

Manufacturers Look With Professionals to 1950

Some radical changes in club design promise new selling ammunition for pros in 1950. Particularly are iron designs of leading manufacturers being changed with each designer having his idea of improved distribution of weight for great hitting effectiveness and precision presented in the new clubs.

One thing this certainly is going to mean is that the pros who didn't watch their stocks and close-out like other merchants when the season got near its end had better unload before the new clubs get on the market. Fellows in the north have been doing a good job in lengthening the selling and playing season since the war. Closer watch of inventory also has helped make the pro position sounder this year. The boys who got loaded and instead of holding to a firm purchase got in such bad shape they had to ship back clubs in lieu of cash may find those clubs being sold at cut-rate prices in 1950, for it's a cinch that the manufacturing margin on golf clubs doesn't allow dumping returned clubs in the river. Some of the screaming about the close-outs that will be dumped through stores next spring will come from pros who are responsible for supplying this competition. Part of the fault can be laid to salesmen who may have overstocked pros. When the credit departments get through jawing the salesmen that performance may be diminished.

However, everybody sells and buys in hope so some overstocking and slow-moving merchandising is inevitable. Pros, considering the stocks they have to carry, the short seasons in many localities, and the markets generally being limited to members or fairly steady patrons of public or semi-public course, get stuck with inventory smaller in percentage relation to volume than most other retailers of seasonal merchandise.

Manufacturers of golf goods in looking forward to pro business prospects for 1950 take cautious views but agree that the pros have advanced so far in merchandising brains and energy they'll probably do as well as almost any type of retail business next year. Possibilities for expansion of the market are so abundant the answer to 1950 volume lies mainly in the pros.

Comment on pro business position and profits in 1950:

L. B. ICELY, PRES., WILSON SPORTING GOODS CO.—"A review of pro accounts definitely shows the most successful operators are those who have featured merchandise having widest consumer acceptance. As technological improvements continue to provide more easily and quickly the necessities of life, people will have more leisure, therefore the pro has an ever-increasing opportunity for recruiting new golfers. The junior promotion campaign of the PGA, the Golf in Schools campaign of the National Golf Foundation, and the extensive and splendid work being done by many pros in teaching women's classes and classes of office and factory workers plainly show that the foresighted professionals are alert and active in market extension and insurance.

"The pros generally have done outstanding jobs of self-development in service and merchandising and I can imagine no marketing problems in 1950 golf that can't be solved by competent professionals in maintaining a volume of pro shop sales that will rank very high among retailing in every outdoor sports field."

VINCENT RICHARDS, ASS'T. TO THE PRES., DUNLOP TIRE & RUBBER CORP.—"As 1950-1960 will be a decade of opportunity for every American business, it will be a decade of opportunity for those of us in the golf equipment field. Last year, the golfing public spent some 25 million dollars on golf balls and clubs—how much will they spend by 1960? My guess would be a potential growth of about 10% over the next ten years. I think I am being very conservative in this figure, simply because in population alone we should have 160 million in this country by the end of the next ten years.

Here are a few reasons why golf equipment expenditures should increase in the next ten years:

1. Our entire working population, if we have no better than average productive increase, will earn more money. Average family income should go to \$4,029 in 1960 as against a 1950 average of \$3,646.

2. There will be more migration from farm to city. This will help the golf

equipment manufacturers, for city people spend more on sporting equipment than farm people.

3. More leisure time for the working man. It is even possible that we will have a 35-hour week by 1960. More leisure means more time for sports.

4. During the next ten years we should see an increase in travel, and that should mean considerably more interest in sports.

All in all, the picture for the golf equipment manufacturers and the golf professionals is exceptionally good, but as in any other business, the rewards will go to those who see the opportunities clearly and set their plans to cash in on them. Those of us—whether the golf pro or the manufacturer—who have the ability to produce a good product and sell it at the right price, will win.

The golf professional who realizes he faces his greatest opportunity during the next ten years and sets his plans accordingly, will, in my opinion, be astounded by the results. He must of course, be on his toes and be prepared to use a few tools that may have been lying dormant during the past few years, or since the return of the buyers' market.

