

# Buying Mood Livened by Obitz Shop Operation

By HERB GRAFFIS

"GOLF professionals' business could be increased a million dollars a year and the members would be happier about spending more if every pro store were run like this one."

That judgment was expressed by the sales manager of a company noted for its progressive selling operations. The executive was buying in the shop of Harry Obitz at Fred Waring's Shawnee Inn and Country Club, at Shawnee-on-Delaware, Pa., during the Western Seniors' tournament. While he was spending his money his wife was taking several dresses from the women's department of the Obitz shop to try on in the women's locker-room.

The sales manager's observation was one of many highly favorable appraisals of the Obitz shop operations made by businessmen members of many clubs during their Shawnee visit for the Western Seniors' event. The comments were especially interesting to anyone in the golf business as sure signs that members of first class clubs are more interested in the way pros do business than pros may realize.

## In a Spending Mood

Pro merchandising methods have improved greatly during the past six years but a general application of Obitz procedure would elevate the character of operations and profits by a substantial degree.

Of course, a home club pro could point out that Obitz is at a fine resort and has a large transient clientele in the mood for spending money for golf and with plenty of money to spend. But another way to look at this is that these customers coming into the Obitz shop have been—or should have been—exposed to pro merchandising service at many of the best clubs all over the country and should be almost completely supplied when they come to Shawnee.

The million dollar figure the inspecting sales executive picked out of the hat as the amount the Obitz policies and operations could increase pro business might not be far wrong. Any businessman pro who watches and hears the job done in the Obitz shop will be inclined to think that



Harry Obitz (L) and his all-star staff take time to keep in good playing form.

the most valuable business education hundreds of pros and assistants could get would be to spend a day as students and observers in the Obitz shop.

## Helps Other Pros

As a matter of fact, the Obitz staff does some selling work for other pros. Harry and Fred Waring make a strong point of developing cordial pro relations for Shawnee by boosting home club pros to members of those clubs who visit the Delaware Water Gap resort where the pro background goes back to the formative days of the PGA.

"I estimate that well over half of our shop business is in golf merchandise that possibly might have been bought in stores instead of pro shops and as pro sales propaganda, and for further extending our own excellent pro relations, my boys and I manage to get in some deft plugs for the expert advisory service of the pro at a buyer's home club," Obitz remarks. He continues:

"I know that people come here in a frame of mind that promotes spending for the enjoyment of golf, but I sometimes wonder why there isn't more attention given to creating that attitude at the buyer's home club.

"No pro at a private, public, semi-public or resort course is going to tell a buyer who wants something to wait until he gets

home. The buyer may be out of the mood and out of spare money then. But time after time I know we make sales simply because the buyer wasn't reminded of his needs at his home club.

"I insist that clubs be perfectly fitted to the buyer and a lot of our club selling is done by fitting sessions on the practice tee. There are cases of men and women players who certainly need clubs a whole lot more suitable to them than the clubs they are playing, but the clubs they really need I don't happen to have in stock. I carry a big stock of good clubs, and a stock with a wide range of specifications. But it wouldn't be good business for me to tie up a tremendous investment in a club stock that would supply an exact fit for everyone who came into my shop.

"There are very few resort visitors who will wait until I can send away and get factory stock or custom-made clubs. Certainly the smart thing to do then is to tell them what I know they need and tell them that they'd better wait until they get home and have their own pros take care of them.

"That policy probably accounts for the sale of at least 30 sets of woods or irons each year by pros whose members have visited Shawnee. I think the pros appreciate that and know it's a good build-up for pro expert service. The profit in good will is more important to us than trying to hog all the cash that's loose."

The basic principle of the Shawnee shop operations is, strangely enough, not to make money, but it's one of the biggest money-making pro shops in the world, notwithstanding a heavy pay-roll and limitations of traffic on an 18-hole resort course.

#### Spends to Make Money

Fred Waring, who bought Shawnee from the Worthington estate and rehabilitated and modernized it, has the top level policy of finest entertainment pervading the whole establishment. The house operations managed by Dick Quillen are first class country club standard. The ground maintenance, under the supervision of the veteran John Dimmick, are expertly handled for enjoyable golf; testing but not devastating. And in the pro department the foremost thought of Waring and Obitz is to see that the customer is made to feel that everything is done to make golf great entertainment. This policy pays off in volume that has made spending of money entertaining because there's very good value and genuinely sincere competent service returned for the money.

Here the pro department spends money

wisely to make money. One of the unique stunts that the Western Seniors will talk about for a long time is supplying free buckets of balls to be hit off a practice tee into the Binnickill, where caddies retrieve the balls from the shallow stream. The balls are beat-up and the shag caddie service is the main item of expense. Thus for smart spending of little money there's a practice, entertainment, and publicity stunt that indirectly and directly contributes to pro shop business and satisfaction with the whole place.

When some addict of practice comes to Shawnee and has forgotten his own shag bag and asks Harry about renting practice balls, Obitz answers, "Why don't you use mine?" The fellow does, and when he learns there's no charge for this personal favor you know what he is going to do. He buys something in the pro shop that shows a profit far greater than the rental on shag balls.

