

How to *MEET and BEAT COMPETITION*

By **JOE ROBINSON**
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Southern California PGA advertises with pride that its proteges won four national junior championships in 1952. Joe Robinson is chairman of the SCPGA's Junior Golf Committee. The SCPGA pros increased the number of juniors receiving instruction from 1,883 in 1951 to 3,047 in 1952.

Sometimes one can learn a lot from a competitor. In this case, we do not refer, especially, to our rival PGA club pros, but to the sporting goods stores and clothiers in your town and mine.

What's their major stock in trade—other than golf merchandise which may or may not sell for a few pennies less? His methods of display, promotion and suggestive salesmanship?

One can fight fire with fire, sometimes. And this, to me, seems to be a logical professional golf answer in these times of highly competitive business. At any rate, we have found results from just such a method.

Fortunately, I have at my disposal at the Virginia CC a pro shop with adequate room for display of merchandise. We have space of about 24x30 ft. In addition, we have a storage room for clubs on the north, and a small pro business office on the east of the display shop.

But the pro shop itself is the pro's problem in question here. That's where he does his club business. The other factors are mere aids to the "front office".

I have two excellent assistants in Don Willis, who takes care of much of the display, and Bryce McCabe, long associated with the club as shop manager and caddie master. Both men are veterans of

This is the sight which greets golfers as they step into Joe Robinson's pro shop at Virginia CC, a well stocked counter in the foreground, and another all along the South portion. Don Willis, assistant, is on the telephone, while Bryce McCabe, shop assistant and caddie master, is on the left.





This view of the west wall of Joe Robinson's golf shop at Virginia CC shows club display arrangement and the interesting border of foursome pictures of club members and guests over the windows and along the beams. Through the window, the clubhouse is seen on the right and the circle driveway around the fountain. Extending out from the clubhouse and mostly hidden by the stone pillar may be seen a portion of the original Los Cerritos Hacienda, center of the colorful and historic background of activity in and near Long Beach during the hacienda days.

World War II, but both had a good background in golf prior to their service.

We have found that the best way to compete with the downtown competition is to give our players a shop display that will gain their interest, whet their golf appetites and be adequate to supply their needs.

"Window Display" in Shop

Pictures accompanying this article will demonstrate the "Window display" we use in the Virginia CC pro shop.

An entire showcase on the northeast end of the shop is lighted, displayed and landscaped—even to hanging ferns.

In this three-way window case we display clubs, balls, sweaters, jackets, sox, rain coats, caddie carts and just about everything in the golf line—and we vary the show at least once a week.

In the other showcases throughout the shop we also stress variety and change.

Along the entire south area are golf balls in the upper half—or mezzanine—of the case, while sweaters, sox, jackets,

hood covers and other merchandise for both men and women are easily available in the lower half.

Display clubs have a long rack under the window on the West wall, and the handy display of putters is in a circular rack midway in the shop.

For convenience of members, we have several comfortable chairs for changing shoes and just relaxing in general; a complete file of members' names, addresses and handicaps; a "memo" chalk board over a public telephone, and as an added scenic potion, the shop is lined with pictures of members and guests from various tournaments.

We maintain a bulletin board of about 4x8 ft. in size on the entrance-exit portion of the shop for those interested in tournaments, rules, handicap changes and golf news.

Plan to Beat Competition

But back to the pro's merchandise problem.

The first requirement, if we meet this



Here's another view of the northeast interior of Joe Robinson's pro shop at Virginia CC, the "window" display on the left, and a couple seated comfortably discussing the weather, golf and/or politics. Dr. F. B. Clarke, just back from a tour of Europe where he attended the annual meeting at St. Andrews, is talking with Mrs. Charles Tally and her daughter. Note the colorful floral effect and the picture border at the top of the walls. The handicapped rack is shown at far end of counter.

downtown competition, is to give our members that neat, attractive merchandise display of equipment. Second, we must vary that display with fresh merchandise to avoid "old copy", and third, we must keep our shops friendly and orderly.

The second requirement, if we meet this competition, is to employ intelligent, suggestive salesmanship—both in the shop and in our mailing relationships with the club members.

Here's where a good mailing list of club members can come in mighty handy, especially at holiday or sale time.

