

"What Can I Do to Give My Members Best Pro Service?"

By HERB GRAFFIS

Gene Root, that alert businessman who is pro at Lakewood CC, Denver, Colo., and sec. of the Rocky Mountain PGA, says he's got one question always in his mind.

It's the most important question a pro can ask himself:

"Am I giving my members absolutely the best in values and service?"

A pro, being as human as any other businessman, never will be able to give every member the best according to each member's desires, tournament and purse, but because the pro knows his customers better than most other retailers do the pro can come closer to giving perfect sales treatment than other retailers can.

One thing that makes the pro's merchandising problem tough is the fact that so many of his potential customers don't know what they want. They depend on the pro's authoritative knowledge of golf and his friendly interest in them to remind them of what they should want. If the pro reminds them too bluntly they'll possibly resent it, thinking that he's trying to high-pressure them into buying.

So the pro has to depend on the suggestion-power of shop display as much, or more than, any other retailer. Often the pro has a shop so small and poorly laid out that display is difficult. And often the pro doesn't show any too much judgment in buying, particularly of styles and colors and sizes of apparel items.

Now is a good time for many pros to study their season's operations with a view to discovering mistakes in shop arrangement and display so they can correct these errors long before 1951 golf play starts at their clubs. There's still some time for experimenting with the shop before play closes down in the northern and central states.

In looking at many pro shops this year I've noticed two extremes, neither of which give the pro the opportunity he wants to serve his members and make sales.

One extreme is that of having merchandise strewn around the shop like the goods in a drugstore window. The method may be O.K. for a chain drugstore. It must be or these stores wouldn't keep at it. But with few exceptions the method doesn't work at pro shops. The exceptions are at clubs and courses where the traffic is heavy and buying is done to a large extent

on the hit-and-run basis and large stocks on display have the power of reminding the shop visitor that everything one might buy "downtown" is on sale conveniently at the pro shop.

The exceptions in which this large open display really does business are those in which the various classifications of items are plainly departmentalized. The wearing apparel is close together; shirts, jackets, hats and caps, hosiery, belts and ties. There are different sections for men's and women's apparel. The shoes are not scattered around the shop. Clubs and bags are spotlighted in inviting displays instead of being distributed around all the walls.

These pros who have learned to show merchandise so there are strong and attractive selling accents instead of confusing spray of display are those who get the quickest turn-over on their investments in shop stocks.

Too Easy Not to Buy

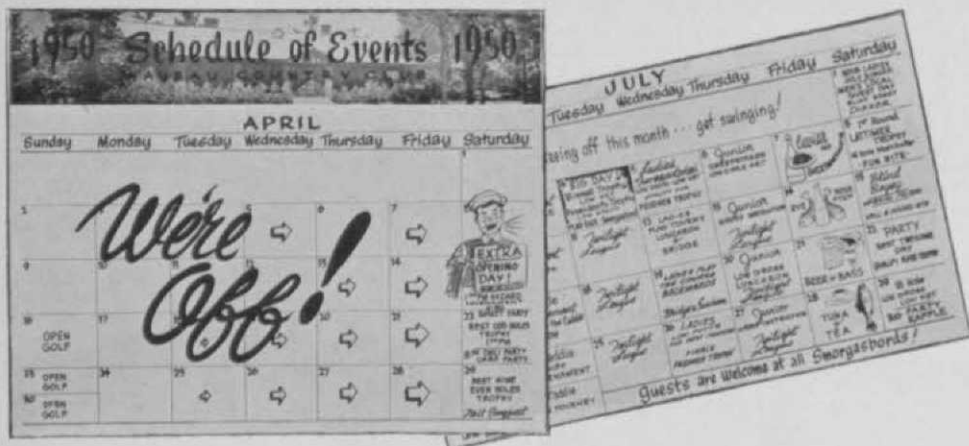
The other extreme is the arrangement of displays so people who walk into the shop don't have attractive merchandise slowing their rapid transit and getting inspection.

The most common mistake in pro shops is having the ball sales case where players can come in and buy balls or a package of tees and not have their eyes stopped by other merchandise. I'd make a conservative guess that in 30 per cent of the U.S. pro shops make it too easy not to see other shop merchandise by having the ball case located where the players dash in and dash out. Sometimes the ball case almost blocks free passage into the rest of the shop.

You'll frequently see wasted sales opportunities because of failure to display some moderate-priced item right by—or even on—the ball case. Hats, caps and golf gloves are examples of the sort of merchandise that will be bought on impulse when they're exposed to the eyes of the possible buyer in a pro shop and all the buyer has to do is sign a sales slip.

One pro told me that he thought he was stuck with a line of hats that looked good to him and were good buys but didn't sell when he had them displayed with the rest of the apparel. He moved a couple of the hats on top of the ball case and by always keeping one or two there he sold five dozen

CALENDAR DOES NIFTY JOB OF ADVERTISING EVENTS



You seldom see any more complete or livelier advertising of club events than is done by the Wausau GC, Schofield, Wis. The members not only come to the club often but they play a lot and play well. Bud Werring who is pro-mgr., works with all committees to see there's something doing all through the season at the Wausau club. But having something doing is only part of the job. The members are kept constantly reminded of what's doing. The club calendar, page of which is shown here, is crowded with events. Even the caddy tournaments are listed on Mondays. The calendar sheet measures 12¼ in. wide by 7½ in. high, allowing the member to make notes of his golfing dates on the day spaces. Werring sends all his members an attractive small desk calendar on which is lettered "A Tip in '50 Will Keep Your Game Nifty." The club's photostated 4-page monthly magazine "Off the Green" is a newsy, illustrated job, telling what's doing at the club, giving instruction pointers, results and a lot of personality material.

of these hats in a few weeks at an average-sized private club. He said that taught him something about the value of display space in his shop and he was surprised that he hadn't learned it before by seeing how many repainted balls he had sold out of a glass bowl on his ball case.

