

Makers Say Pros Prepared to Beat 1949 Competition

Manufacturers of golf playing equipment, looking at the golf business in general and the pro situation in particular, see manufacturing and selling operations settling down to a sounder basis than ever before.

One of the leading manufacturers finds that interest in playing is higher than at any previous period and because the play is extended wider among the population the current boom is more substantial than the golf surge in the 20s.

The professionals' position is stronger than ever before, he says. That's because the natural process of selection has raised the standard of pro business operations and put good men in good jobs, this manufacturer opines. He adds, "What will develop will depend entirely upon the character of the men who constitute the professional ranks and how they conduct themselves and their businesses. They have an extraordinarily good opportunity and I am confident they will measure up to the requirements for further growth. The pros have had an important role in developing the game and business. They form the backbone of golf retailing. They have every reason to believe that conditions favor them to the extent that each pro whose business ability and energy measures up will enjoy retailing advantages seldom present in other fields of competitive merchandising to large markets."

"Bigger Field for Pros"

L. B. Icely, Wilson pres., believes that pros generally have qualified themselves to competently meet whatever conditions arise.

He says that pros have discovered that in business operations, just as in the golf swing, fundamentals govern. With the market development that in no small measure is due to smart pros' class instruction and promotion efforts, the pros have a bigger field than ever before and are better prepared to serve the market and maintain their merchandising domination.

Icely remarks: "From our own observations and the close-up views of pro business operations as the professionals report them in GOLFDOM, it is clear that the average of business management capacity and initiative among representative pros is exceptionally high among those who conduct small specialized retail and serv-

ice establishments. The progress has been astonishing and is a credit to the veterans who laid the foundation.

"Even during these few years since the war the pros have exhibited a go-getting live attitude which is rather rare in a period of sellers' markets. What the leading pros have learned about a merchant's own most serious competition being himself, is something many other retailers need to learn.

"Participation in golf will undoubtedly continue to make the same kind of strong gains in 1949 that we have experienced during the past year. As to what's ahead for the golf professional, I can see no economic factors on the horizon that will interfere with present upward trends.

"Increases in women's and junior play are adding greatly to the pro's opportunities. Developments in both of these fields are evident on every side. The new outlook in physical education, brought about by schools and colleges generally recognizing the need for teaching students skills in sports in which they can participate in post-school life, insures a healthy, steady growth for golf.

"Faced with statistics showing that more than 80% of the students taking physical education do not go out for athletic teams or big muscle building activities, thousands of schools have either added golf to their programs or are trying to find ways to include golf instruction. A great many have found that with the help of local golf professionals and the very valuable teaching and promotional aids made available to them by the National Golf Foundation, it is a simple matter to develop interest in golf classes and events.

"Some idea of the market potentials to result from the work of the Golf Foundation in the junior field may be gained from the fact that this year more than 900 schools and colleges participated in that organization's intramural program and conducted both girls' and boys' tournaments.

"From a merchandising viewpoint there will undoubtedly be a need during the coming year, due to manufacturers' increased production and competitive conditions, for more intensified selling effort in pro shops. This, of course, will mean greater attention to giving the kind of service to members

that will create stronger bonds of friendship—the keystone of all pro business. It will mean, also, a need for more featuring of strongly advertised, pre-sold merchandise.

"All in all, I believe that the alert pro has every prospect for an unusually fine year ahead."

"Manufacturing Status Good"—Cowen

Henry P. Cowen, MacGregor pres., believes that pro business in 1949 will favorably reflect satisfactory completion of leading manufacturers' postwar adjustment.

"In our own case," says the MacGregor head, "increased stability in the raw material markets and fulfillment of our long range program in our new plant, put us in position to supply a wider range of equipment to the professional trade.

"The Tommy Armour Tourney line, while retaining distinctive and characteristic features, has been restyled. The Byron Nelson Tourney line is completely new with an original, precision-ground head. Production is being increased on the Double Service niblic and No. 11 iron to care for the great demand that the clubs have received since their introduction this year.

"We are confident that our new Louise Suggs line, to be sold exclusively through pros, will enable professionals to make an unusually effective campaign for girls' and women's business. The line will be presented in three popular price ranges.

"During the past six months we have made rapid strides in our ball production and in addition to our new Tourney are supplementing our pro-only line with the Mac to retail for 65 cents and the MacGregor 259 to sell at 50 cents.

"The bag and accessories lines have been revised, not only in style but in broadening of price range. Emphasis again will be on the original and exclusive Pax bags with individual club compartments. The Craig Wood sportswear line which has become an important part of pro shop merchandising, has been enlarged with new, attractively styled items.

"MacGregor production in 1948 reached the peak of our company's history. This, of course, means that pro sales volume of MacGregor was at record height."

"Pros on Inside Track"—Kaiser

Bill Kaiser, Hillerich & Bradsby, says 1949 will be another fine year for pros who can outsmart and outwork the competition that will be present now that the wartime shortage of golf clubs has been supplied and business will be getting on a normal basis in a much larger market than in pre-war days.

Kaiser says the alert pro will be on the inside track, due to intimate contact with the market through clinics, classes and other promotion activities, as well as the pro's personal contact with players and convenient merchandising location at the courses.

"Professional businessmen no longer expect to have sales put in their hands. They have made themselves business-getters by their own brains, what they have learned from successful pro merchant articles in GOLFDOM and from their exchange of experiences at their PGA meetings. They are better qualified, in most cases, to meet inevitable competition in a growing market than they ever were before."

