

Women Are Making Another Big Pro Shop Market

By HERB GRAFFIS

Apparel and accessory business is accounting for pro shop annual sales of more than \$7,000,000. Besides the direct profit there's an indirect profit from apparel. It gets more people coming into the pro shop and exposes them more frequently to the selling appeal of strictly golf merchandise.

In the old days a few sweaters, hosiery imported from Scotland and some knickers constituted the apparel sales volume at pro shops. Now the smartest of a rather wide range of sportswear is stocked and attractively displayed at the pro establishments.

The truth of this development is that the pros themselves were not primarily responsible for discovering and enlarging this great new market. It was the pros' wives more than the pros themselves who saw in the pro shop great retailing possibilities in convenience of purchase, the finest setting for smart styles and a merchandising set-up that could keep the prices in line with any competition of first class retailers.

The pros' wives began building the apparel business when golf merchandise wasn't available during the war and when the manufacturing situation returned to normal the pro shops had become a recognized and established outlet for sportswear—shirts, caps, hats, jackets, hosiery, shoes, slacks, rainwear, belts and many other items to clothe and adorn the golfer.

Women's Market Is Built

For the first few post-war years the business was about 95 per cent with men golfers, but during that period the pros' wives again were observing that the apparel market among women golfers had been neglected at the golf clubs.

Why? The pros themselves had many reasons or excuses. But their wives, knowing a whole lot more about style, materials, workmanship, values and women's buying ideas than their husbands ever could, again got on the job.

And again, the pros wives are accounting for a rapid and large development of a market that not only produces considerable profit but which is a distinct service to women golfers.

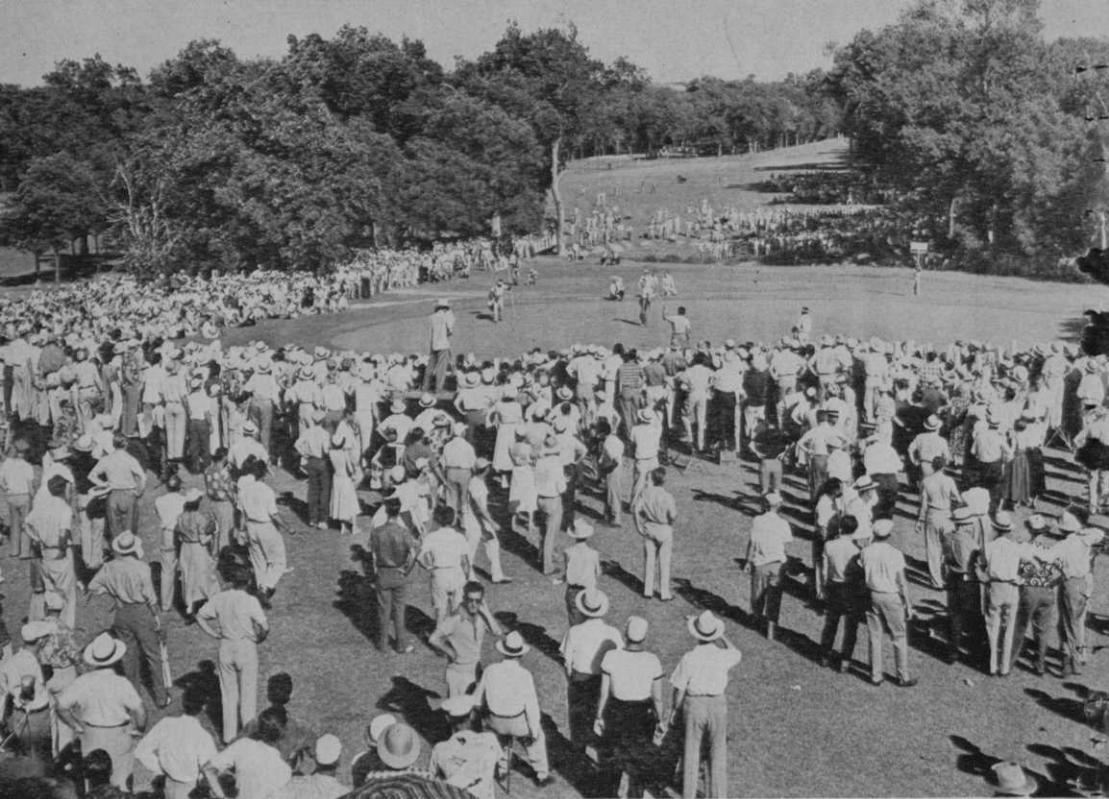
I've seen this situation progress and have talked it over with pros' wives after my wife and I have dropped into pro shops and my wife has called my attention to some merchandise or display that's unusually attractive. But only lately have I realized the extent to which smartly dressed women are telling each other about pro shops as excellent places for getting the best and latest at right prices.