Another common mistake in pro shops is to have an open aisle from the locker-room to the door that opens toward the first tee. That's all right if you want your shop to be only a thoroughfare but if you want to bring to the attention of members something that they could buy and use in making their golf better and more enjoyable put a table on which there is a display of popular merchandise right in the path through the shop.

And you might put on that table some specialty item that's new and which you want to bring to the attention of your members in showing them that you are on the job to bring them the latest good ideas in golf equipment. You've got to bear that "first with the latest" idea in mind if you are going to be able to give yourself the right answer to the question Gene Root says a pro should be asking himself: "Am I giving my members absolutely the best in values and services?" The members expect you to have the best in golf merchan-

dise before anyone else shows the product.

One of the smartest things a pro can do for himself and his club is to get each member's guests talking about the service at the club. Jack Drucker, veteran pro at Ravisloe CC (Chicago dist.) and who has served at other excellent clubs, told me years ago that anything a pro did for a member's guest seemed to count with a member stronger than anything the pro could do for the member himself.

I saw, when I played at Ravisloe several weeks ago, that Jack still is operating on that basis. My clubs and those of the other guests of our host, had been cleaned and stacked in the guest rack in a club hall. The cleaning didn't take as long as the time devoted by the guests to favorable comment on this thoughtful service.

When a guest goes to a first class club he knows it is customary to have his street and golf shoes shined. But rarely does a guest have his clubs cleaned; a job that takes less time than shoe-shining. Of course the locker-room man usually gets tipped for the service but the pro is shooting for a bigger cash reward than a tip.

Pro service generally has reached the point at better clubs where the pro has to keep a sharp watch and use his imagination in discovering ways to improve his services

and get himself regarded by his members as an unusually capable operator.

These small, but collectively large, services cost money. And to tell the truth they may mount up to more than members ever realize. Rarely have club officials and members the slightest idea of the extent of operating costs of a first class pro department. The average club member is inclined to think the pro's operating costs are few and low. Despite accounting practices forced by income and sales tax laws plenty of pros don't fully realize their costs and the moderate income they net on their operations after deducting what would have to be paid as a salary to the head of the department if the pro activities were being operated on the same salary scale as most retail stores.

The "Gives" Pays Out

Thoughtful little things that aren't ordinarily done may cost the pro some of his time and money but they certainly pay out.

One of those things has been done by Stan Kertes for years and any member of a club Kertes serves brags about Stan as an ideal professional. Years ago Stan used to cut down hickory-shafted clubs which he gave to the children of members. Now Stan has carried that kid gift idea right to the start. When a baby is born in one of the Bryn Mawr CC families Stan gets one of those Bristol kid clubs and with a Vibra-tool writing appliance inscribes on the club (as an example):

To Linda Norian

The new 1970 Women's Champion

From Stan Kertes.

The club is given to the proud father. And you can bet that many, many people hear about that club and get to see it.

Stan is a strong and sincere advocate of the policy of creating a warm feeling for the pro among the kids. He says, "The child is going to grow up as a member of the pro's golfing family so it should be perfectly natural for the pro to develop standing with the youngster as the child's golf daddy."

Kertes goes on the basis that members who come into his shop are agreeable to buying anything that he wants to sell them. That puts a responsibility on the pro; a responsibility of stocking the best type of merchandise available — especially personalized items. The pro must believe in what he sells; not sell simply to make a profit in cash. He has to make a profit in respect and member satisfaction as well as dollars.

Kertes remarks that when a pro is dealing with well-to-do people he can't help but have a clear idea of attractive goods that are well worth the price. Price isn't a handicap to a member who wants quality, and there are more of those members that pros sometimes are inclined to realize, Kertes maintains.

Study Golf's Place in Nation's Defense Plan

American Red Cross as part of its planning of expansion in a national emergency has queried golf clubs in some metropolitan areas concerning mass shelter facilities that might be available.

Data on type of building, location, maximum sleeping capacity, water, other utilities, auxiliary power, toilet facilities, heating system, feeding facilities, etc., is requested. The survey is made in metropolitan areas as a correlated study of bomb defense.

Planning of the expansion of golf facilities, instruction and exhibitions to fit in with increase in armed services personnel at present is in preliminary stages, with military authorities reviewing golf program basic material of the National Golf Foundation which stresses the value of PGA members' services, adequate equipment and facilities.

Another phase of golf's planning to meet conditions that may be expected as a result of an accelerated armament production schedule is that of providing golf recreation and physical conditioning for war plant workers. An outline of this activity is to be discussed when the club and ball manufacturers' associations consider National Golf Foundation 1951 program at the manufacturers' fall meeting, and at the annual meeting of the PGA.

Patty to Help Veterans



Patty Berg (R) recently appointed golf director of the American Women's Voluntary Services, Inc., is helping to set up "AWVS Swing Clubs" in Veterans' Hospitals throughout the country. Five of the "AWVS Swing Clubs" are serving California hospitals and 27 other centers representing all sections of the country have bids in for similar programs. Originator of the "Swing Club" idea, encouraged in hospitals for its excellent therapeutic value, is Mrs. Louis Lengfeld, pres. of the California AWVS, editor of the *Golfer Magazine*, and long time booster of golf in California who also serves as liaison between the AWVS and VA.