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## Pros Tell Successful Ideas for Late Season Selling

Many professionals who are rated as first-class pro businessmen tell the score in pro merchandising in statements made in response to a GOLFDOM survey of the prevailing pro department business situation. Responses reflect pro policy in dealing with varying factors of club and fee-course merchandising and clearly present the pros as canny and resourceful merchants in adjusting their operations as circumstances demand.

Two points were stressed in the survey. One was the element of used club sales in encouraging and supplying a growing market that might be handicapped by higher playing equipment prices necessitated by wage and material price increases. The other was to what extent and where pros could use the clearance sale idea in converting inventory into cash, especially near the close of the season in central and northern territory.

Statements from the pros, in this and future issues of GOLFDOM, plainly show merchandising ability that accounts for the pros being by a long way the dominating factor in golf goods merchandising.

An interesting example of successful use of every possible selling force is the newspaper advertising of Jimmy Thompson, at Timpanogos GC, Provo, Utah, fee course. Jimmy uses 10½ inches on four columns to advertise "mid-summer golf bargains" for "two weeks only." Prices of sets of woods, irons and bags, and of separate sets of clubs, bags and balls are prominently displayed. The advertising moves merchandise.

### Promote Golf; Increase Sales

Thompson says:

"Those of us that have seasonal jobs, certainly have to apply 'late summer selling pressure'!

"As to disposal of trade-ins; I have used several methods, i.e., cutting clubs down for juniors, also, I have displayed within my shop a large barrel, attractively painted as, "Jimmy Thompson's Bargain Barrel", in which I place odds and ends of

clubs, with each of them tagged for price. (Always, in my shop, I have every club, both new and old, well marked for price.)

"As to wearing apparel, shirts, caps, jackets, etc., I periodically place a table in a good location within the shop, displaying various specials. I believe that at all times, if an item is not moving, one should immediately convert the item into cash, and restock with a more standard item.

"I feel the best method any pro can use toward selling, is his promotion of golf! 'Educate the public to the pleasure of playing'. You were never so right with any statement, than your recent one, wherein you state that 30 to 35% of a pro's time is spent gratis, because promotion certainly costs the individual pro time and money!

"Each summer I offer a three week course, consisting of two lessons each week, to all juniors, wherein I furnish all equipment, including balls, with no charge whatever. This year, as well as last, I had some 60 to 70 youngsters in these classes. Upon completion of the course, I run a tournament, offering numerous prizes. These youngsters are certainly our members of tomorrow.

"As to promoting women's play; I have given free group lessons every Wednesday morning, during the entire season. We now have a group of some 45 to 50 women, which does not include the experienced players.

"It seems some of these methods were never attempted previously, at this Club, and it has cost me considerable time and money, however, it is the only solution for increasing play and selling.

"This season we have had the Utah State Men's Amateur and the Utah State Women's Amateur meets here, also, the Provo City Open, which carried an entry list of 162, which was an increase of 85% over last year. Too, it was the first time the Men's Amateur had ever been held in any location other than Salt Lake City. Other tournaments are the Junior Tour-

namement, Caddie Tournament, Monthly Directors' Cup Tournament, Shriver's Hi-Lo Tournament, the Utah County Tournament and the City Women's Tournament, also, we have league matches twice a week from the steel plant located here.

"You can see for a community this size, there has been considerable activity.

"Also we run a Mixed Scotch-Foursome once a month, at which time a pot-luck supper is held afterward, this being done since we do not have facilities for a grill, to date.

"I further have the full cooperation of the radio stations, wherein they elaborate on the various activities, as well as explaining the merchandise available within the shop. I sincerely believe all this promotion is essential toward selling and building up memberships of any Club.

"This late summer I am not too heavily stocked with clubs, etc., however, I do have far too many golf balls, as do many of the other boys."

### **Sales Policies To Please All**

Harry Todd, Lakewood CC, Dallas, Tex., says:

"We notice that the sales begin to drop off in the middle of July. At this time we are already buying the merchandise for fall and winter. By checking the records of the past years, we have a pretty good idea on how strong to go. With this merchandise coming in from September 1st on, it is then necessary for us to make room for it.

