

# This Year's Conditions A Challenge to Able Pro

By PAT PATTEN

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Definitely the pro golf fraternity has a well founded realization that although this should be a good year financially it's going to require harder and smarter work than previous post-war years have necessitated.

The 1949 business conditions will provide a test for the pro merchant but he ought to do a whole lot better than many other retailers for the pro still has a lot of room in his market.

Some of the boys talk about the "saturation point" having been reached. They mean the "saturation point" on easy sales that just fall into one's lap. The time when good golfing tools were difficult or impossible to buy and when "let the buyer beware" was the rule, has passed. Nobody had to be a merchant to sell then. What he may have thought he sold was bought. The pro would have had to close his shop to keep from doing fair to very good business.

Now there can be an increase to pro sales volume but it can be effected only



Pat Patten, Orinda (Calif.) CC professional, uses this corner of his pro shop to check list of inactive members with an eye to building up program to bring them out and thus increase market possibilities that otherwise lie dormant.

after keen scrutiny of the golfer's needs and subsequent careful stocking of equipment and accessories to at least partially magnetize the potential buyer. The pro has to make sure he features only proved and reliable brands of merchandise. He must avoid "off brands" and brands of question-

able quality. He can present a wise price range of shop stock without getting his merchandising identified with "cheap" stuff.

The pro must look for every chance to sell tournament prizes. He has to work closely with heads of men's and women's tournament committees and those who are conducting special events at the club. A lot of the prizes can be of merchandise that he carries in stock. Prizes of the cup and jewelry type usually are available to the pro on a discount basis and the pro should investigate the possibility of making a deal with one of the trophy dealers.

## Market Development a Pro Job

Right now the pro has to be more conscious of the importance of his market development and more energetic in it than ever before.

He has no trouble at all getting the old reliables out to the club and playing and buying, but he'll see that he has considerable work to do among many members of his club if he has accurate records on how many of his members don't play as often as they should for their own good and the good of the club. Many businessmen are going to be under tension of uncertainty this year. Their doctors will tell them that this tension probably more than any organic defect accounts for the alarming mortality of successful businessmen. You really can do a pretty fair job of doctoring for them if you can get them to play, even if you have to connive with their wives and doctors to use influence. Maybe these men are awful golfers and it's tough to spark their interest in more play. But that's a challenge to the pro.

Our other phases of market development involve less of a problem to the pro who is willing to plan and to work.

Each spring, for the past few years, I have conducted novice classes for ladies and juniors. Aware of the fact that "misery loves company," I get a dozen or so brand-new women golfers together, give each a club or two and a few balls, and take them out to the practice fairway for a group lesson. After brief recital of golf fundamentals, I step aside and let them bang away together. I have found that regardless of results, the lassies really en-

joy themselves, laughing at each other's mistakes and trying to out-do Helen or Gertrude as the case may be. The spirit of camaraderie prevails. I charge a nominal fee and find, out of a class, a goodly portion is sufficiently interested to follow up and so become regular pupils of mine. That, I submit, is good business.

In juniors, the same program has proven itself. It takes no stretch of the imagination to see how child golfer and fond parent make "Box-Office."

### **Boost College Golf**

Throughout the country many professionals have coaching jobs with universities and colleges. In such a capacity one should be able to influence college golfers to become very active in the game, since they are the largest and most desirable source of future club members. My club permits the golf teams of nearby colleges to use the golf course free of charge. They play during the off hours on week days and have consideration not to interfere with the regular club golfing schedules. It is a service to them and gives them the opportunity to play a private course. Such sowing of good will invariably pays dividends in the future.

The caddy angle may not present in itself any immediate cash value, but, in my opinion, the good, satisfied caddy definitely figures in the over-all country club picture. My caddies are paid wages comparable to any club in the area. I encourage school boys to come out but insist they comply with their school's regulations in regard to work permits and class attendance. Each spring my caddy-master and one or two of our best caddies take a group of the youngsters out on the course and thoroughly school them in the art of good caddying. They learn the rules, golf conduct, and a little "fairway common sense." Then, and then only, are they assigned jobs. It has paid. Fair and considerate attention to their individual problems has generated respect in them for me and their caddy-master. They show added interest in their jobs and definite profits in their pockets.

My caddies are taught, aside from the mere carrying of the bag, to co-operate with each other. They don't hang back on the flags and have learned to help each other in many ways. For instance (my caddies carry double), when one boy finds he has one ball on the left of the fairway and his other player's ball on the right, he switches bags with his fellow caddy so that regardless of whom he is caddying for, he is servicing. This not only speeds up play but saves wear and tear on the boy plus eliminating the necessity of a player standing and waiting for a club. There is no set rule for taking the flags. Regardless of whose player is first on the green, etc., the

caddy who is least occupied at the time takes the pin. These little tricks and coordinations keep my members happy and more satisfied and my caddies coming back.

For some time there has been some concern about the source of the future qualified assistants and professionals. If every pro would spend a little more time instructing his caddies, helping them make their work interesting and less arduous, the question would answer itself. Good caddies make for better golf, happier players and added revenue.

Besides, caddies grow up and play golf.

## **Indiana Section in Profitable Meet**

Indiana PGA annual spring meeting at Hotel Lincoln, Indianapolis, April 4, was attended by most of the section's members, many assistants, and a good representation of manufacturers. Program was the most practical the Hoosier group has presented.

Lee Harrington, Wilson's Merchandising Manager; Don Mudd, Spalding's treasurer, and George Madden, publicity director of Wm. H. Block Co., Indianapolis, with the store's head display man, Coleman Clark, gave a very valuable round-up on pro business problems. Harrington detailed how the pro can make good use of the outside viewpoint in getting more business. Mudd told the pros how to make more money by working with manufacturers' credit department and Madden and Clark put on a demonstration of how to show merchandise that was a new and exceedingly valuable feature of pro merchandising sessions.

The veteran Al Watrous, showing several movies including an amazing new film Detroit pros had made with a super-slow motion camera General Motors engineering department supplied, conducted an exceptionally informative and useful instruction clinic. Al flew in from his job at Oakland Hills CC (Detroit dist.) to stage a fine session for the Indianans.

Wayne Timberman's class of three boys and three girls, ranging in age from 6 to 16 years, put on an astonishingly good exhibition of junior class instruction under Wayne's direction. The kids have sound swings and score well. They got a great hand from the pros.

Tom Crane, PGA executive sec., gave a review of PGA national activities. The affair concluded with a banquet at which Mayor Al Feeney of Indianapolis, Indianapolis golf writers, veteran pros and club officials spoke in a merry vein. Herb Grafis was ringmaster of the finale.