Recently I was in the pro shop at one of the most exclusive clubs in the midwest. The pro had seen in the south a very attractive type of golf hat for women. That is one of the items on which women golfers don't, in our opinion, show good judgment too often. They're inclined to get the screwiest of all possible headgear. But in this case the pro shop number which the pro had stocked looked charming on the woman who is a prominent society woman whose picture frequently is in the papers. I thought, as I saw that woman buy the hat, there'd be some more follow the leader, and sure enough, while I was in the shop three other women came in and bought the same style.

What's making this women's apparel business grow so fast at pro shops lately? I've asked wives of professionals and the reply of one of them gives you a close-up.

Mrs. Massie B. Miller is the wife of the professional at Arbor Hills CC, Jackson, Mich. Massie went to Arbor Hills this year after a number of years at Dayton (O.) CC. And when you see the smartly dressed women golfers at Arbor Hills you don't have to be told that Mrs. Miller is active in shop merchandising.

Mrs. Miller's remarks on the women's angle in pro shop merchandising give you the story of how and what has expanded



THE TIGHT FINISH AT NORTHWOOD

From this view of the dogleg 18th at Northwood Club, Dallas, you can get an idea of how a fellow could get into trouble if he had wild tee shots in the National Open. The hole is 410 yds. A lot of the boys were too long off the tee (which is hidden in the distance by trees) then they pounded out from the trees at the right of the fairway and had to shoot at the left of the green. If the shot was too strong it went into a trap. Placing of the cup on the big green could — and did — entirely alter the character of the hole. Looks like a good market for lightweight shirts among Texas golfers; also a big pro shop market for hats and caps under that sizzling sun. Incidentally, wouldn't you think that all tournament pros would wear hats or caps or visors by doctors' and oculists' advice, as well as to promote shop headwear sales?

pro shop merchandising in a very substantial manner. She says:

"When the man power shortage brought on by the war made it impossible for my husband to hire a shop assistant between the ages of 16 and 60, I was drafted. I haven't decided whether I owe my continued service to a flair for merchandising, or to ole man H C of L. Whatever the reason, most of my summers are spent in the pro shop and I have found it an interesting challenge.

"Only a short time ago merchandise for feminine golfers was limited to clubs, bags, caps, and socks, with an occasional brave soul risking an order for a pair of golf shoes. Even in the smart shops, it was difficult to find the kind of sportswear golfing gals really wanted.

"My desire to buy and sell attractive ladies wear was three-fold: I golfed, so had a personal urge for attractive and comfort-

able sportswear, without the bother and time consumption involved in shopping down town; second, I was sure dozens of our feminine golfers felt the same as I; and third, the countless husbands who habitually forget anniversaries, birthdays, and Mothers Day, until the day itself; who would rummage through our shop looking for last minute gifts made me feel sure the field was large enough to assure a nice profit.

"I soon became impatient with salesmen's samples of 'for men only' lines, and with ladies' wear that had been designed by some one who disliked golf, back in the dark ages.

"Echoing the girls requests, I began asking for shortie socks, practical windbreakers — the kind that could go to the grocery as well as to the first tee — skirts with pockets, where golfers' pockets should be, and caps becoming as well as utilitarian.

