

Advises Pros to take It Easy on the Salesman

By DAN ELLIS

About seven in the evening I was sitting in Joe Blow's pro shop reading a golf magazine. We were going to have dinner together but it was the assistant's day off, the shop boy was out sick and Joe wanted to keep the shop open for half an hour to accommodate a few golfers still on the course. Joe had already told me about the last two tournament rounds he had played, described them hole by hole, shot by shot and now my ear was getting a rest while he straightened up his showcase stock.

A well dressed, nice looking young fellow came in. He wore a smile, like the book says, held out his hand and introduced himself as the representative of one of the small but reputable club manufacturers. Joe shook hands perfunctorily and while the young chap was reaching for a calling card said, "I can't use any of your clubs. They won't sell here."

"Have you seen our new model?" the salesman asked.

"No, but the clubs just won't sell here. I've got a lot of clubs in stock and I can't put any more in," Joe announced.

"Well, how about Zilch shoes. I represent them too and we've got a couple of new numbers that are really hot. I'd like to show them to you."

"No, I've got a big stock of shoes. I'm sorry but I just can't use any of your stuff now."

Joe shook hands with the salesman and went back to his showcase. The salesman made as graceful an exit as possible with an "I'll see you next trip," and Joe muttered, "O. K."

Now actually Joe is a pretty good guy. But his treatment of that salesman was lousy. Not only did he ruin the fellow's day but he didn't do himself any good.

Why the Chill?

Why did Joe treat the gent that way? I knew he wasn't in a bad humor because he had been cordial to me. He had plenty of time and nothing much to do for half an hour. Later, after a couple of drinks, I asked Joe about it and this is what he said.

"I have a big inventory and the season has been punk so far. I can't afford to put in any more stock because I like to discount all my bills and the only things I'm buying are the things that sell fast — stuff I have to have. I hate to turn down any salesman

and he seemed like a nice fellow. It made me mad to have to turn him down. Maybe I didn't turn him down the right way but it seemed to me the best thing was to tell him right away I wasn't going to buy so he wouldn't go to a lot of trouble bringing in samples and waste his time. I like to give every salesman an order."

I have come to the conclusion that usually when a salesman gets such treatment from a golf pro it is for just the reason Joe gave. Pros like to give salesmen orders. When they can buy they are glad to see the salesman; when they feel they can't buy they frequently adopt a hostile attitude — not because they resent the salesman but because they dislike being unable to give an order. It is still one hell of a way to treat anyone.

Selling is not an easy job. At best the road is full of bumps. In nice weather the pros are giving lessons or out playing and salesmen have to wait around or call back but they have to keep moving because they have routes and schedules to stick to. In bad weather the pros are often away from the club. Salesmen understand that it is the pro's job to give lessons and play golf and that they have to have luck to see half a dozen of them a day. They try to do their big selling job in the Fall and early Spring when pros aren't so busy but they miss some of the boys on these trips and they get a good deal of that "It's too early; it's too late" business. When a salesman does catch a pro at a time when he isn't busy he feels he is entitled to common courtesy. Common courtesy on the part of a buyer consists of looking at a salesman's samples and giving him a reasonable amount of time to tell his story.

Every salesman wants an order but he knows he is going to be turned down and turned down often. He doesn't like being turned down but he doesn't resent it if the pro looks at his samples and treats him like a fellow human being. Most of the men calling on golf pros know how to handle themselves around a club and in a shop. One who doesn't won't be on the beat long. If he has been on the job any length of time he knows the pros' problems pretty well and is sympathetic to them. He is no more anxious to waste his time than the pro is to waste his own. He doesn't expect a pro to caress him, invite him to



TAG DAY IS EVERY DAY

Bill Boyle (right) talks equipment in his Iron Rock CC pro shop, Merchantville (N.J.), with Harley R. Kline, club owner. A former Walter Hagen salesman before returning to the pro game, Boyle has naturally two large banners on the walls of his shop boosting Hagen and Wilson equipment. He sells a lot of merchandise in this cramped shop. Price tags on all the goods are one of the reasons for Bill's sales volume.

lunch or buy anything he can't sell or doesn't like, but he does expect a chance to show his samples and tell his story.

In Bluefield, West Virginia there is a large wholesale hardware house with a number of branches in other states that distribute merchandise widely throughout the East. They have half a dozen buyers who are very busy but never too busy to see salesmen. The salesman is greeted courteously at the front desk by a switchboard girl who promptly rings the buyer he wants to see. The wait is never more than a few minutes and the buyers are cordial, listen to what the salesman has to say and give him frank answers to any questions he asks. A lot of times they don't buy and when they don't they give the reason and salesmen never resent it. No hard goods salesman goes near Bluefield without calling on this house and when shortages occur you can bet he doesn't forget this concern where he always gets friendly treatment that sends him on his way feeling good.

