

Early Planning Pays in Pro Christmas Gift Selling

By HERB GRAFFIS

December has become one of the biggest months for pro shop sales. With many of the leading businessmen professionals in northern and central states December is second month in sales volume and for these pros the old schedule of winter vacation has changed because of the importance of Christmas golf sales. Instead of heading south or southwest in late October now they wait until after Christmas to travel to the warmer parts of the land.

There were some signs of recognizing the Christmas sales opportunities before the war. A few pros got out Christmas golf gift advertising and made money while the rest of the fellows were spending what they'd earned during the summer. The ball manufacturers offered the Christmas package deals and they were accepted with spotty reception.

But after World War II ended, the golf Christmas gift business which had been mainly in the hands of smart store merchandisers who overlooked no bet, suddenly began to jump in pro shops.

As in the case of the great development of pro shop golf apparel sales in the post-war period, pros' wives had a great deal to do in getting the pro shop Christmas selling drive started. The wives would point out to their pro husbands that Christmas gift buying is one of the most puzzling jobs of spending money that men and women have. "Look at the Christmas gift golf stuff that your members show up with in the spring and see how you missed making a profit that would have carried us through the winter in the black," the pros' wives would tell their husbands.

Christmas Selling Serves Members

"And when you're selling them these Christmas golf gifts you're making your members grateful for helping them solve

a shopping problem," the wives would add. The way GOLFDOM has heard pros' wives talk to them about Christmas business sounded as though the pro wasn't on the job for his members if he let them spend some gift money elsewhere than in the pro shop. And in a great many cases the pros' wives were absolutely right.

Now the pro shop Christmas gift business is so extensively established as one of the biggest selling factors of the whole year's merchandising that the pro who doesn't go after this business with a thoughtful and complete plan, worked out in advance and energetically pushed until Christmas eve, can't consider himself a thorough golf merchant and buying counsellor for his members.

The old idea of selling only in the height of the playing season doesn't go any more in pro merchandising. Numerous pros in college towns have sold enough sports jackets to boy and girl students in September and October to show profits exceeding the prize money won by any except the first 15 or so of the tournament circuit players. Several pros have kids on a commission basis selling rain outfits to people in football crowds. And what fat net profits these pros have made!

But the top sure-fire extra profit for pros is in the Christmas gift golf sales promotion.

Work Ahead of Sales

It's not a campaign to be handled catch-as-catch-can. To really score in net profits the campaign must be planned no later than September and get started by October.

The first step in pro planning of the Christmas gift selling campaign is to make a study of the market possibilities. It's better for the pro if he'll write down just what he thinks is a conservative

estimate of the market. Say he's at a private club, his Christmas gift market will be about like this:

- (1) Gifts bought for men members
- (2) Gifts bought for women members
- (3) Gifts members buy for their children
- (4) Gifts men members buy to be given by their companies or themselves to their customers
- (5) Gifts that non-members buy because of the golf club's prestige, pro expert advice, or pro-only retailing policy.

The first three gift classifications generally are about the market the pro works on as the obvious volume, although the third category hasn't received the attention that some pros have proved it deserves. Sports jackets especially have been going well the past two years as Christmas gifts for members' sons and daughters. Clubs for youngsters are made by some leading manufacturers and the prices put them in the Christmas gift class. Strong promotion of junior golf has given this gift item plenty of a market.

By looking into the Christmas gift market early, pros probably will find that members are thinking of buying clubs for sons and daughters who have grown taller than their fathers and mothers, but who are using their cast-off clubs. The parents may not want to go for top grade clubs for the kids but would be interested if the pros would make available to them good clubs in lower price ranges.

Ball Box Sales Mount

The Christmas boxes of golf balls have steadily grown. The marking of the recipient's name on the balls has been a strong factor in promoting the sales. Here, again, is something that the pro has to work on early if he's going to do the marking in his own shop.

One of the best selling Christmas items at many pro shops has been balls in dozen boxes to members who give the balls to their customers. Usually these are individually-marked balls and time is needed for getting the marking done, or for some special printing that the buyer wants attached to the gift boxes. In some cases pros have sold many dozens of balls with specially printed wrappers around 3-ball units to be used as company Christmas gifts to customers.

Plan Advertising Ahead

The pro who intends to make an effective campaign for Christmas gift business has to do some advertising. He's up against the most energetic and inviting advertising that other retailers do and he

can't expect Christmas gift business to fall into his lap while the competition is going after it.

The pro advertising must feature the highest quality and expert selection of merchandise and at the same time stress the fact that pro prices are standard—or lower — for best quality merchandise. There is more selling appeal than the pro may realize in pro-quality merchandise and in the one who gets the gift being able to say he—or she—got it from a golf professional at a first-class private club. Many people don't realize that the pro at a private club will sell to non-members and one of the problems of the pro's Christmas gift advertising is to reach those people who want to buy golf goods but don't know the pro will sell to them.

There undoubtedly is a good chance for pro co-operative newspaper and radio advertising for Christmas goods along the lines some PGA groups have done in getting early season business, but as far as GOLFDOM knows there has been none of this cooperative advertising done for Christmas business.

In preparing his Christmas gift advertising the pro has to get on the job well in advance and make use of the expert help of an advertising man or printing salesman among his members. The merchandise should be classified in price groups as well as in groups for men and women golfers. In some cases advertising material from manufacturers — either folders or cuts — may be obtained for use by the professional. Often costs for attractive and quite comprehensive gift circulars may be cut by several pros going together for a small Christmas golf gift catalog and having the name of each of the cooperating pros printed on the material he sends to his members or other prospective purchasers.

But, if he doesn't go for extensive advertising he should at least get out several letters, starting in late October, to make known his stock of Christmas gifts. He should remind his customers that with special orders or those requiring expert pro fitting in the case of clubs, the pro should be allowed ample time to get the order handled correctly well before Christmas.

One letter won't do the job. The stores start early on Christmas gift advertising and keep it up until the last shopping day before Christmas. This advertising pays the store richly, just as Christmas gift advertising will pay out handsomely for the pro.

START NOW — on Your Christmas Selling!

Cut out the page opposite. Display it prominently! Extra copies for mailing to your members, folded to 3" x 6". Send \$1.50 for 100 (\$1 for each additional 100) to GOLFDOM, 407 S. Dearborn st., Chicago 5, Ill.