Here are a few ideas or reasons picked up during calls on pro shops that may be

of some help toward increasing the income of the pro:

1. Too many pros regard their club affiliation as a six, eight or nine months' proposition only. Service and profit possibilities should be studied from the angle of an all-year job. During the golf season, sales and profits come easily but the average pro, with some careful thinking and planning can develop "out of season" sales and profits from 20 to 35 percent over their average annual income.

2. The ardent golfer will play every day possible throughout the year—only stopped here and there by rain, snow or extremely cold weather. Weather jackets, socks, heavy shirts, rubberwear, umbrellas, shoes, etc. are both more in need and more attractive to golfers for this off-season than at any other time of the year.

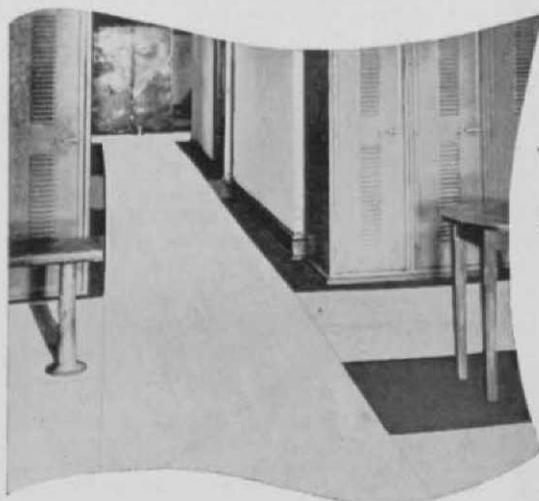
3. Stimulate play by providing attractive competitions such as "snowbird" ringer contests, sweepstakes, etc. Keep even the non-playing members golf minded during the off-season by getting the club manager to cooperate by using golf merchandise for dinner prizes and other club functions.

4. Use the off-season to liquidate old merchandise that did not move during the summer months, and at the same time, don't wait until the first of April to put in

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stock the newest models in clubs, other golf equipment and balls. Stock these items as soon as they are available—keep your members conscious of the fact that if it's new and if it's good you will have it first.

5. Give lessons. A suitable net of your own, if possible, but at least in cooperation with a few of your local pros on a share the time basis. You can spend more time with an individual during the off-season than you can during the busy months. And when a member takes lessons during the winter months, even he will be astonished at the improvement when the whole gang steps out on the links in spring. With proper facilities the average pro should be able to book as many or more lessons during the off-season than at any other time of the year.

6. Ball sales can always be stimulated through Christmas gift packages, but why overlook golf balls and other golf accessories for appropriate gifts throughout the other 11 months of the year? The leading manufacturers have suitable gift boxes for balls that are most appropriate for all the holidays—Thanksgiving, A New Year's send-off, birthdays, door prizes, vacations, etc.

7. One of the popular advertising slogans today is "Never underestimate the power of a woman." Stock feminine golf equipment, apparel and accessories so that the ladies will be equally interested in your shop. You will be amazed at sales resulting by the "better half" or that lovely daughter or sister buying something special for the male members of your club as well as for themselves if they but find your shop worthwhile in interest.

8. You are called a professional but your club connection depends upon a relationship with your members that is much closer than that defined by the word professional. Your success is determined by just how close your friendly personal relationship is with the members. The members shy off from high pressure tactics but they have high regard and esteem for the golf pro who honestly does everything in his power to be of service. When such a member-pro relationship is established, the pro will find that members go far out of their way to patronize his shop.

9. Use direct mail, particularly during the off-season, to keep in close contact with your members. One month, send out a free book of rules to each member; another month, mail one of the free booklets on some phase of golf instructions, such as putting which is supplied by manufacturers, and still another month, Christmas or New Year greetings.

CHARLES F. ROBBINS, PRES., A. G. SPALDING & BROS., Inc.—"Because pros are in strategic sales position to make use of the golfer's constant ambition to improve his scoring, the professional golfer can tie his selling campaign to far more intimate personal contact than almost any other retailer enjoys. As long as the pro makes wise use of this advantage there is sound foundation for steady advance in pro business.