Buyer Gets Information

A smart buyer picks up information from salesmen — dope about new items, dope on what competitors are doing. And salesmen talk a lot. It's an occupational disease. A

golf pro might as well have salesmen say he's a good guy as have them pass the word that he's a heel. Sometimes pros are looking for jobs and often salesmen know when jobs are to be had. So, even from a purely selfish standpoint a pro ought to be kind to the poor salesman.

Suppose the pro is just getting ready to go out on a lesson when a salesman drops in. The nice thing for him to say is, "I'm sorry, Bill, but I have a lesson right away. It's an hour lesson and right after that I've got a half hour lesson. Do you want to come back in an hour and a half?" If the salesman says yes, the pro should make sure he's around when the salesman returns and then he should give him fifteen or twenty minutes of his time.

Sometimes a salesman is so anxious to get his merchandise into a pro shop that he will offer to ship on consignment. If the pro agrees to this he should insist that the salesman write up the order, make a notation on it that the goods are to be sent on consignment, sign the order and leave a copy of it with the pro. The same goes for orders carrying any special dating or other deals out of the ordinary. When the pro has a copy of such an order he has a ready answer if the company writes and asks him why he doesn't pay up right away.

A chore every salesman hates is trying to collect over-due accounts but most of them are obliged to do it. Believe me, a salesman hates worse to ask for money than the pro does to have him ask for it and a pro can rest assured when a salesman puts the bite on him he has been directed to do it by the company. Usually a pro from whom a salesman is asked to collect is a chronic past-due account and can think of more excuses for not paying than a kid can for not going to bed. He is also a past-master at the art of dodging the issue. But if he can bring himself to pay at least something on account the salesman can show the credit department he has made the effort. When a cash payment is made the pro should get a signed receipt.

A pro who is not habitually past due with suppliers but simply happens to have run into tough luck or to have over-bought and tied up his funds temporarily should write to the companies, explain the circumstances and tell them when he expects to be able to pay. If he does this he will find credit managers leaning over backward to co-operate. The most exasperating people credit departments have to contend with are ones who owe money and won't answer letters or in any way signify intent to pay.

One big headache for a salesman is the occasional pro who is sore at the company and won't do any business with them. He is often peeved over something that happened ten years ago in another part of the country. Whatever it was that happened may have been the company's fault or the fault of some individual who worked for the company but anyhow the pro is pig-headed about it and absolutely refuses to buy or talk to the representative.

It is of course true that a salesman represents the company he works for and when a pro has a gripe against the company it is natural he should make it to the salesman. A salesman is always on the side of his customer and if there is anything he can do to straighten out the matter you can bet he will do it. But he can't turn back the clock and any pro who holds a grudge against a business concern for any length of time is being juvenile. The fact that the concern has been able to stay in business and presumably prosper indicates their methods cannot be far off the regular line, and because some person who once worked for them once did something that rubbed a customer the wrong way is certainly no reason for the customer to keep the house on his black list forever.

Most of the salesmen who call on golf pros regularly like the pros. They like to call on them, talk with them and of course they like to do business with them. In most shops all salesmen get a good break because the great majority of pros are experienced enough in doing business with

people to know it pays to be courteous, but one or two inconsiderate pros can spoil many a day for the boys. It isn't that they won't buy. It's simply that they won't look and listen for a few minutes. Nine times out of ten it's for the reason Joe Blow gave and the tenth time it's because they're afraid they might weaken.

But if they looked and listened for a while and bought just a little or even didn't buy anything they might learn a bit more and surely they would make boosters instead of knockers. It's a small world. As businesses go, golf is not big. We all ought to give one another a break when we can.

Golf Equipment Production \$46,971,306 in 1951

Athletic Goods Manufacturers' Assn. figures on 1951 production show golf equipment production (at factory selling price including excise tax) at \$46,971,306.

Golf equipment production for 1950 year was reported as \$41,789,127.

In 1951 golf again was the largest classification of athletic goods manufactured. Baseball and softball was second with \$26,067,383, athletic shoes was third with \$12,103,461.

Total production by the Athletic Goods Manufacturers' Assn. in 1951 was \$115,834,944 at factory selling prices. The 1951 total was \$1,261,941 below the previous year, with an almost \$3,000,000 slump in baseball and softball equipment.

Comparison of 1950 and 1951 factory sales of golf equipment:

NUMBER OF GOLF CLUBS

1950	3,379,658
1951	4,030,331

DOZENS OF GOLF BALLS

1950	3,030,159
1951	2,920,340

NUMBER OF BAGS

1950	514,745
1951	482,399

In 1951, 2,842,139 irons and 1,188,192 woods were sold by the factories; the overall ratio of wood to iron sales being about the same as in 1950.

Interesting changes were shown in the price classes. In 1950 top grade irons were sold in almost twice the number of the second largest selling price class (the irons that sell at \$2.76 to \$3.60 at factory prices). In 1951 the top grade irons still led, but in second place and only about 56,000 back was the price class of irons that sold at factories for \$4.01 to \$5. Increased production costs were reflected in all figures.

In 1950 the leading classification of woods was in the top price bracket but in 1951 most woods in the second of the four price groups (the \$5.41 to \$7.50 group) were sold.