

# Pros Must Plan Sales Battle As Competition Tightens

By **WILLIE HUNTER**

*Professional, Riviera CC, Pacific Palisades, (LA) Calif.*

The past few years for the golf professional have not been conducive to salesmanship. Salesmanship has not been necessary to get business from the hungry buyers and this state of affairs can easily lead to a feeling of complacency which may hurt badly when the real competition hits us.

During the war years it was a "must" to concentrate on haberdashery and odds and ends of different kinds to fill in the vacuum of lack of balls, clubs and bags. Even so, our sales were necessarily off and the years were lean.

This past year although the right kind of clubs have not been plentiful our sales have been away up and our inventories still low with everything worthwhile turning over rapidly.

The next few years are going to be different with department stores, sporting goods houses, stores and sundry smaller sources vying for a part of the business. Golf professionals have a strong advantage meeting and knowing intimately their clientele and it is just this advantage that must be capitalized to its utmost.

To do this we must carry a full line of all makes of fine merchandise and display them attractively with prices in accordance with the standard mark up. Personally I do not hesitate to tell my members just what profit we get out of a sale of any kind of goods as it stands to reason the buyer realizes that the professional must get a fair profit to run a good establishment.

While teaching is of great importance such part of our business must be so arranged that we can be in the golf shop and around the first tee at busy times to keep continuously in touch with our members. A few helpful hints are gobbled up avidly



**WILLIE HUNTER**

by a professional's members. When the pro is giving out in this way it is invariably the rule that a group gathers. They all become interested in your interest in them. Sales leads are started that bear lucrative results.

## **Assistants Are On the Job Too**

My golf shop is fortunately well located with most of our traffic passing through the shop to register before starting. It is kept scrupulously clean, well lighted and has all kinds of merchandise displayed within easy reach of the customer. No attempt at high pressure salesmanship is permitted, but my assistants are carefully instructed to give immediate attention to anyone showing the slightest interest in buying.

Assistants are carefully trained and are fully able to take over any duties such as starting, caddie master, teaching and running of events. They must present a clean, well dressed front at all times. They are not permitted to call members by first names and must memorize the entire membership to be able to properly greet them when they enter the shop.

I believe that Riviera CC has the most comprehensive tournament schedule of any club in the world with a tournament of some kind always being played.

It may be asked how we do this and where the money for prizes comes from, and it would be well to briefly outline the manner in which we accomplish this. Some years back we realized that to continually dun members for entrance fees to everything that came along was repugnant to both the member and the professional so we formed what is known as the Tournament Fund.

A letter was sent out to the members fully explaining our objective and informing them that they could at their own option have one dollar per month put on their bill, such money to be used in its entirety for promotion and running of tournaments. This money is set up by our accounting department separately and all prizes are charged against the fund. The member does not at any time pay an entrance fee.

We have approximately 400 members contributing at the present time which means that we dispense close to \$5000 annually in prizes. With the exception of our club championship and two other major events per year when outstanding trophies are given, the prizes are all merchandise orders on the golf shop. The year's schedule is set up at the beginning of our current year by our general golf committee which allots a generous sum to the ladies who in turn spend such amount in their own way. It is an ideal set-up which gives much pleasure to all contributors.

A speaker system takes care of the calling of caddies and it is interesting to know that the caddies themselves installed this. Since the finish of war our caddies have been carefully checked with many dismissed who were just used during the war because there was nothing better available. California caddies are mostly adults with boys used at weekends to take care of the heavy weekend traffic. The adults and boys are differently rated for pay.

#### Care Needed On New Jobs

It appears to me that the PGA should be more interested in their professional members' credit and formulate a policy to educate them on the value of dealing with their business on a solid basis. To fully stock a golf shop requires capital and very few of our younger men when they get a good club are financially able to carry the load until they are established. It is then that they get oversold on certain merchandise at the expense of an all round assortment. If we could help these men to get off on the right foot we would hear far less about their credit ratings.

Club professionals should not play in too many tournaments at the expense of neglecting their membership. Such tournaments as are in their immediate locality certainly should be taken in, but bucking the circuit against men who do nothing but play competitive golf is an expensive luxury for many pros and a neglect of their members' primary interests.

