

Best Pro Shop Selling Ideas of '53 Told by Salesmen

(Salesmen's reports of progressive pro merchandising methods observed in 1953 continued from October, 1953 *Golfdom*.)

Table Also Displays Bags — Toland

Bill Toland of the staff of E. J. Smith & Sons Co., Charlotte, N. C., says that one of the most effective selling ideas he has seen in pro shops is the display table in the shop of Jack Isaacs at Langley Air Force Base, Va.

Isaacs designed a display table approximately 7 ft. in diameter which is located in the middle of his shop.

The top of the table is of heavy plywood and the frame is of pipe. The table has 8 legs.

Around the perimeter of this table and about 2 in. from the bottom edge he has hung strong hooks. He displays 18 or 20 bags on these hooks. This arrangement keeps the bags off the floor, has them convenient for inspection, and they are

goes to his club or pay-play course. The "golf store," which Cliff points out is what Harry Bassler correctly calls his shop, is the main new idea in golf merchandising.

Then Castle remarks:

"One thing in particular that the pro has done impresses me. That is the systematic manner in which he now maintains his glove stock. In earlier days the gloves were usually piled together in a case. With repeated handling they became badly soiled. We have watched the pro fumble around for several minutes without finding the size he was looking for. Not so today. The modern pro has a case which keeps the women's gloves separated from the men's, and he can tell at a glance when his stock is low on a certain size or style. As a result he now sells a great many more gloves with about one-tenth the time per sale.

"Three highly profitable items which today account for a good volume of business in most pro shops were, up until just a few years ago, found in relatively few shops. These are shoes, hats and caps, and sport shirts. True, some shops have handled golf shoes for a good many years. However, it is only in recent years that they have done so with a margin of profit comparable to that shown by other items stocked. Today the pro shops do the bulk of the golf shoe business. Those enjoying the most of this lucrative trade are the ones which have made an effort to put their shoe stock systematically into one 'department' of their shops.

"In the matter of golf shoes we like to think that we have had some small part in bringing this item to its present place of importance in the modern golf shops of our area. A good many shops featuring shoes felt that only top grades should be handled, and that anything of low or moderate price would be of little interest to the members generally. This idea was modified when we were able to bring out a moccasin style golf shoe at a moderate price. An appropriate sign was delivered with the initial order of shoes, and when properly placed in the shoe 'department' it afforded the pro the opportunity of



Pro shop display table designed by Jack Isaacs.

not falling down every time somebody touches one.

On top of the table Jack has an attractive pyramid display which is surrounded by shirts, caps and other golf merchandise.

Cliff Castle, pro sales representative with Los Angeles headquarters, says that this year more than ever before during his 40-some years of selling to pros, he's noticed that pro shops are developing into the modern well-stocked "golf store" offering everything a golfer needs when he

selling more shoes of all grades. As a result, the golfer who formerly bought his shoes at a chain shoe store because of the lower price now patronizes his pro, who can better know his problems and fill his needs.

"The merchandising of hats and caps was given an added impetus about two years ago when a large golf merchandise distributor in Florida brought out a multiple-arm display rack. This put hats and caps right out on the shop floor where members could make their own selection. One pro told me this method had increased his hat and cap sales 300%.

"Sport shirts are to be found in all present day golf shops. In our particular area — California — they are able to meet the competition of most of the stores since local manufacturers call on the golf shops direct. Southern California being a leader in sport shirt production, it is easy to understand how some of our golf shops can carry such a variety of styles and colors.

"Most modern and progressive clubs have realized the need for larger pro shops. More spacious shops, modern fixtures, and a good stock of all the wanted items go a long way toward keeping the club member happy. In our estimation some of the merchandising methods used by many of our large and successful stores could be put to use by the pro shop. Take discontinued or 'dead' items for instance. Moving out such merchandise at cost or even below would give the member a chance at occasional bargains and at the same time make room for new models.

"The pro, with his modern 'Golf Store,' is in the best possible position to serve the needs of his golfers. The public generally is beginning to realize this more and more."

Boxes Help Club Sales — Weaver

George Weaver, for A. G. Spalding & Bros. in New England, tells of a new way of displaying and selling clubs that George Apple, pro at Sagamore Springs GC, Lynnfield, Mass., uses very successfully.

Sagamore Springs is a public course so Apple gets many who are inquiring price-conscious shoppers.

Weaver reports that Apple had display boxes for woods and irons made up of wood and painted in pastel colors, blue, green, red, yellow, etc. At the bottom of these display boxes he has neat signs printed, giving full details of the merchandise displayed, so that prospective buyers looking around in the shop can look the clubs over and get all the information pertaining to them.

"This display is most attractive and un-

questionably speeds up his time in selling.

"He also deals in a great number of second-hand sets and these are all in uniform smaller boxes with the story printed on the ends.

"Apple's idea is to have no lost time in having everything at the prospective purchaser's finger tips."

Clubs' New Idea of Shops—Walker

Johnnie Walker, MacGregor Golf's man in the Heart of America, says the biggest idea he's noticed in pro selling this year is the realization by club officials that a good pro shop is absolutely essential in correctly serving players.

"The members or fee course players are the ones who primarily benefit from a first-class pro shop. Now many people are judging the class of the club by the class of the pro shop.

