

"Traffic Study" Shows Pros Big Job and Costs

By GUY PAULSEN

Professional, Medinah Country Club

What suggested a traffic study of the pro department at Medinah was investigation of dish-washing at our club. The number of items of china and cutlery used in meal service, labor, breakage, wear and loss in manual washing were figured and the answer was the profitable purchase of additional pieces of kitchen equipment. That case made such an impression on me I decided to make a detailed study of traffic in the pro department to learn just what par should be for our operations and to discover what might be done to improve results for the department, the club and its members and guests.

Primarily, of course, I wanted to see a complete analysis of the pro business because while my staff and I are confident we overlook no opportunity to serve satisfactorily and make a profit we didn't have a breakdown of figures to serve as an accurate check on our work. Lack of such figures is as much a handicap to pro business operations as lack of standardized par on scorecards would be to playing golf. On this account a pro may not know whether or not he's really doing a good job in merchandising and service.

Scorecard for Sales

So I went over our figures for the season with the idea of determining a scorecard for sales. It can be accepted as a sound generality in most pro department operations that the volume of sales income is in such close relation to the quality and thoroughness of service that under normal conditions when income is off the service has deteriorated. There are instances in which that generality doesn't hold true, but the pro can safely use it in checking up on the many intangibles that establish the character of pro department service.

At Medinah, as at other clubs where there are more than one course, some courses are made available at certain periods for trade tournaments and other outside play. In our case we schedule outside events on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. Our No. 3 course, on which the 1949 National Open was played, is exclusively for use of members and a limited number of their guests on the customary invitation basis.

In making the breakdown of traffic figures I made it by days, by members

and by guests, and by the various pro department services used. Weather also was noted each day. In all pro department analyses weather is the major factor in influencing the volume of traffic.

Ratio of Sales to Rounds Played

One of the objectives of the traffic study was to learn the ratio of sales to number of rounds played. We found that the tournament guests spent slightly more than the members per round. Members' play was approximately 7000 rounds more than the total of guests for the year. The members averaged for pro shop merchandise (exclusive of lessons and cart rentals) \$1.10 per round and the guests' average for pro shop purchases was \$1.25 a round.

This was to be expected as the trade tournament people are not as frequently exposed to private club pro shop merchandise and as many of them play just a few rounds per year they come out to the club needing equipment.

Pro Department Merchandising

The trade players come out for a gala day, and the pro department must make its bid as a merchandising organization by not only helping to conduct competitive events, but by running a blind bogey, selling prizes to the tournament sponsors, giving prominence to some special bargain in shop stock and in every other way that can be devised to be helpful and add to the interest of the event without being too obviously aggressive in promoting sales.

As a matter of fact, the pro often can do a lot more for his members' individual guests that not only builds up the member as a host but increases the prestige of the club. When a guest's bag comes out with dirty clubs it's smart to clean them quickly and pleasantly surprise the guest when he sees his bag at the first tee. In some cases that treatment of the guests is a diplomatic reminder that sells club cleaning and storage service to members.

But, back to the traffic study and what it shows club officials and the pro department. There are in all clubs that permit trade tournaments some members who protest against receiving these affairs. The traffic study of member and guest



---Van Fossen photo

Guy Paulsen (with club), pro at Medinah CC (Chicago dist.) shows members of his shop staff selling points of every item of merchandise in the shop stock. Design and construction features of clubs may not be known as well to the shop men as they are to the pro who does the buying and learns from the salesmen, as well as from his own experience, what there is of distinctive selling and playing value. Paulsen goes over all shop stock with his staff so the shop men are fully informed to give thorough help to the buying member or guest.

play will plainly reveal that the club couldn't be operated, except at a forbidding increase in dues, without the guest play. The big problem at most golf clubs is to increase traffic and spread it out so the plant investment will be utilized.

Balancing Member and Guest Play

Total figures on member and guest play on Medinah's three courses during May through August show the problem of trying to smooth the traffic. The play by days, by members and guests:

Day	Members	Guests
Monday	350	250
Tuesday	1106	2054
Wednesday	3306	1700
Thursday	660	1864
Friday	628	2514
Saturday	4415	1228
Sunday	6046	999

Actually, considering normal weather and variations in traffic, the representative private golf club in midwestern metropolitan districts operates on a profitable traffic load basis only about 100 days a year. The big job is to build the traffic on the off days.