There is an educational phase to tournament play that can be capitalized upon smartly by the younger professional. He can develop his instruction ability as well as his own game. In his observation of leading players and in his discussions with the stars the younger man will acquire knowledge that will help in diagnosing the faults of his pupils and in applying corrective methods that are properly suited to the individual who is on the lesson tee. But in most cases the tournaments can only be considered an educational or vacation expense for the club professional and not as a source of income that will compare in volume to what he can make by sticking on the job for complete service to his members.

#### Business Battle Lines Forming

In the keen competition for golf business that is inevitable when golf club, ball, bag and other playing merchandise production catches up with demand the pro may expect to see a multitude of retail outlets bidding for business with aggressive advertising, excellent display and appealing prices.

The pro will have to make fullest use of his strong selling points to master this competition. The pro has to remember that hundreds of thousands became golfers during the six years after Pearl Harbor and these newcomers, due to the scarcity of golf merchandise, may not have acquired the habit of going to the pro first for golf goods.

Everything possible must be done—wisely, tactfully and promptly—to develop that habit.

What the pro has that puts him in a stronger competitive position than the other retail outlets are:

- (1) A knowledge of the player's type of game; a genuine interest in the player's enjoyment of the game, hence the player's more frequent play and purchasing; and the expert skill to properly fit the player with clubs.

- (2) A shop location that makes purchasing convenient.

- (3) A reasonably accurate knowledge of the player's purchasing capacity.

- (4) The opportunity to develop sale leads through teaching and acquaintance with the player's present equipment.

*(Continued on page 130)*

*Front Cover: Architects are making attractive use of glass to bring beauty and life of the course into the inside of the clubhouse. This view is from the dining room of the remodeled Tam O'Shanter clubhouse (Chicago).*

Pros Must Plan Sales Battle As Competition Tightens.....	Willie Hunter	33
Club Financial Statements Show Inflation Dangers.....	Walter Vetter	35
Chlordane Rates High in Insect Control Tests.....	John C. Schread	39
Advances in Turf Management Reported at GSA Convention.....		46
School Classes Best Field for Pro Golf Build-up.....	Patty Berg	52
Glen Head Catches Up After Shutdown of 5 War Years.....	John Brennan	56
Atlanta's New Peachtree Pre-tested by Bobby Jones.....	Robert Trent Jones	60
Restoring Moisture to Localized Dry Spots.....	O. J. Noer	65
Toil, Trouble and Triumph at Small-town Club.....	Kelly J. Cook	74
What Makes Sammy's Golf School Run?.....	Jim Green	80
Applies College Business Course in Pro Shop.....	Jay M. Funk	86
News from the Manufacturers.....		114

## PROS MUST PLAN

(Continued from page 34)

(5) An opportunity to show the pro's own sincere personality and competence in making the sales transaction a matter of service rather than the store method of cold exchange of cash for merchandise.

### Check Up Pro Strong Points

In preparing himself to get the drop on budding competition the pro will be wise to go over his entire membership list and see just what he knows about each member and the member's game, equipment and needs.

It will surprise many a pro to be reminded by such a survey that he doesn't know as much as he should about a lot of his comparatively new members and the golfing prospects in the new members' families.

The pro's very strong point of expert fitting of clubs has been neglected during the long period when clubs that precisely fit haven't been available. Players have been so eager to get new clubs they'd buy almost anything they could find.

Many of the older—and wealthier members—have clubs that are too heavy and have shafts that are too stiff. Actually one reason for a club having a first class

professional is to attend to rectifying such cases as these outgrown clubs. The pro has to handle these cases with discreet judgment but if he doesn't look into them he's going to lose sales—and his members who go elsewhere won't be fitted properly. It will be a loss all around—except to the stores.

I've mentioned the shop arrangement and stock as being a vital matter to the younger professional but the older professional too can well spend some time considering the price range of his shop stock and keeping his displays constantly with "that new look."

This year far more than in years past the pro has to think of what he's got in selling points that the stores haven't got. And the pro has to make sure that the member is made keenly aware of the superior points of pro shop stocks and service. You can't expect the member to go to any trouble making the discoveries for himself.

If a pro loses out in competition with stores in the battle for golf business that will begin in earnest this year he can't complain that luck was against him. He'll have to blame himself for overlooking the same sort of smart planning and work the store would do if it had the inside track on golf business that the pro logically has.