The same canny idea is used when some likely looking prospective customer comes to Shawnee for a business meeting, gets the itch to play and asks Harry if he can rent clubs for a round or for practice. Obitz says, "I'd be glad to have you use mine." Harry has three sets of his own clubs for that purpose. Again the pay-off



#### FRANCIS OUIMET HONORED

Francis Ouimet, Boston, former national open and national amateur champion, receives the annual Fred Waring Sportsmanship Award made by the Old Masters award committee. Presentation was made by Francis Elliott, New York, chairman of the committee, during ceremonies at Shawnee Inn and CC, Shawnee-On-Delaware, Pa., during the eighth annual Bill Waite Memorial tournament. Ouimet is shown above on left accepting award from Elliott.



Obitz keeps displays of apparel and accessories in immaculate condition.

is that the man feels happy and built-up about using the pro's own clubs and buys something in the shop.

The shop staff is an all-star outfit that Obitz has selected and trained. The line-up is Jack Ryan, Stan Dudas, Dick Farley, Al Nelson, Ronnie Ward, Rocco Coco and Joe Quincey. All the boys have astonishing memories for names and that's an impressive and profitable asset considering the number of players who come into and out of Shawnee. The members of the pro staff have to spend time on their own games in the evening when the teaching and the shop service work is done, or in the morning before the schedule begins.

#### Features Own Labels

Harry insists that his staff members keep in good golfing condition as an important element of their teaching must be in understandable demonstration. "The Swing's the Thing," the fundamental of the instruction by Obitz and his staff, is a slogan that Harry has on lighters and money clips that he presents discreetly to customers.

Obitz merchandise is uniformly first

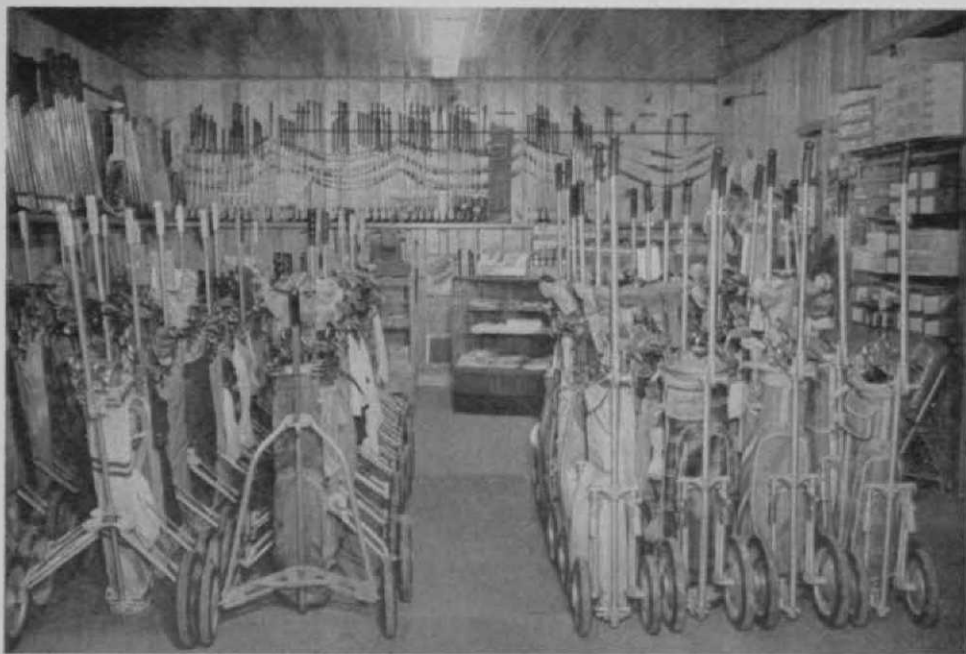
class and the surprise to many is that the prices often are lower than those for similar merchandise in highly rated retail stores. He has his own labels in shirts, sports coats, women's apparel, and ties. He sells a very large number of ties at \$3.50 and \$5. These ties are made by a woman in Massachusetts. These ties are 53 in. in length and are of materials and workmanship that correspond with \$6 and \$10 ties in well known men's wear stores.

His shoes have stamped in them: "Made expressly for Harry Obitz." He sells a great many "loafer" shoes as well as a big volume of golf shoes.

The packaging, in envelopes or boxes, is handsomely done in packages made especially for Obitz. The envelopes have the names of Harry's staff members printed on them.

The shop, of course, is immaculate and the merchandise is rearranged frequently. A women's apparel department is in one arm of the L-shaped shop. A barrel by the door leading from the shop to the first tee contains putters and specialty clubs.

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Above is a comparison of the area needed to store old and new types of golf carts. On the left are two rows of older type carts stored in an area 51 inches wide for the two rows. On the right are four rows of a new design in golf carts which, because they may be folded flat and still rolled, occupy an area of only 47 inches for four rows.

great things are in store for him. Geersten, who has carded a 73 in tournament play, comes by his sport naturally. He is a cousin of John Geersten, well-known San Francisco pro.