"My grumbling must have been matched at many other clubs, for we began to get results. It was a happy day when a truly practical golf dress in the moderate price field was made available for pro shops. I ordered a dozen in assorted sizes and colors. To make everything perfect the dresses arrived on Ladies Day so into the locker room they went, where a veritable style show took place. All dresses were sold and orders taken for another dozen.

"Dresses have been followed by California skirts, Bermuda shorts, 'little boy' caps, golf nylon bags, and many other items to catch the fancy of the gals.

"When introducing a new line, I have often ordered my own size, and worn it to the club. I am a shopper myself so have understood the urge in my sex that makes us bargain hunters.

"Some of my buying has been subject to the trial and error method, but I have usually been able to discern which numbers are to be handled, admired, and passed by. For example, tee shirts, which the stores can feature as leaders, are slow movers in our shop, because we have been unable to meet the prices in the stores. Country club women like a bargain just as much as those who shop in Macey's basement!

"The personal approach is usually good.

USGA Changes Open Pattern for 1953 Trial

At Dallas, the USGA released a statement advising that after the usual 36-hole sectional qualifying rounds for the 1953 Open at Oakmont, 300 qualifiers will play 18-hole rounds at the Pittsburgh Field Club and Oakmont courses, to narrow the field down to 150, including the defending champion.

Prize money will be increased from \$15,000 to \$20,000. The additional qualifying rounds at Pittsburgh will mean more of a gate which should care for the increase in prize money. With the practicing that contestants want to do in getting the range of a National Open championship course, the 1953 trial arrangement undoubtedly will mean that any tournament circuit event playing the week end before the Open starts won't have much of a field.

The USGA release:

"The form of the Open Championship will be changed in the following particulars on a trial basis in 1953:

"1. After the usual 36-hole sectional qualifying rounds, 300 players will be qualified (instead of 162 as at present). The present exemptions from sectional qualifying will be continued.

"2. All of the 300 except the defending Champion will play a 36-hole Championship qualifying competition, one round each at

I almost knew ahead of time these customers who would like to try or wear the new things we ordered. One golfer wearing something smart, and answering, 'I bought it in the pro shop,' would provide the necessary advertising. Placing dresses, skirts, and shorts on hangers, racked so the sizes and prices were plainly visible; and allowing 'take home on approval' sales, or 'locker-room try ons,' made selling very easy.

"For those men who liked the convenience of pro shop buying for their wives, I have instituted a gift wrapping service, which they really appreciate. It is well to have some items that appeal to the non-golfing wives, too. The husbands buy more, and are much less price conscious.

"In my experience I have found that volume buying does not pay when dealing with women's apparel. None of us like to see too many others wearing an identical garment. Novelty items should not be re-ordered. Most pro shops know the number of their potential customers, and should buy accordingly."

Now, gentlemen, you begin to see what type of bright business women's brains are adding millions to pro retailing revenue, and improving and extending pro merchandising service to golfers.

the Oakmont Country Club and the Pittsburgh Field Club, Pittsburgh, Pa., on Tuesday and Wednesday, June 9 and 10.

"3. As a result, 150 players, including the defending Champion, will qualify to compete in the Championship proper at the Oakmont Country Club on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, June 11, 12 and 13. The form of the Championship proper will be the same as at present.

"4. Prize money for professionals will be \$20,000 (instead of \$15,000 as at present).

"The changes were prompted by a desire on the part of the United States Golf Association to reduce what is considered the present excessive premium on qualifiers' places in the sectional rounds. For example, for the 1952 Championship 1,664 players competed for 133 places in the sectional tryouts.

"John D. Ames, of Chicago, is Chairman of the USGA Championship Committee."

The release added:

"The USGA has accepted an invitation from the Baltusrol Golf Club, Springfield, N. J., to entertain the 1954 Open Championship. Dates will be fixed later. This will be the first Open to be played in the New York Metropolitan section since 1936, when Baltusrol was the location.

"Baltusrol has two courses which would be used if the revised form of the Open described above is considered successful in its 1953 trial."