"The general business situation, of course, will determine the volume of pro business in 1950. But with indications pointing to stabilization of general business in 1950 and golf's promotion having reached the point where shortage of playing facilities is a main obstacle to considerable increase in play, it is apparent that pro sales volume in 1950 will depend principally on each pro's exercise of his merchandising ability and energy.

"Our observation is that the pro as a merchant has developed so greatly he will be well able to take care of himself in making his business substantially profitable next year.

FRED HAAS, SR., GEN. MGR., PRO GOLF DEPT., GOLFCRAFT, INC.—"Pro business in 1950 should be very good in those cases where the pros have paid particular attention to fitting themselves to their clubs. What fits in business operations at one private club won't do at another, or at a fee or public golf establishment.

"The pro's business success and the value of his service to his club and its players are balanced over a period of a few years. Some years the pro may work very well for his members and sales will be slow simply because members haven't money to spend for much golf equipment. Other years a pro can sell fairly large volume simply by having stock to supply a demand. In such years the stores, too, will do very well in golf sales. The pro position in golf goods selling has improved for two reasons: one, because the pros have developed more golf play among men, women and children; the other is because the pros have watched and studied how to increase their percentage of the player's dollar spent on golf.

"In 1950 there will be increasing accent on expert pro fitting of clubs to buyers. That is a strong point in pro selling which gave pros command of the business in the bench clubmaking days. Until the post-war demand was filled players bought anything they could get in their eagerness to get new equipment. Now the demand is normal and when a player can get the plus value of correct fitting in his club purchase it is logical that the pro competitive position can be strengthened.

"I've found in my own experience how women and children's instruction pays the pro in business and prestige. My wife, son and daughter became excellent players and so did other women and children I have taught. When the wife and kids play more golf you can bet that the father will too. The close tie-up between instruction and sales will figure prominently in pro success next year.

"I taught my assistants so when they graduated into their own jobs they knew how to order wisely for their market and to watch their stocks carefully so they'd always have enough to attract business but not to get overloaded. In my own case I made sure that playing and house event prizes and every other sort of a push prevented going into the slow season with cash frozen in slow-moving inventories. I think one thing that will put many pros in fine shape for 1950 business is pushing Christmas business. Then, after the Christmas sales, get back on the job early in 1950 and work with committees to lengthen the season by a longer competitive schedule."

KENNETH SMITH, PRES., KENNETH SMITH COMPANY.—"One of my best friends, a radio man, at the worst of the recession a few months ago, said, 'There is nothing about this recession that good merchandise and good merchandising won't cure.' Well that is just the way we feel about the problems of some of the boys who didn't have such a good season. The day is gone when we can sit back and wait for orders. We have got to have the stuff, and we have got to be able to prove why it is best. But that is all there is to getting as much business as you can handle.

"There are a few changes that probably aren't advisable. One of them is a tendency to make irons with less loft, so they will hit the ball farther. This is pointless. If you want 4 iron distance, the 4 iron is the club to use, not the 5 iron. But on the whole I think we must admit that the golf industry has been a very healthy one, and by and large, the large companies set a fine pattern of good, clean competition. That is what we thrive on.

"We will be able to give the boys better service on repairs in 1950. This is purely a service feature, but does mean a lot to them when they know they can depend on good service. We haven't changed our basic ideas, though. We believe that if a golfer can afford good clubs, he is entitled to clubs that fit his swing, and at least 25% of the golfers can't select out of stock clubs that fit their swings, any more than they could pick a suit out of a store that would fit them properly. Pri-

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marily it comes down to just one thing: How well do you want your clubs to fit? If a man is paying for the best, he certainly should be entitled to clubs that fit his swing."

BILL KAISER, PRO SALES MGR., HILLERICH & BRADSBY CO.—"The professional golf business for 1949 has been most encouraging for the professionals in most sections. It is my opinion that the sales were not as great this year as in the previous years since the war, although they were exceptionally good and far better than before the war. Over all, the professional golfers have merchandised at their respective clubs much better than in past years, therefore, making their season prove successful. They have realized that competition from stores is getting keener, so they have been more on their toes than ever before.

