I began trying to figure out how I could sell more to them. I studied them because I knew—as every married man does—that women are smarter buyers than men and are subjected to the very best of retail advertising, display and selling.

Now let me tell you something about how that early attention to merchandising to women helped me. I learned, first of all, the pro shop selling appeal of "class" and superior quality products in the apparel lines. Application of this primary lesson brought me men's slacks sales of more

than 300 pairs a year. I made a deal with a tailor who would alter the legs for length and the seats to the correct dimensions and my members looked far better than the average of private club members around the Chicago district.

That was one of the timeliest merchandising lessons I ever learned, i.e., studying how to do business at the pro shop so the operations would compare favorably with the best at women's stores. At that time men's dress generally on a golf course was going into a decline from which it certainly has not emerged. Look at the pro and amateur tournaments today—or at many members at private clubs—and you'll see a lot of them looking like they were driving coal trucks instead of playing a game in "the country club atmosphere."

Contrast most of the field in the National and Western Opens and the PGA championship this year with the grooming of Hagen, Sarazen or Armour or 50 others where they were tournament contenders. Or look at Joe Kirkwood today playing an exhibition when it's 100 in the shade. Joe is wearing a \$20 shirt, a \$15 tie, a pair of expensive and finely tailored slacks and looks cool, collected and classy. Too many other pros look like they're dressed for work—and that's bad psychology for the golf pro to pass along to his members. You sell more golf merchandise when golf is fun.

Pro's Grooming Important

Today about 75% of the professionals are smartly groomed in hosiery and shoes. The deterioration in the rest of their golf attire, except sports shirts, has been in a sharp decline from the generally high previous standard. Today too many of the professionals have the casual—and even careless—dress standard that is so obvious among the amateurs. It is fortunate for some pros that the sports shirt fashion from Hollywood not only saved them from tee shirts and dungarees as a professional costume but put them in a profitable new department of pro shop sales.

One very important thing about women's business is that the merchant has to look neat and businesslike if he's making any bid for quality trade. That certainly holds good at the pro shop. Women recognize quality material and tailoring in a professional's apparel more keenly than most professionals do. Lack of a manicure, need of a haircut or shave, the offenses of B.O. or halitosis; all are factors that cut down women's business at pro shops. Perhaps it's undiplomatic to mention these as factors that are sometimes present. But we might as well be bluntly honest.

Most professionals know how neatness of person and of their shops are essentials in making a successful bid for women's

business. But where the business professional is still pretty much up in the air is concerning the merchandise to carry for women. About the only item of quality merchandise other than golf gloves that pros have been able to sell in considerable quantities to women is golf shoes, of one brand especially. The visors and jockey caps have gone rather well to women at many clubs but they'll be on the way out and pass quickly the instant some smart milliner gets busy on women's hats for golf. At the very top Florida clubs last winter some attractive golf hats for women were in evidence.

Women's Golf Dress to Change

From the masculine viewpoint there is a lot of room for improvement in the looks of most golf dresses for women. I have my doubts that at this stage of the business pros can do much of a job in stocking and selling women's golf dresses although I'm told that several pros around Los Angeles have been very successful in selling women's golf blouses.

Generally, though, there is such a wide variation required in women's sizes and so much altering that it's dangerous for a pro to get too far off base in women's golf dress business. Furthermore I believe that the style factor is going to take a more definite and smarter trend in women's golf clothes. At this time a few smart women in almost every club are showing a dress leadership that is having a strong and favorable influence. The truth of the women's golf dress situation among too many of the better golfers is that these garments also look too much like work clothes and have a bad influence in making the golf course, which used to be a place where the smartest sports attire for women was seen generally, an area in which there is a curious and vast variety of women's clothes worn.

There is nothing a pro can do about this, I suppose, but if the dress designers would take the lead the young girls who are coming into the game by the thousands would learn right at the start to be smartly groomed on the golf course. That would be the best break the pros could get in assuring a speedy and solid development of the new boom in women's golf. Look what smart costuming did in popularizing skiing and making business great for ski pros.

Women's Club Market Improves

In club sales to women the missionary work that pros have done with free class lessons for youngsters and women show positive indications of paying out in a big way. Fifteen or 20 years ago girls and young matrons who started to play golf didn't often get new sets. They became

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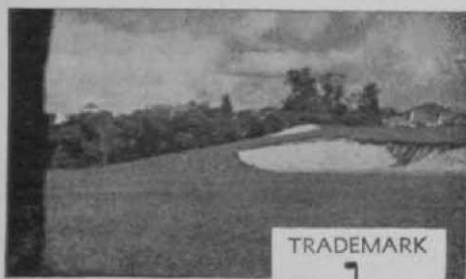
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STUDY WOMEN'S BUYING

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heiresses to the old clubs of their fathers or husbands. That wasn't good for their scoring and the development of their golf interest and it certainly wasn't any good for pro shop business.

Now, generally, the golf swings of younger women around a club are of a better standard than those of any other class of members except the low handicap players. The girls and young women have better than average performance with the wrists, thus get the arms and hands working together effectively.

In my classes for youngsters I have noticed an increasing seriousness of the girls which I attribute, in part, to the little girls hearing about what prominence now is being given to golf instruction at the leading girls' schools. My classes for kids are quite serious matters to the youngsters and to me. I don't permit them to clown. If they get funny they are sent out of the classes. Seldom does that happen because I keep them too active for any foolishness.

Group Lessons Are Divided

Instead of having these classes once a week I wait until school vacation starts and have the youngsters in one and a half class lessons four consecutive days. Half the youngsters sit and watch and listen while the other half are taking their lessons in grip, stance and swing. Then the sitters get their action half of the class lesson. I've found this matter of taking the youngsters on consecutive days gets them well grounded in the fundamentals, whereas the weekly sessions allow them to forget.

The younger girls getting enthusiastic about golf get their mothers into the game and playing far more often than fathers. Golf is developed into a prominent place in the social scheme of these families, with a consequent extensive development of the pros' market.

These are critical years for the pro who wants to protect his future market. Pros have seen that their own errors of omission allowed alert and aggressive store competition to get in on men's business that might have been channeled into pro shops. If pros allow the same competitive condition to develop in women's club, ball, bag and accessory sales it will do them no good to try to place the blame for loss of this business elsewhere than on themselves.

And, as I've previously remarked, the stability of many a private club and fee course, despite a possible general business recession, depends a great deal on how strong women have been sold on golf during such good business years as the nation has enjoyed since the war.