"1949 A Challenge"—McCarthy

George T. McCarthy, mgr., golf ball sales, United States Rubber Co., forecasts that 1949 may increase the pro percentage of the entire golf market for the reason that the competitive situation undoubtedly will bring forth the pros' ablest and broadest effort in attracting and serving golfers.

McCarthy further remarks:

"1949 looms up as a challenge to the golf professionals' sales ingenuity. Now that production of golf equipment has caught up with the demand, plus the fact that more rounds of golf are being played than ever before in the history of the game, the pro will find competition in 1949 keener than it has been the past several years.

"Such competition is an open challenge to the pro for greater ingenuity in displaying and selling merchandise so that he may get his full share of the potential business.

"The United States Rubber Co. plans for the 1949 golf season call for the continuation of selling through the pro shops only, the U. S. Royal "Special" ball—an extra high compression ball for the accurate, long hitter; the U. S. Royal (Blue) for the pro and the expert amateur who likes a distance ball in a slightly softer compression and the U. S. Royal (Red) ball specially built for the golfer who prefers extra durability—plus good distance. These balls are generally retailed for 95c each. The U. S. pro-only policy on the entire fast-selling U. S. Royal line of balls completely eliminates competition for the pro shops.

"To help stimulate sales of the popular U. S. Fairway balls we have lowered the price so they can now be retailed for 65c each. It is a certainty that the U. S. Nobby made to retail for 50c each, will be definitely established in the line for 1949.

"Research and development is continuing at the United States Rubber Company's plant in Providence, R. I., so that at all times we are in a position to offer advanced products in the respective price classes.

"U. S. Royal golf gloves in improved construction and design will be offered to the pros in quantities to meet demands.

"Plans are being formulated for an elaborate advertising and sales promotion campaign — the greatest portion of which will be put behind the selling of U. S. Royal balls through pro shops.

"To aid the pro to close 1948 with 'plus' sales, the United States Rubber Co. is offering U. S. Royal and U. S. Fairway balls put up in handsome eye-catching six and 12-ball gift packages for the holiday season."

"Preview Is Bright"—Bommer

Fred W. Bommer, pres., Acushnet Process Sales Co., reports:

"Ample evidence that pro merchandising is fully capable of increasing pro volume and maintaining pro sales leadership in 1949, already is present in sales figures on Acushnet's Christmas package proposition. This deal involves putting the players' names on balls in dozen-ball Christmas boxes.

"The sales have been exceptionally large, indicating plainly that professionals' sales operations are taking advantage of the logical opportunities.

"It certainly is reasonable to assume that with pros pushing strong and selling a surprising volume in an off-season period they'll do very well for themselves in their sales efforts when and where weather permits play.

"We are continuing to make our pro-only plans for 1949 on the basis that the pros' foresighted and energetic promotion work has put them in position to command a major percentage of what should be a very satisfactory year in golf ball sales."

"Planning Is Required"—Smith

Kenneth Smith, maker of custom clubs, expects that next year will be another good one for pro merchants, notwithstanding the probability of keener competition. Smith says this competition situation will require careful advance planning by the pros. He believes that this advance work is being done extensively as in his own plant he has a large backlog of orders for woods and irons. He urges his pro customers to speak up at least 60 days in advance for their requirements.

Smith says the pro sales advantage in being able to fit clubs correctly to customers is being strengthened by Smith's new balance scale which makes possible a simplified matching system for woods, irons and even the putter, in a matched set, so all clubs have the same constant swinging balance. He says this banishes the mystery and confusion in swinging weight.

James C. Brydon, Worthington Ball Co. vp in charge of sales, says his own company's 1948 sales point to the pros having had their biggest year in shop volume and amount of golf played. "There's every reason to believe that 1949 with an increase in courses, more youngsters coming into the game and lengthened seasons at clubs, will mean a further increase in business to the hustling business men in pro golf," adds Brydon.

Of Worthington's sales operation Brydon says: "Sweet Shot Christmas package sales with the pro's customer's name imprinted in dozen lots, is remarkably good. There couldn't be any surer sign that pros are overlooking no chance, at any time of the year, to get close to their present and potential customers and make sales profits.

"We've been having highly gratifying reports on the new Wonderball we're bringing out to be a sales feature along with our high compression Sweet Shot. The Wonderball is moderate compression to respond better to the hits of the great multitude of golfers. The resilience of the Wonderball is due to a dynamic new liquid center which extensive tests by pros and their average-scoring members prove to give most effective results from the typical golfer's blow.

"This Wonderball is for pro-only sale. We are fully aware of the psychological factor that has many golfers playing a ball that's too high-compression for them but we are confident that this new development will produce a fine volume of business for pros in 1949 by fitting the ball to the player as the pro fits clubs to his customers."

True Temper Accents Pro-Fit

The fitting factor in the pros' merchandising always has been the foundation of the professional golf business. No other golf goods retailing outlet can come close to the pro in matching the clubs to the player's build, strength and type of swing.

This selling point will be emphasized at pro shops in 1949 by a new development in the True Temper shaft line. The American Fork and Hoe Co., True Temper shaft makers, are presenting three types of shafts. The shafts are True Temper (A) Dynamic for the golfer who wants more shaft action, the (T) for the low scoring amateur and the (S) for the powerful swinging professional. Each shaft will be marked with the identifying letter appearing on the Dynamic band around the shaft.

The wide variance in styles and power of golfers' swings makes this True Temper scope of shafts something that fits into the pro's basic plan of providing his customer with playing equipment designed and made for his style of a game.