The emphasis of junior activity extends beyond golf into other fields of sports, a feature of which is junior swimming instruction. Try-outs for the city's junior swimming championship were held in the club's pool in August.

The success of Warren's persistent program of activity promotion is briefly reflected by the activity in his pro shop. The tidily arranged, neatly kept shopping center is well patronized by the members' families.

Like so many golf professionals, however, Wood is confronted with the perplexing problem of golf cart storage. The club has 450 members, the great percentage of them active golfers. With no permanent enclosure available outside his pro shop, Wood is confronted with the responsibility of storing 320 carts. As the accompanying photograph shows, there are times when almost all available pro shop space is occupied with the two-wheel pack ponies. He reports that the Con-Voy type of cart which folds to occupy approximately a

square foot of floor space, yet permits wheeling of carts for efficient storage arrangement, is enabling him to gradually overcome part of his congestion problem.

## BUYING MOOD LIVENED

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This barrel has the outside covered with wallpaper. That gives it eye-appeal. The paper is changed every few weeks. The barrel does an almost unbelievable volume of business.

### Assistants Are Praised

One man I heard say to Harry, about one of the Obitz assistants, "Congratulations on having such a nice young fellow working for you." What that remark amounted to was the customer thanking Harry for giving him the opportunity to spend his money pleasantly.

Obitz told me after the customer had left: "That's what makes me proud of these boys of mine. They have brains and class and enjoy their work. I think I have really the best balanced top grade pro shop staff there is anywhere in the country. I believe it's a great thing for the club and the pro to have a customer commend an

assistant. It shows evidence that the pro has executive capacity and spends time and thought training his team-mates. Any sales manager who gets the compliments from his customers about his salesmen that I do is lucky."

In a small room off Harry's shop is his office. "The most important place in the shop. There I can plan, think and do the paper work. It's the place where I get groundwork laid for proper action," Obitz says. "I make notes. That keeps me from letting some remark about what a man needs or wants being forgotten. That habit has helped me make many sales."

Over Harry's desk is a sign that is pretty much the key to his operations. The sign reads:

**DO IT**

**If it's worth doing . . . DO IT!**

**If it concerns me . . . DO IT!**

**If it concerns you . . . DO IT!**

**If it helps someone else . . . DO IT!**

**If you like it . . . DO IT!**

**Even tho' you don't like it . . . DO IT!**

**And get it done . . . NOW**

**Not five minutes later.**

**Harry Obitz.**

A lot of pro shops would increase business and player pleasure by adopting the Obitz policies and practices, "Now and not five minutes later."

## SHORT GOLF COURSES

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fill was required. A few thousand yards were obtained from surrounding high land. On the inspiration of Mr. Zinkus additional fill was obtained by digging a moat 40 to 50 feet wide and about six feet deep around three sides of the course. This fill together with that from surrounding areas brought the general level up 2 or 3 feet above the old level with greens some 2 feet above this. The moat now filled with clear fresh water from a shallow stream that previously cut across the property makes a very beautiful boundary to the course.

Experience on other courses has pointed out the need for relatively large greens on a floodlit course and those on Seaview have been built accordingly. Another fact determined by experience is that greens on floodlit courses stand up much better under the exceedingly heavy traffic if great care is taken in designing each in relation to the following tee. While the design varies for each hole it is important that the green be so shaped that the pin can always be placed to encourage traffic to the next tee

to leave the green as soon as possible. Observation of this point at Seaview will save untold headaches in years to come in greens maintenance.

The main cost items to consider in building a short floodlit course are the greens, fairways, floodlights and wiring, water system, cabin, fencing, parking lot, course furnishings, playing and maintenance equipment. With careful design and proper supervision a high quality 9-hole floodlit course can be installed on suitable land for \$9,000 to \$13,000 and an 18-hole layout for \$15,000 to \$22,000. These figures do not include real estate. With ideal soil and terrain they can at times be substantially reduced.

### Short Courses Are Money Makers

A short golf course is a profitable business. Space does not permit listing all the locations in which one might be built as a valuable adjunct to another business or as a non-profit recreational facility for industries providing employee recreational programs.

We know that a broad cross section of the population will play and enjoy short golf when facilities are available. Undoubtedly we can expect the development of a substantial number of these attractive installations in all parts of the country in the next few years.

## ADVANCES IN TURF

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the primary cause of injury.

Leaf spot of the helminthosporium type was very bad on the greens at a club in western New York during May. No fungicide would stop it. Apparently the same thing happened in 1952 and made the greens bad for play. The turf was badly thatched and contained considerable Virginia bent. A test showed the soil to be very acid and low in available magnesium and potash. The greens were cross aerified, part of the grass removed with a Verticut, and dolomitic type lime of a high magnesium content was applied. The new fertilizer program included the more generous use of potash. These things helped the grass stage a comeback and enabled fungicide to perform as expected.

### Fairy Ring New Problem

The fairy ring problem is a worthy one for somebody to study and solve because the rings seem to be on the increase in putting greens. As yet no quick cure is known. The causal organism resides in the soil and is of the mushroom type. This