Our first step in these lines has been to properly display what they have to sell.

Second, has been to allow players to practice with the equipment, if they so desired, and third, we have made it a general policy to send to our club members written announcements monthly of our new merchandise, or of any good buys that might be available at the moment.

My assistants are instructed to allow

members to feel their way in the golf field, but to aid them in any and all possible ways.

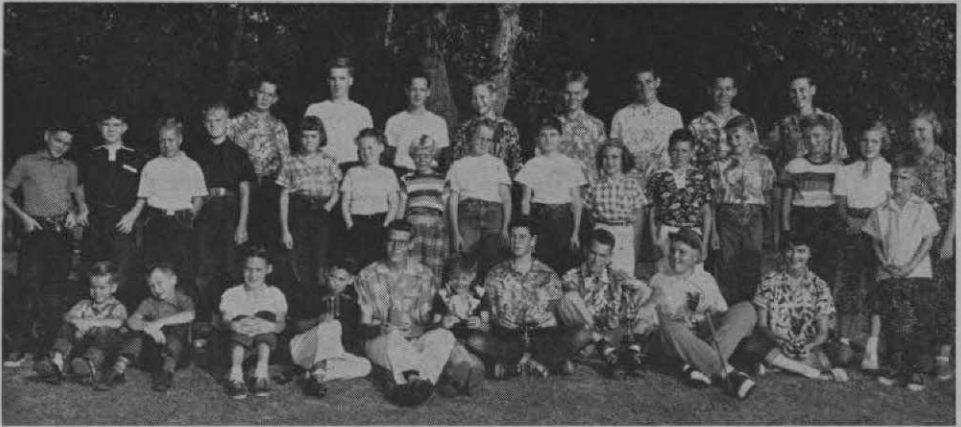
Passive, but clever, suggestive salesmanship pays off in the long run.

And attractive cabinets, colorful merchandise and lighting can do a lot toward drawing the eyes to an item that ordinarily would otherwise go unnoticed in your shop.

Uses "Demonstrator" Idea

Another method that I've borrowed from uptown merchandisers is a practice of the automobile dealers, of which we have many at our club. They employ a policy of having a single "demonstrator" car of each make on the lot. A prospective buyer is given his trial ride in the demonstrator car.

A few years ago many pros allowed a prospective customer to take out a set of clubs for a trial. They were ones that fitted him and his swing, and maybe after the round he was not satisfied, and we had a "used" set on our hands.



Junior golf is regarded as one of the most important activities at Virginia CC., where the youngsters handle all details of their tournaments and social events. Photo shows their 1952 group.

This method required much merchandise, and at the end of the year, we had many, many "used" sets — sometimes.

I've modified this a bit by having one set from each of the leading PGA-accepted-club brands on hand, all with medium shafts and medium weight. They are available for prospective customers on trial.

We have found that over a year's period we have sold as many, and perhaps more, sets of clubs — yet have only four or five "used" sets on our hands.

And, what's more, the members like the idea because there are many who are

conscientious enough to be too careful with a new set of clubs that does not belong to them. They feel more free to give the demonstrator set a real tryout.

I have found two other big factors in the successful promotion of a golf shop:

First, it's imperative that the pro shop lend itself as a complete center of tournament activity, and that the pro — who in most cases serves also as course manager and works in harmony with the course superintendent — combines both the pro shop and the course in his line of action.

In the first case, the course pro, the shop men and the caddies working from the pro shop receive first hand and constructive criticism; the pro learns the members' like and dislikes of the course, and the arrangements; the pro, naturally, is the most informed of the tournaments on the agenda, and can act as a clearing house for these.

In many instances, too, he can act as a go-between for the course superintendent, members and the board of directors for course arrangements and for tournament activity.

Junior Promotion Featured

Then too, with the recent spotlight nationally on the PGA's PRO-motion of junior golf, the drive has gained momentum greatly in Southern California, and it has been our pleasure to have done our bit in the construction of the Southern California Junior Assn.

Our program at the Virginia CC has been taken as a model for the new Junior Association, an auxiliary of the SCGA, PLGA and PGA.

Naturally, we're proud of that fact but



Ronny Robinson, age 4, gets a tip on his grip from his dad as Charye Lynne, mamma Robinson (Onie) and Joe Jr. look on.