"To improve business in 1950 for the pro the first requisite at a country club or municipal golf course is at all times to work with officials and committees to make everything concerning club activities work out most successfully. The pros are working the same as anybody else for a business and if they want to go to a tournament or make a trip, they should definitely consult one of the officials at the club to obtain approval before doing so.

"Next I want to point out is that a professional should give all his members the same consideration and by doing this he will have the respect of all. Also he should be thorough in his business transactions, both in giving lessons and handling the sale of merchandise. It is my opinion that if a professional handles himself properly and is sincere in his dealings with his members and customers, that everything will work out satisfactorily for all concerned.

"If by chance any differences should take place between any of his members and himself, the pro should keep these to himself and endeavor to straighten them out promptly and also continue to give this man or woman the same consideration as other members of his club.

"A few basic thoughts for the operation of a successful golf professional business:

"The professional must be a gentleman, neat in appearance and a pleasant personality. Being a professional covers a lot of different vocations. For example, the pro must be a good teacher, salesman, organizer, businessman and at all times have everyone's enjoyment of golf at heart.

"He must maintain an attractive, clean professional shop and display merchan-

dise in such a manner it is inviting to his members.

"Lessons are an important part of the pro's business. He should give his best to all members and have patience with them. This includes the children of the members, for the closest way to any father's or mother's heart is to do something to help their youngsters. I do not know of a better way to do this than for the pro to give the young people of his club lessons and help them improve.

"Always select proper merchandise when purchasing for members. In doing this see that members have correct clubs, balls and other equipment. It is a service that you can render that they will never forget, for the old slogan 'A satisfied customer always comes back and tells others of their good fortune' means plenty.

"It is to the advantage of the professional to have a gentleman as an assistant who is clean, honest and has a nice personality. Remember, when he is in the shop or giving lessons, he represents what you stand for and can help immensely to build up your business.

"A professional must be a good organizer and in this respect he helps to keep all members enjoying the facilities of the club. In fact, if he will endeavor to play golf with each of the members at one time or another during the season and arrange games for them, it will be a service for which they will be grateful.

"Another requisite of a good golf professional is to know the golf rules, be informed about arranging the different kinds of golf tournaments and have a knowledge of the care of the golf course."

ED RANKIN, GEN. MGR., WALTER HAGEN DIV.—"Wherever one goes these days the question is asked, 'What kind of business can we expect in the immediate future and for 1950?'

"Next year can be very good for those of us in the golf business who properly apply ourselves and make necessary adjustments in our operations to cope with conditions.

"Previous to the war it was said that competition is the life blood of American business. All good American business men have met the challenge of competition and survived and prospered.

"During and since the war, competition has been greatly lacking and it might be said that production is the life blood of American business. No professional could obtain all the goods he could sell. Consequently, it became a matter of what quantity of goods could be bought, and not what quality of goods.

"Many of us have forgotten how to operate in a competitive market. It behooves us to reeducate ourselves, for competition is here, and it is here to stay. We probably are entering a period when production will surpass any figures known in the golf industry. This means our merchandising techniques must be adjusted to this production.

"The word 'merchandising' has a very broad meaning. It covers our very conduct and has bearing in every department of our business.

"In a retail setup, as operated by the golf professional, merchandising starts with purchase of stock. Every care must be exercised by the pro in his buying so this stock will be acceptable to his trade, be good values, and be of good quality.

"Profits are determined in any business by the turnover of capital invested. So, merchandise must be bought that will sell readily and not remain on the shelves. Great care must be used in purchasing only goods that will sell with a minimum of effort, and at a standard margin of profit. If proper purchases are made, very little goods will be sold at cost, or at a narrow margin of profit at the end of the season. Analyze your prospective buyers' needs and purchase your stock in proportion to those needs. Don't over-buy or under-buy! You can't sell it if you don't have it, or you can't eat it if you have too much.

