

I Woke Up and Began to Sell Women's Clubs

By "HOME CLUBBER"

Most professionals who've been at their clubs more than ten years believe that they are doing about everything possible to help their clubs, their members and themselves. I do. I keep looking for every new idea or new model of an old idea to stir up more golf interest at our club which is typical of the first class eastern metropolitan district clubs. The more golf interest there is, the more rounds there are played, and the greater the business in my shop.

I've got probably a hundred ideas out of GOLFDOM that have helped me increase the play at our club, and my profits. One of the best hunches I got came from an article on increasing women's business at pro shops. It reminded me that I hadn't been doing the job I should have been doing in selling women's clubs.

Maybe you're like I've been; selling quite a lot of women's golf apparel simply by thoughtful buying and good display; but are just coasting along in selling women's golf clubs. I think that most pros have been negligent in that way. I've visited a lot of pro shops in playing pro-amateur events in our section and in going south after our season is over and up to the time I got wise to what I was missing I'd seen only one pro shop display of women's clubs that called any special attention to this part of the stock being specially selected for women golfers!

Overlooking A Chance

No wonder that I had been getting only 6 to 10 per cent of my total yearly club sales in women's purchases and had been seeing store sets of women's clubs coming into our racks too often.

I can see now that one reason I missed a good bet was that for the past few seasons the new models of men's irons were selling so well I got misled. Those new irons were being bought more than they were being sold and the volume was so good I didn't look around to see where I might be overlooking chances to sell other equipment.

Then, as I read of how other pros were doing with women's business it struck me that if women were buying hats, shoes and dresses in increasing amounts why wasn't my women's club business increasing? There were more women playing

golf at the club. Ladies days were packed and there always were arguments about women starting too early Saturday afternoons, and complaints from women that they didn't get more time on the course. About half of my lessons were to women.

When I got to thinking how men's lesson business was among the principal leads to club sales but that women's lessons didn't have the same selling influence although the women pupils certainly needed new and well fitted clubs more than my men pupils, I knew there was something wrong in the way I was doing business.

And it dawned on me that the most serious part of my error was not that I was missing a profit but that I was missing a chance to improve the games of the women members.

I had the shock of my life when the wife of my chairman said to me, "Oh, I didn't know you had clubs for women in your shop."

Not the Only Sleeper

Well, brother pro, don't think I'm the only sleeper in the game when it comes to not letting women know there are clubs especially made for women, on sale in the pro shop. You probably have women at your own club who don't know you stock women's clubs.

Since I became very much interested in women's club business and have talked it over with other pros I am convinced that the pro women stars who came around to the clubs and put on clinics have accounted for so many sales they've partially awakened the pros. One pro told me that after Patty Berg was at his club he sold six sets of woods and irons to women that he thought would be using the same old mallets forever.

If the men tournament pros would get interested in visiting pro shops and helping sell clubs in the same way that Berg, Suggs, Zaharias, Spork, Smith and the rest of the girl pros who are on manufacturers' payrolls, the home club pros would be a lot happier. Those girls know how to sell golf clubs and they love selling and they don't mind work at all.

It wasn't until about July a year ago that I realized I'd been missing the boat on women's club sales. I'm still looking for a lot of the answers but at least I've

begun to see that our women know I've got fine clubs for women, and clubs at the right prices, in my shop.

This year my women's club business will run about 18 per cent of my men's club sales volume against about 8 per cent for all of 1951 when more than half of my women's club sales were made after July 1. My men's club sales are off a little bit from 1951 but the increase in women's club sales this year will give me an overall improvement in club sales revenue this year.

Separate Women's Display

The first thing I did was to have a sign-painter make me three very attractive signs like you'd see in top grade women's shops. These signs read: "The finest in golf clubs for women," "A woman's golf clubs should fit her as well as her dress," and "The best in women's golf clubs in all price classes."

I thought I was over-ordering when I got a few more sets of women's irons and woods so I could make an impressive and separate club display in the front of my shop. But I wasn't. I picked up sets other pros couldn't sell in early September, and got rid of them.

For the first time in the 23 years I've been a pro I saw women getting into the habit of handling clubs when they came into my shop. I lot of men will take clubs out of a good display and waggle them for feel and look them over, but seldom do you see women doing this.

I set my women's club display apart from the wall space where I show my men's clubs. The women were made aware that there was something distinctive for them and something worth the spotlight.

"Peace Offering" Sale

The first set of first quality women's clubs that I sold after making the special display was to a man for his wife. He went the limit on price. Another member told me the buy was a bargain as it might have saved the man who bought it the price of alimony. It was a peace offering and the way the wife bragged about the set and enjoyed the woods and irons was proof that the husband had squared himself.

It doesn't take long for women to get talking when good new merchandise is properly displayed and the price is right. In two cases husbands and wives agreed upon new woods and irons as graduation gifts for daughters and I know that in both instances the idea of buying the gift clubs came from the wives.

I used the demonstration set idea and found that the sampling idea got across pretty well, especially after I'd given each user a simple tip or two that they could

remember and use and cut a few strokes off. It amazes many women to see what a difference there is between the old clubs they're using and a modern, stylish, really suitable set.

Getting Specialist Reputation

This year I've continued to departmentalize my women's clubs and I'm getting the reputation of being the district's specialist in correctly fitting women with clubs. I'm no better than any other experienced pro at this but business is coming into me from other clubs where the pros haven't got on the job in selling clubs to women.

I couldn't say to these women who were brought to me from other clubs by my own women members, "Go back home and buy your clubs. Your own pro has clubs for you or can get them." That would knock the sale out. Splitting the profit is a deal that will go just so far and only among pros who are close personal friends and in positions to conduct reciprocity business. I've got enough of my own women members who should be buying new clubs not to want to make any bid for the business of women who belong to other clubs. But this sort of business from other clubs is coming and growing, even though I've just been featuring women's clubs for a year.

Most of us in pro golf clubs have been treating women's club business like an orphan and I'm surprised that the stores didn't run away with it before we began to give this business the attention it should have.

Professionals and Amateurs Named to Mid Century Roll

The nation's golf professionals, sports writers and sportscasters have selected 10 top professionals and amateurs to the mid century honor roll of American golf in commemoration of the nation's most successful 50 years of athletics. They will be honored at a banquet September 20 as a highlight of the National Celebrities Open tournament in Washington, D. C.

The list of professionals in the order of most votes received are as follows: Ben Hogan, Walter Hagen, Gene Sarazen, Sam Snead, Byron Nelson, Tommy Armour, Lloyd Mangrum, MacDonald Smith, Ralph Guldahl and Jimmy Demaret.

Amateurs receiving the most votes were: Bobby Jones, Chick Evans, Francis Ouimet, Lawson Little, Frank Stranahan, Willie Turnesa, Johnny Goodman, Jerry Travers, Dick Chapman and George Von Elm. Although eligibility was limited to native born or naturalized citizens, many foreign stars were named among the 106 professionals and 193 amateurs who received votes.