MICKEY WRIGHT
Mission Valley CC, San Diego
Nat'l. Jr. Champ.

EDDIE MEYERSON
Brentwood CC, Los Angeles
Nat'l. Jr. Champ.

AL CHANDLER
Western Ave. GC, Los Angeles
Nat'l. Jr. Champ.

TOMMY JACOBS
Montebello CC, Los Angeles
Nat'l. Jr. Champ.

congratulations, champions!

To you, National Junior Champions of 1952, the membership of the Professional Golfers' Association of Southern California extends its warmest congratulations. We find particularly proud and happy that you have justified our faith in you, the time and efforts of our members who helped you develop into champions. Your brilliant showing—almost a clean sweep for Southern California—should give added impetus to our fast-growing P.G.A. Junior Golf Program. Your accomplishments will prove an inspiration to all other Juniors, showing them that with hard work and the experienced help of their Professionals, they too may become big golfers.

Again—congratulations, champions!

The Professional Golfers' Ass'n of Southern California



Southern California PGA used this advertisement to congratulate junior proteges who won four national junior championships in 1952. The four champions pictured above are: (L to R) Mickey Wright, Mission Valley CC, San Diego, USGA Girls' Champ; Eddie Meyerson, Brentwood CC, Nat'l. Hearst Junior; Al Chandler, Western Ave. GC, Nat'l. Caddie Champion, and Tommy Jacobs, Montebello CC, USJCC Nat'l. Jr. Champ. we hurry to assure our fellow PGA members that the junior program itself has many, many follow-up possibilities.

We conduct free instruction clinics twice a week the year around. The youngsters themselves handle their own tournaments, figure their own handicaps, and with an adult as a supervisor in the background, conduct all their own business. They even hold social affairs at our club several times a year, at which they invite their parents to be guests for a business session, dinner and an informal dance.

This keeps the youngsters interested and the parents enthused. The time spent by a pro in such promotion definitely results in good business.

So it simmers down to this—especially in my shop—that if you're going to meet and beat downtown competition, you've got to give your golfers all that the downtown shops give 'em, plus your knowledge of golf management, golf diplomacy in heeding the criticisms, tournament conduct and promotions, a wide-awake suggestive salesmanship program and—if possible—a junior program for members and guests.

Fitted Clubs on Trade-in Lift Grout's Sales

Dick Grout, pro at Butterfield CC (Chicago dist.), boosted club sales after mid-summer to a surprising extent with just one letter mailed to his members.

The letter is something for a pro to use as a hunch for his own advertising along in July. It read:

Dear Member:

IF YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOOD FOR YOU—There's a saying that has made the rounds!

Make your next rounds of golf the best by playing with equipment that you know is GOOD for you.

As your golf professional I know how to select irons and woods to fit you—and THEY must fit YOU, before you can ever fit your swing to them.

Are your hands on the small side? Have you strong wrists, short arms, tall frame—each factor must be diagnosed by your Doctor of Golf, before you ever actually have your own set of clubs. Don't be content to wear the other fellows "shoes".

Now is the best time to finally find your own set of clubs. I'll take over that old set and give you top money for it. We'll call the next couple of weeks, trade-in weeks. Let me see you soon. I'll take a good look at you, your swing, make you smile at the price you get for that old set—and finally start you toward the Tee with your knowing you got exactly—WHAT'S GOOD FOR YOU!

Cordially,
Dick Grout
(The Fitter)

Longhurst's "Golf Mixture" Is All-Star Reading

Henry Longhurst, well known to American golfers as a reporter with Walker and Ryder Cup teams, has collected his pieces in the Sunday Times and the Sporting Life of London, into a book entitled "Golf Mixture." It's subtitled "A Golfer's Bedside Book," but you will stay up late and enjoy every minute reading Longhurst's brilliant observations and comment, written in the liveliest literacy that shows in sports copy anywhere in the world these days.

The book is published by Werner Laurie of London. Its British price is 12s 6d. Probably about \$3 in the USA; your book dealer can get it for you.

There's a great deal of American stuff in it, including "A Hard Case from Texas," about Hogan and a classic among the sales of copy that have been written about Ben.