

# Private Club Service At Public Course Pays Pro

By HAROLD GRAHAM

Professional, Silver Lake Golf club, Staten Island, N.Y.

The greatest undeveloped asset for professional golf merchants in this country is the public links golfer. He is just as fast with a dollar as a private club member. He often is a better player than the average country club player and he should be, for he loves the game just as much as the private club player and must triumph over inconveniences and generally plays oftener.

These facts I've learned in 20 years as caddy and golf professional on both public and private courses. And these are the facts that enable me to sell successfully, to the surprise of many pros and dealers, extensive equipment to the "little man."

I recently received a letter from the general manager of one of the country's leading golf companies. He asked me if I could explain why I sell four times more top-priced golf balls than cheaper balls.

The golfers at my club would rather buy three high-priced balls than six cheap balls. This holds true with women as well as men.

The public links golfer wants the best equipment he can buy and he gets it. He will not buy cheap equipment.

In my 20 years as a golf professional I have spent 18 years as pro at the Silver Lake GC on Staten Island, one of the 10

municipal courses run by the New York City Park Department. Before I became a public links pro, I caddied and worked at various private clubs. I feel that I am in a position to judge.

In my pro shop I carry a complete line of golf merchandise and the prices range from the lowest to the highest that can be obtained. This season I have not yet been able to sell a golf club that retails for \$5.00. But I have sold sets of eight irons ranging from \$52 to \$100.

## "Little Man" Big Customer

This merchandise is sold to the "little man" who loves the game so well he will come by subway, "el" or bus as well as in his own car. This is the man or woman who will arrive at the club house at 7 a.m. on a Saturday or Sunday and wait three or four hours before teeing off. On weekdays he arrives at 6 a.m. and sometimes stays until 8:30 or 9 p.m.

This man or woman will not complain about a bad lie in a trap or fairway or criticize the pro or greenkeeper if the wind is strong. These are the people who realize that when 400 to 500 other golfers (300 to 400 on weekdays) are playing the same course on the same day they must expect



Supporting his contention that the public links golfer wants the best equipment that money can buy is this display of top quality merchandise in Harold Graham's well-stocked public course pro shop that will put many a private course pro shop to shame. Club-fitting and reconditioning are other important services not overlooked by businessman Graham.



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an occasional temporary green or tee.

Don't try to sell these people inferior merchandise. They want quality and they should get it.

My assistant and shop manager are told to accommodate anyone who comes into the shop; not to brush anyone off, as is often the case when the pro is out teaching.

I break matched sets of irons and woods in order to sell individual clubs, which the private club pro or store dealer will not do. I do this as a favor to the golfer and by doing so I make a customer of someone who might otherwise be lost.

As soon as possible stock is released. I do not believe in empty shelves in my shop during the golfing season. And I have found it does not pay to carry a small line of merchandise.

The average golfer does not want to order sight unseen. He wants to take a club in his hand and get the feel of it. More clubs are sold when a golfer can come in and shop around and pick up a club and waggle it and swing it a few times and, YES, even hit a ball or two with it. This way, a club sells itself.

I believe a pro should carry at least four different makes of golf equipment in different price ranges so the golfer can make a comparison right then and there.

If a golfer wants to trade in his old clubs for a new set we allow him a fair and reasonable price and tell him we will hold his old set for one week if he thinks he can get a better price for it elsewhere.

We then recondition the clubs and sell them to a player who cannot afford a new set, or we use them for group instruction.

### Club Fitting Is Featured

My assistant, John Murphy, who has had a good many years experience as an instructor and clubmaker, also sees to it that when someone buys clubs, the clubs are properly fitted. I have been most fortunate in having a man of Murphy's character and ability working for me.

Recently, a young boy of 13 came into my shop all smiles with a new set of irons he had just received from his father as a graduation gift from grammar school. He asked me to give him a lesson.

When I got him out on the lesson tee I discovered the boy had been given a set of irons that would have been heavy for a man weighing 200 pounds. When clubs are bought at random both the instructor and pupil work under a terrific handicap.

In this case, I spoke to the father, who, of course, was not a golfer. I promised him I would try to get the best price pos-

*Golfdom*

sible for the clubs in the pro shop. I suggested he have a pro select clubs for the young boy.

To develop more golfers, I arrange group lessons at various social clubs at special rates. This season I have one class a week.

#### Makes It Easy to Begin

I supply all the equipment necessary and anyone who really wants to learn golf does not have to invest one penny in equipment until he is sure he would like to become a golfer. I also invite class members to use a golf net I have installed alongside the first tee and again I supply the balls and clubs free of charge.

Against the time these beginners step out on the course I have also arranged a time payment system with one of the local banks for any of them who wants to buy equipment on the installment plan.

For all golfers I import a few times each year movies with sound showing the professionals in action. The movies are run off at the club house and I've found they really go over big with golfers from both private and public courses.

I have surveyed most of the golf clubs in my area and I've discovered that few pro

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shops measure up to the rest of the club building. Some of the private clubs I've visited have beautiful locker rooms, bars and restaurants, but the pro shops look more like run-down caddy houses.

At the beginning of this season I had my shop, which is ideally located between the first and tenth tees, redecorated. Stained asbestos shingles cover the walls halfway up. Above them are handpainted green silhouettes of palm trees, a beach, mountains. There are nautical lights and a gamboo shade to separate the repair bench from the main shop and show cases. The shop boy is told that dust must not settle on any of the merchandise at any time.

My shop is in the basement, but the modern decor gives it a light, breezy air and the golfers like it, judging from their comments.

The public links golfers deserve any good the pro can do for them. I have found time and time again they will remember you for any favor you do them and they will patronize your shop as much as they possibly can.

## Managers Association Names Vice-Presidents

John J. Pomeroy, pres., Club Managers Assn. of America and mgr., Red Run GC, Royal Oak, Mich., announces appointments of following regional vps of the CMA.

Harry C. Andrews  
Oakley Country Club  
Watertown, Mass.  
C. Mac Arrowsmith  
Colonial Country Club  
Memphis 11, Tenn.  
Arthur H. Craig  
Alderwood Country Club  
Portland 11, Oregon  
Page Curran  
River Crest Country Club  
Fort Worth 7, Texas  
Frank Dowie  
Des Moines Club  
Des Moines, Iowa  
Al A. Feyerabend  
Spokane Press Club  
Spokane, Washington  
C. W. Gelwick  
Myers Park Club, Inc.  
Charlotte 7, N.C.  
Carl J. Jehlen  
Glen Ridge Country Club  
Glen Ridge, N.J.  
George A. Jobe  
Athens Athletic Club  
Oakland, Calif.

Harry Masterson  
Binghamton Club  
Binghamton, N.Y.  
James B. Montfort  
National Press Club  
Washington 4, D.C.  
James J. O'Connor  
Edgewood Country Club  
Charleston 26, W. Va.  
Marcel G. Pontillon  
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Miami Beach 41, Florida  
Raymond Riede  
Elks Club No. 17  
Denver, Colorado  
William F. Roulo  
Metairie Country Club  
New Orleans 20, La.  
William H. Slaughter, Jr.  
Union League of Phila.  
Philadelphia, Penn.  
W. L. Stewart  
Alta Club  
Salt Lake City, Utah  
E. A. Vetter  
Portage Country Club  
Akron, Ohio

J. P. Tonetti, mgr., New Haven (Conn.) CC, has been appointed chmn., CMA Public Relations committee. Regional vps are members of this committee which is to promote club managers publicity and develop public and trade understanding of managers' problems and plans.

CMA will hold its 1949 convention at Hotel Statler, Detroit, February 6-9.