"After you have bought properly, you must sell properly. The pro should make it his business to find out all he can regarding the way his merchandise is made and what goes into it. Today, techniques unknown before the war are used in the manufacture of golf goods. As an example, in the Hagen plant, shafts are assembled into wood heads under an electronic method eliminating the possibility of loose heads, and cracked necks as a result of loose heads. In the hands of the pro, this type of information can be very well used in selling his golf equipment. When possible, a professional should visit golf factories and see for himself how his merchandise is made. I extend a sincere invitation to all pros to visit the Hagen plant at any time."

"Now, as to your place of business. This should be made as attractive as possible. Your stock should be arranged so it is interesting and impressive. Rearrange your displays at least twice a month so there is a constant change of scenery for your prospective buyers. Keep your shop neat and clean at all times so it is an appealing place to enter.

"Now that you have properly bought and properly displayed, you should proper-

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ly sell. Service is again an important part of our business. Sell an individual only merchandise suited to him. Service him in a manner that will please. See to it your customer leaves you with the feeling he has made a good buy, and should his purchase not be 100% satisfactory, that it will be made so.

"Select your assistants carefully and train them to service your customers in the same manner you would. Emphasis should be placed on courtesy and promptness.

"There are many good merchandising practices now used by some professionals adaptable to most all. I have observed the splendid results of putting on intensive junior golf programs. The benefit received from these is far-reaching and lasting. If a desire is created in youngsters to play golf, they are customers of the future. Also, interesting children in golf has a tendency to bring the parents to the club more often.

"Periodic letters to your members, advising them of the goods and services your shop offers, is also a fine merchandising idea that has its reward in increased sales.

"Play a round of golf with as many members as possible. One pro of my acquaintance starts early in the spring. On Saturdays he will start out with the first foursome on the tee. He plays three holes and then joins the next foursome, and so on, until he has played 18 holes with 24 different members. In this way, before the season is well advanced, he has played three holes with most of the members in his club. There are many of these good promotional ideas used by good professionals. And who knows but what the pro at your next nearest club may be using some of them. Get together and discuss your problems and ideas. Undoubtedly this exchange will help both you and your neighbor.

"I want to say I feel 1950 will be a good year for all of us who organize and operate our business in an efficient manner. Our business in 1950 can be just what we make it."

Mashie Wins Greenkeepers' Annual Championship

Emil Mashie, supt. Onwentsia club (Chicago dist.) mowed down the opposition with 71-70—141 in winning National Greenkeeping Supts. Assn. annual tournament at Firestone CC, Akron, O. Jack Thompson, Youngstown, finished second with 73-73—146. Mike Sopko and Gordon Watson tied for third with 154. Senior greenkeeping golfer's title was won by

Rocky Schorr with 153. Jim McGunical was second with 156 and C. W. Jones, third with 161. USGA awarded medals to winners and runners-up in both classes. Mashie also got a Firestone television set for his triumph. Many prizes for golf and as door prizes were awarded to supts.



Emil Mashie, NGSa Tournament Champion.

and their wives. The 18 low scorers also got NGSa flags as trophies. The Cleveland district quartette of Jack Thompson, Jim McGunical, Mike Sopko and Garland Parsons won the team event.

The event was hospitably staged by committee consisting of Bill Lyons, Mal McLaren, Colin Smith and Larry Wolfe, and Firestone club and recreation dept. officials. Morning addresses were made by Victor Tiedjens on lime, and Virgil Overholt on drainage, with interesting practical discussion of liming and drainage problems at courses of those present at the sessions.

A handsome, large family-size garbage can was awarded Lawrence Huber for blood, sweat and tears spent in compiling a heavy score.

PLAY MORE THAN 1948

(Continued from page 49)

any voice in the operation of the golf course. The club was organized as a non profit organization and the entire dues were used to buy prizes for the tournaments they held at our course. We find that the club not only stimulated interest in golf at our course but that it actually increased our business.

Col. Lee S. Read, Sec'y-Treas., Southern Golf Assn., Louisville, Ky.—The play in this vicinity this year has been about the same or shows a slight decrease in number of rounds. This decrease could not be accurately computed but one pri-