"A year ago last Spring we had a sale and cleaned out our Winter merchandise 100%. Last August we completely cleaned out our Summer stock, and again in the Spring, we sold out the leftover Winter stock.

"I personally think that any Pro that does not put the remaining merchandise on sale is making a mistake.

"We find that our best customers do not wait for the sale, and yet the members who do look for bargains are the first to take advantage of it. So in the long run, it seems that all the members are happy, and above all the entire membership is patronizing the golf shop.

"We carry a very large stock of sports wear for men and the ladies, and with the turnover complete at least once and sometimes more each season, it is very gratifying not to have to pack most of the stock in moth balls for the next season.

"As for trade-ins on clubs, we have another way that has been most successful for us. We very seldom sell a used club or bag to a member. All the sales are to persons who are not members; mostly from players of the public courses.

"Our members leave their old clubs with us when they purchase a new set

and we charge them the full price and then tag the old set. We tell them what we think they are worth and when we sell them, we then credit the member with the full amount of the sale. Practically every time the member applies this amount on other merchandise. In this way we make a profit from both the sale of the new clubs and also from the old.

"The reason we are so fond of this system is that we very seldom have any inventory of old clubs, yet we can give bargains that pays non-members to come by to see what we do have, and this means more sales. You can see from this that we are not restricted to sell only to the members."

### **Hunter Keeps Capital Working**

The astute Willie Hunter, Riviera CC, Pacific Palisades, Calif., is one of the most successful pro businessmen. Willie has been using an inventory control system similar to the one recently set forth in GOLFDOM, for years. He keeps his operating capital working.

Hunter says:

"In S. California we have no end-of-season problem. My business runs uniform all the year round with the biggest month coming in December. I confess I was asleep to Xmas business for many years and altho getting quite a bit extra it amounted to very little compared to what I get now by sending personal letters to members—one to the man and one to the little woman. In this letter I stress my shop men as far better able to pick the right merchandise because of our intimate knowledge of their game and their ways of dressing.

"I have no great problem with trade-ins as the majority of my sales are clean without trades. I have a perpetual sale sign on all trade-ins and if they do not move fast enough or when the amount of capital tied up becomes what I think too much when considering the small margin of markup I sell to a public course professional; frequently at a small loss. I like to keep my capital in new up-to-date merchandise and do not hesitate to sell at cost or even less if the merchandise hangs.

"I keep a big inventory of fast moving merchandise so no possible sale is lost thru inability to supply when the buyer is in the mood.

"No high pressure selling is permitted, but timely suggestions and insisting that the buyer try out clubs before buying makes selling on a friendly basis. Business this year is up for every month and I believe this has been accomplished by dignified service with the selling.

"My volume has been greatly increased by shoes and top class haberdashery.

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ally and imperceptibly change a hole until its original character is utterly destroyed. Sometimes the demand for relief from the seeming injustice of some hazard influences the Green committee to eliminate a salient of rough upon which the whole scheme of play hinges and in a few years, when the old setup is forgotten, players ask, "Who built that silly, meaningless bunker No one ever gets into it!"

The rough costs comparatively little to create and little more to maintain properly than to neglect. Properly outlined and conditioned, it is an important factor in the strategy of each hole. Thought expended on its location and vigilance in maintaining its outline when proven is more than worth while.

## PROS TELL IDEAS

(Continued from page 22)

Cheaper sweaters, shirts, socks, etc., are poor sellers and the amount of profit derived from them is very small compared with the top grade goods. A wide variety of hats and caps, fancy and otherwise, alone grosses \$2000 annually.

"Criticism of members' clubs is not permitted by me, but we do suggest that better clubs are made when such is the case."

### Stage "Clearances" With Care

Howie Atten, well trained as an assistant and now doing a fine job as pro at the Dubuque (Ia.) G&CC says:

"For a club the size of Dubuque G&CC, I find that running blind bogeys during the early part of the season with many small prizes creates interest. Along toward the latter part of the season, after building up interest with many winners of small prizes, I clear inventory of sets of clubs with a few large winners. Running bogeys on Saturday and Sunday, one can get rid of a set of woods one day and a set of irons the next. In smaller clubs, one set of woods or irons for both days would probably be the better way. This type of clearance could run from Aug. 15 on.

