

# Pro Shop Problems Solved with Able Assistants

## An Interview With CHICK HARBERT

Professional, Meadowbrook Country Club, Northville, Mich.

Chick Harbert, Meadowbrook CC, says that knowing the job, the members and the local economic situation will protect the pro from getting over-stocked. Many cases of pros having surplus merchandise nearing the end of the season are the result of not making a study of what the club's market can absorb, he declares. He believes it unwise to have season-end clearance sales as they might get buyers in the habit of delaying purchasing.

Harbert also says that more attention given to studying the needs of new members and developing them as habitual patrons of the pro shop would absorb a lot of shop stock. Last year was the biggest Chick has had at his club but by August this year shop revenue had passed 1950 figures. He and his assistants kept close watch of their inventory and played the cards so close the shop was short of some sundries in late summer.

"My members, rather than any other factor in general or golf business conditions, determine every move I make in the business of my department," Harbert says. "Our officials are especially sound in their judgment in keeping the events schedule at the club running lively well into the fall. That gives the members greater benefits from membership and lengthens the marketing time and demand in my shop.

### Assistants Are Stars

"My assistants, Wade Ruffner and Nick Bersan, are two of the best in the business," Chick asserts. "They know that the better they do for the members the better they are doing for me. Wade is a Kentucky boy who has a brother who's asst. to Errie Ball at the Oak Park (Ill.) CC. Wade knows the members and the merchandise and the golf business. He has that good merchant's knack of getting the customers wanting to buy.

"Nick used to work in Ford's Rouge plant, then was in a factory at Akron. Before I was playing in the National Open at Canterbury in 1946 he telephoned me long distance and wanted to know if he could caddie for me. I told him it was O.K. with me if he got assigned. He paid \$10 to the boy who had drawn my bag. Nick got the approval of the Canterbury caddiemaster and we started out together in the practice rounds.

"Nick made about 20 pages of notes on every club I used, where the ball finished, how the wind was and other data and stepped off the distances from landmarks, during those practice rounds. Despite a miserable 78 I played in the second round, I finished only 3 strokes behind Mangrum, Nelson and Ghezzi who tied for the play-off. I was tied with Dick Metz for 8th place. Nick's way of getting data showed me that he was a sound man in golf business.

"Later, when he wanted to come to work for me at the club, I told him he couldn't make what he'd been making as factory wages. But he, like Wade, is enthusiastic about golf business and enjoys it. So he took a chance. In his second year his income increased so it justified the chance he took changing jobs.

### Learn from Successful Members

"From successful businessmen at my club and at other clubs I've learned good business management makes money by seeing to it that the help makes money.



Nick Bersan (L) and Wade Ruffner (R) holding Ryder Cup won by boss, Chick Harbert, are personable assistants Chick credits with fine management of his shop and services.

Get good assistants, see that they know the business and have a genuine eagerness to please the members and they'll work so they'll pay you a profit. They must have the incentive of cash rewards themselves. That calls for thoughtful study of the revenue and the expenses of the pro department. It costs a considerable amount to

run a pro department in a first-class club the way the members should have it operated. Members and officials don't often realize that but the pro does when he figures out his net profit on the capital he has invested in the business.

"I want to apply the same business principle members usually have to use in their own businesses—that of establishing a set-up that enables the assistants to make more money and the head pro more as the result of competent assistants' work.

#### **More Than Money — Teamwork**

"Money isn't all there is to it. It's essential, but not the only essential. The elements of teamwork, understanding and ambition can make a job grow. The members feel that the shop personnel is a smart and hard-working team and they get interested in making the operation a success for, after all, a successful pro shop reflects successful members.

"In our case the members work with us and have a personal interest in us. One of our members, a noted surgeon, performed operations on Nick that were wonderful for the young man and another inspiration for team spirit within the pro department and for the pro department's determination to work at everything that advances the interests of the club.

#### **Incentive System Pays Chick**

"When I'm away in tournaments the job at the club must be handled by my assistants in a thoroughly competent and conscientious way. For their able services to the members and to me I pay Wade and Nick a bonus out of prize money I happen to win in tournaments.

"There was a very pleasing recognition of this policy when Wade and Nick, who are good golfers, won money in a Detroit district pro-amateur event this past summer. They gave me \$8.14 as my bonus on their winnings.

"My observation of pro shop merchandising problems is that most of them would be solved if pros attended strictly to their own club business, paying special attention to getting the new members started right, the right sort of assistants selected, trained, supervised and encouraged to make more money for the pro for the simple reason that they then would be making more for themselves."

### **27 Caddies Get Scholarships under WGA Program**

Twenty-seven former caddies, representing golf clubs in all sectors of the country, will enter college this September as Evans Scholars under the program sponsored by Western Golf Association, according to Jerome P. Bowes.

The acceptance of 27 new caddie-scholars increases to a record 91 the number of

Evans Scholars who will receive college educations this year under the scholarship fund of WGA. Several additional candidates will be considered before schools open, and their acceptance may boost the roll call of caddie-scholars to approximately 100. Last September 86 young men attended school on WGA scholarships.

Named in honor of Charles "Chick" Evans, Jr., one of the all-time greats of golf, the Evans Scholars Foundation has furnished scholarships for close to 200 needy and deserving caddies during its 22 years of existence. Affiliated with Western Golf Association in the caddie-scholarship program are the Wisconsin State GA, Detroit District GA, Pacific Northwest GA, Illinois Women's GA and the Minnesota State GA.

Twenty-six colleges and universities are represented in the Evans Scholars program, with Northwestern University leading the roll call of scholars with 39. Ten Evans Scholars will attend the University of Illinois this September, while the University of Michigan will embrace six from the Detroit area. New schools added to the caddie-scholar program are: California Institute of Technology, and Illinois Institute of Technology.

#### **Exhibition Headliner at Six**



Lanna Kaye Robert, 6 years, shares with her daddy, Johnny, exhibition headlines. The lassie consistently scores in the mid-60s for 9 holes on some rather tough courses. Her drives average 125 yards. Johnny, a fine right-handed golfer until his right arm was crippled, now stars with trick shot and scoring exhibitions one-handed with his left hand. He's getting a lot of dates and allows Lanna to play in some of them. Johnny's probably played more vet hospital dates free than anybody else and gives a cheering and cheerful competent performance.