

# Pros Report Play, Sales, Up Despite Spotty Weather

To get a line on what the business score is for pros this year GOLFDOM queried by mail 400 professionals. The pros were selected to give an over-all picture, according to private, public and semi-public courses, large, medium-sized and 9-hole clubs, and on a regional basis. Answers were received from 297 pros; an unusually large response to a mail query in any field, and a plain indication of pros' close study of merchandising. GOLFDOM greatly appreciates this response. We are especially grateful for the professionals' and course superintendents' responses to our requests for information that benefits the entire golf business. We know that facilities available to the pros and supts. generally make it inconvenient for them to handle correspondence.

Questions asked the pros, and the percent of answers were:

**HOW DID YOUR PLAY THIS YEAR COMPARE WITH 1951?**

More—88%; Same 9%; Less—3%

**HOW WAS THE WEATHER IN YOUR DISTRICT THIS YEAR?**

Good—65%; Bad and Good—27%; Bad—8%

**HOW ARE YOUR GOLF BALL STOCKS NOW?**

Normal—81%; Low—11%; Overstocked—8%

**HOW WERE APPAREL, SHOE AND ACCESSORY SALES?**

More—63%; Less—37%

**HOW DID WOMEN'S PLAY COMPARE WITH LAST YEAR?**

More—74%; Same—21%; Less—5%

**HOW DID CLUB SALES COMPARE WITH LAST YEAR?**

More—68%; Same—7%; Less—25%

**ARE YOUR SALES OF CLUBS TO WOMEN INCREASING?**

Yes—29%; Same—13%; No—58%

**ARE YOU GOING AFTER CHRISTMAS GIFT BUSINESS THIS YEAR?**

Yes—74%; Undecided—12%; No—14%

Two points stuck out conspicuously; one was that the weather is the big determining factor in golf sales, and the other is that despite the general big increase in women's play sales of women's clubs were a long way from increasing proportionately. However, most pros reported small but steady increase in

women's clubs continuing and credited women pros' clinics at their clubs for having most sales effect.

On the weather, pros commented that the effect of heat and humidity on course condition was more of a factor in reducing play during the unfavorable months than was the discomfort to the players. Except in the far south, women golfers didn't seem to be kept off by hot weather.

In numerous places play on weekends and holidays, weather permitting, was at capacity and delays in waiting to tee-off and in play caused much grumbling. This slow action will diminish play unless there are more courses and a faster pace of play. Unquestionably the slow play of tournament pros who are in the game for a living has set the pace for golfers who are playing for fun but find the fun reduced when their have to take four hours or more to get around a course.

Not enough data is available to estimate the 1952 rounds of play this year but it's certain that the total will exceed 1951. Favorable economic and employment situation offset unfavorable weather factors.

On the economics end pros reported, in some cases, that those women who were buying clubs were going for the better equipment. The exceptions were at fee course and smaller town courses where the "buy it wholesale" lure on cheap clubs registered strong with women.

## Ball Stocks Normal

The excess stocks of golf balls caused by Korean war scare buying has been practically cleared away, with some pros coming to the end of the season in northern and central states with barely enough to care for Autumn play. Thus one of the bad spots in pro business financing has been cleared up. Pros had far too much money tied up in ball stocks and had sold the market too far ahead. GOLFDOM had called that one in advance, warning against over-buying on the grounds that if a pro at a private club got a premium for balls in case of a shortage he'd be criticized by members who were making fortunes by having bought ahead of shortages.

In no case reported were apparel, shoe and accessory sales the same this year as last. Puzzling thing about the shoe and apparel sales is that almost all pros in larger cities reported this business up

although one might think, offhand, that store competition in the large cities would keep pro shop business from showing much of an increase. Our guess is that smart choice of merchandise and attractive display in the larger clubs made the pro shop more of a style center and the smaller shops couldn't solve the problem of spotlighting the merchandise in a strong selling way.

Club sales at most reporting shops were up but not as much as the increase in play. Numerous pros reported that decided increase in women's play accounted for much of the total increase in the number of rounds played. Last year was an especially good one for club sales and in some instances that we happen to know quite well, the explanation for pro shop club sales not being up to 1951 figures was because the pros really shoved the clubs into the eager, ready-cash buyers in 1951. No getting away from it; trade-ins are growing as a factor in pro grade club sales. The reconditioned clubs are helping pros meet competition of the low-priced lines, too.

Christmas gift business is growing big. One pro explains his Christmas sales campaign by saying "We've got to eat all year." Another explains that he's found Christmas golf goods sales campaigns are well timed because people are in a spending mood, wondering what to buy and don't have heavy bills for drinking and eating and caddy charges at the club hanging over them.

### Pro's Books Tell Clear Story of His Business

A professional whose outstanding community service and community advertising at a city golf course is nationally recognized breaks down his accounting so he can see what his income is per player.

This method of watching his revenue he says not only helps him to see quickly and clearly whether he and his staff are on the job in getting the revenue he must have to give complete and excellent service but it is a check to see if costs to the players are getting out of line.

In a very good month with about 10,000 rounds played, his average sale of merchandise per player was around 75 cents. The additional average revenue per player from repairs, practice range, cart and club rentals was approximately 20 cents per player. The total revenue about 95 cents a player looks very bright until the pro's investment in merchandise and equipment, salaries, insurance and other operating expenses per player are considered. Then the net profit of endeavoring to give a close approach to private club service to public course players is very moderate. The net is small enough

to keep the pro constantly reminded that he has to watch all expenses of operation. The net also is low enough to keep the pro reminded, he says, of the necessity of doing everything possible to promote a large volume of play.

Other figures on the per player basis indicate that at many of the best operated public courses, as well as at private clubs, expenses that are strictly for golf are lower than for the other items such as beverages and snacks. Because of rapid turnover the investment in stock of this merchandise is much lower than the investment usually required in pro shop stock.

Another professional gets a vivid picture of the financial part of his operations by figuring how many sets of clubs he has to sell to have the net profit pay his shop stock fire and theft insurance premiums, or how much of anything in his shop he'd have to sell to have the profits pay certain items of operating costs. He's got his average net profit figured out pretty accurately.

### Gibson Leaves PGA to Book Stars

Bob Gibson, for past 3 years publicity director and magazine editor for the PGA, has resigned effective Dec. 1 and will handle exhibition bookings and product endorsements for National Open Champion Julius Boros, PGA Champion Jim Turnesa, Jack Burke, Jr., Ted Kroll, Dave Douglas and Doug Ford.

In addition, he will arrange all booking for trick shot artist Paul Hahn, who last year appeared in nearly 300 cities with his one-man show.

Gibson, a former Dayton, O., and Pittsburgh, Pa., sportswriter, will establish an



Paul Hahn (L) signs with Bob Gibson.

office in Chicago. Wm. B. MacDonald, Chicago industrialist, who will sponsor the International Four-Ball Matches at Miami Beach December 17-21, has contracted with Gibson to act as public relations consultant for that event.

Gibson's successor to be named soon.