Meeting Costs of Operation

In the study of traffic and how its expenditures have to be stretched—or increased—to meet costs of pro department operation, the pro usually is going to learn quite clearly why he isn't making the net he should be making. Club offi-

cial, too, will see from a complete study of playing traffic and the pro department services it requires, that the pro department is an expensive operation when done correctly.

For example, at Medinah, during the rush of traffic there are as many as 13 men busy in the pro shop and golf departments. This roster includes the head pro, teaching assistants, shopmen, club cleaners, range man, registration man, starters and caddymaster. A lot of pro shop merchandise has to be sold to net enough profit to support the men on the pro shop payroll. Any curtailment of the department's service would be adverse to the enjoyment of the club's members and guests, reflect unfavorably on the club's prestige and diminish the volume of traffic necessary to conduct clubhouse operations and course maintenance on a sound business level.

Extensive Details Involved

Seldom do players or officials realize the extensive detail involved in pro department operation. A summary of the work done by the Medinah pro department gives an idea of the extent of the tasks. In registering players provision must be made for caring for those who want caddies and those who will rent carts. Those who bring their own carts or will carry their bags also must be sifted at registration. The caddy part of the job requires recruiting, transporting,

training, assigning, supervising and paying the boys.

Tournament service for members and guests requires that the pro department sign up players and explain tournament details, maintain handicaps, conduct the bogey events and collect fees, advise newspapers of results and frequently distribute prizes. Sometimes there are rules controversies or other differences the pro department must handle discreetly. Affairs for women and youngsters must be conducted on the same careful basis as the men's tournaments.

In pro shop operation there is plenty of important work to be done in purchasing, receiving, pricing, displaying and selling merchandise. Sales must be recorded and inventory carefully kept. Tax accounting must be exact and bills must be paid promptly to get discounts. The shop and stockroom must be cleaned daily. The pro and his teaching staff have group lessons and demonstrations on how to play golf for the members and the lesson times must be judiciously booked to meet each member's convenience. Club rentals must be vigilantly watched. The wages of employees must be carefully watched. Supervision must be maintained over every other detail of operation although with a well chosen and trained staff whose men know their duties and are competent and responsible, this supervision instead of being an onerous detail is fine for getting the staff together and exchanging ideas and observations.

Club Cleaning and Storage

An operation in the pro department that involves more time and work than officials appreciate is club cleaning and storage. The clubs must be removed from the racks and delivered to the caddy master or sometimes attached to rental carts. Cart storage is getting to be a problem. Members' carts in some instances must be taken from a storage room that in most clubs is still makeshift since the size and arrangement of pro departments seldom provides for carts.

The withdrawal of bags from storage and the cleaning often are peak period jobs. The cleaning has been slowed up somewhat by so many woods now having head covers and many bags having individual compartments for clubs. The job must be well done for the cleaning and storage fees are a considerable per cent of the pro department income.

The range operation instead of merely issuing and picking up balls, calls for supervision to minimize theft, cleaning balls and inspecting for damaged balls.

When the pro thoroughly studies each detail of the traffic through his department he will be astonished by the amount

of work he and his staff must do to handle this traffic in a first class manner. He probably will see that some economies may be effected by more efficient routines and he most certainly will see that he must operate economically or he will find himself working for a very low net in a rather risky, short-season business.

One thing that many pros will see from a traffic study is that they are devoting considerable time to handling unpaid details of the job when they could be on the lesson tee using their time to cash profit.

Club officials who see a pro department traffic study will get an impressive and detailed close-up of the multitude of details the pro department must handle completely and competently so members and guests will be kept cheerful and in the right frame of mind for coming to the club often and spending freely. They get far more service than they realize for their money.

SAM'S 70 YEARS YOUNG



Sam Whiting, Olympic Club, San Francisco, for 28 years in charge of Olympic's Lakeside courses and responsible for design as well as maintenance of the Lake and Ocean courses as they now are, arises to say his merry piece at the 70th birthday party club members tendered the sprightly veteran.

Sam was hailed as the affable and able gent who performed miracles in that stormy no-man's land where one catches the crossfire of Mother Nature and Father Green-chairman. Sam acknowledged the praise, the gift watch and check by saying he'd had a lot of fun doing the job for the boys and had been lucky with officials who allowed him to use his own judgment.