"If reductions in price are the manner of clearance, too many wait and look for the 'bargains' and it spoils the potential

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## GOLF COURSE ARCHITECT

Member:

American Society of Golf Course Architects

R. D. #3, Box 372  
Phone — Valley 3225

Turtle Creek, Pa.  
Suburb of Pittsburgh

# ALFRED H. TULL

## Golf Course Architect

209 E. 49th Street  
NEW YORK 17, N. Y.

for next year. Only merchandise that does not hold out well (shirts, white goods, etc.) will be cleared with 'closeouts' and reductions this year."

### Get Rid of the Stock

Bill Wotherspoon, Southern Hills CC, Tulsa, Okla., is another pro who believes that the type of club governs the advisability of "clearance sales" and in some cases it's not wise to push cut-price sales. He thinks that more cautious buying and close inventory control will do away with the necessity of clearance sales. However, weather and other factors, such as the unwarranted ball shortage scare, Bill admits, cause problems of liquidation that test pro's business ability.

He says:

"In my own case the shop inventory is in very good shape for the beginning of August and it is right now I begin to buy again with thoughts of fall and Christmas sales. Only one article I happen to be long on is one type of golf ball and I am going to have to do something about that.

"The makers might send a letter to the boys and find out if they are overstocked in their particular line of clubs or balls. If so they could suggest unloading or transfers of the merchandise to others close by. No manufacturer would want a

pro to sell old models next year or yellowed golf balls and as long as the stocks are there it will be difficult for them to sell the new 1952 line.

"I have never believed in sales in pro shops as members are prone to believe there is something wrong with the merchandise and also they might wait for that time of the year all the time and the over all picture would be hurt.

"Junior golf and presenting clubs to caddies helps my trade-in situation and sometimes I will gather used clubs together and give a bargain to a fee course pro where there is a better market than mine.

"A live wire golf events program presents an outlet for prizes such as carry-all bags, cashmere sox, umbrellas, seat covers, and shirts which members might not buy but like to have. However, I do not unload these items after they've been in stock for months as it wouldn't be long until the golf committee would switch to other prizes so all winners receive up-to-date merchandise. Sometimes, though, it helps to create sales for new items.

"The telephone is a great means of personal advertising and every professional knows the bargain hunters. Why not a personal call on overstocked clubs as

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## **WILLIAM F. GORDON**

**Golf Course Architect**

Member

American Society of Golf Course Architects

**Doylestown,  
Pennsylvania**

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long as the pro knows the set will fit the individual and improve his game? I have always figured no deal would work unless it worked to both party's mutual advantage so these sales should have as much thought as ones through which the full profit is made."

### **"Trade-ins" A Staple Item**

George (Apple) Apalakakis, pro at Sagamore Springs GC, Lynnfield Center, Mass., ties in his merchandising at a fee course with golf promotion. His sales leads are mainly from transients.

Apalakakis says:

"I have to build up an inventory of good used equipment and purposely encourage trade-ins during November and December. I must have used equipment in excellent condition when I open shop in the spring, hence 'clearance sales' are out of the question with me.

"By expert reconditioning of the trade-ins I establish a reputation for my shop as being a very reliable place to get bargains and that brings business from those who have to keep their golf costs under close control. I find that this reputation for providing top values at any price also helps my new club business.

"Pros at fee courses and private courses should work together on this trade-in

matter as the fee course pro, provided with good bargain merchandise can approach his 'hard to sell' players with something that gives them what they want without increasing their golf costs unduly.

"The cooperation means more golf play. The players of any age who may not want to make much of an investment in golf playing equipment because of intermittent play may get a set of expertly reconditioned clubs at an affordable price and play a lot more golf.

"There can well be more cooperation between neighborhood professionals in selling some of a pro's surplus stock to another professional whose shop stock may be thin. None of us want out-of-date models of unused clubs backing up on the market next spring. We want to avoid that by quicker turn-over of inventory, getting players who can afford to do so buying new clubs more frequently, and bringing more players into the game."

Bill Cleary, head of W. A. Cleary Corp., New Brunswick, N. J., says next issue of their "Turf Maintenance Tips" will carry valuable information on control of fairy ring and snow mold with PMAS.

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