"This accounts for the number of new pro shops clubs have built in the past few years. In every case the pros in the new shops have done much more business than they did in the old places. That is a plain indication the old places were not suitable for adequately taking care of the golfers.

"The new shops have been able to extend their merchandise. This is especially evident in the case of sportswear for women. This is bringing in business far beyond the welcome volume of the women's buying for their own use. Many times the women buy for men."

Women's Pride Aroused — Vinton

Ross Vinton of Burke Golf believes that this year has been unusually productive of smart pro merchandising ideas. He regards the advance in promotion of women's clubs as possibly the main development.

Says Vinton:

"Pros are making great progress in arousing women's pride in their golf clubs. This has accounted for marked improvement in golf scoring by women members and women fee course players. At a number of clubs I used to wonder why the women were so attractively dressed for golf but played with such dowdy old clubs. A variety of ingenious and subtle means have been employed by pro merchants to create this new and proper balance of playing equipment and attire but I am sure that the most effective has been the establishment of women's departments in pro shop club displays.

"Something else that has been an improvement in the smaller pro shops especially has been putting in one or two comfortable chairs to make the place look

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Definition 18—A marker should not lift the ball or mark its position.

Rule 21-2,3—Clarified to provide that strokes played with a wrong ball do not count in the player's score.

Rule 36-1—Combining match play and stroke play prohibited.

Rule 37-3—Clarified to prohibit practice on course before starting in stroke play.

In addition, Definitions 17, 20, 21, 22 and 26 and Rules 9, 27, 30, 32, 35, 40 and 41 have been slightly reworded.

National Golf Fund Allots \$68,000

NATIONAL GOLF FUND, INC., at its annual meeting during the PGA annual convention, approved distribution of \$68,000 from National Golf Day funds contributed by U. S. golfers to the nationwide event co-sponsored by Life magazine and the PGA.

Fund distribution is subject to recipient organizations qualifying under internal revenue regulations.

Largest amount, \$25,000, went to 14 caddie scholarship funds, headed by Western Golf Assn. Evans scholarship fund. WGA will handle distribution on basis of present scholarship commitment ratio, among Detroit, Mass., Wis., Western Pa., Cleveland, Rhode Island, Pacific Northwest, Illinois Women's GA, Omaha, Maine, Minn., and Kansas City GA caddie scholarship funds.

PGA educational and benevolent funds got \$16,000. Green Section of USGA got \$10,000 to be employed for regional and coordinated research. US Junior Chamber of Commerce got \$10,000 of which \$7,000 is earmarked for its national junior championship and \$3,000 for sending USGA, Western GA and USJCC junior champions to British junior championship.

American Women's Volunteer Services got \$3000 for its Swing Club program at vets hospitals and military establishments. Possibilities Unlimited tournament for disabled vets and civilians got \$2,000. Middle Atlantic Blind Golfers' Assn. and United States Blind Golfers' Assn. each got \$1,000.

After split of proceeds of 1952 and 1953 National Golf Days between USO and National Golf Fund, distribution of \$20,000 from 1952 "Beat Hogan" event and \$68,000 allotted at National Golf Fund, Inc. at December meeting, \$5,000 remains in the fund.

Officers, headed by Fred L. Riggin, Sr., Port Huron, Mich., were re-elected.

Rutgers Turf Course Has Packed Program, Jan. 18-22

Ralph E. Engel, Rutgers university turf specialist, in releasing program for Rutgers' annual turf short course to be held at the university, New Brunswick, N. J., Jan. 18-22, says the enlarged program requires some separate sessions for golf course supts. and for the group interested in other uses of fine turf. There will be several general sessions.

The golf sessions will feature 1953 fungicide trials, "Is fairway renovation paying?"", watering practices, clover control studies, performance of 18 bentgrasses cut to ¼ in., turf problems in the northeast and a report on golf course maintenance operation in 1953.

N. J. experts plus John Cornman, O. J. Noer, Fred Grau and Al Radko will present the program. Applications for enrollment should be sent to Westervelt Griffin, Office of Director of Resident Instruction, Rutgers university, New Brunswick, N. J.

PGA Has Business School Program for Dunedin

PGA announces program for its business course sessions at PGA National GC, Dunedin, Fla. Sessions, unless otherwise designated, will be exclusively for PGA members. Seminars will be conducted by the PGA Teaching committee one evening each week.

Business course sessions will be held Mondays starting Jan. 11 and ending with the Feb. 22 session. There will be an extra session Friday, Feb. 12 on "Bookkeeping, Insurance, Inventory, Finance."

Subjects and speakers already assigned: Starting Beginners in Golf; Variations in Sound Methods of the Golf Swing; Our Experiences with Our Golf Instruction (Betsy Rawls and Betty McKinnon); Golf after 50; Public Relations and Merchandising; Bookkeeping — Insurance — Inventory — Finance; Visual Aids in Teaching; Future Planning for Dunedin (Leo Grady and Emil Beck).

BEST SELLING IDEAS

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more inviting and to keep tired golfers resting and looking around instead of virtually crowding them out. Rearrangement of small shops to make them look roomy and orderly has been quite an achievement.

"One of the real selling jobs I've noticed this year was done by a pro who was hav-

ing trouble getting bag rack customers. He observed bags standing outside the locker room door before being put in cars, instead of going into the pro shop for cleaning and storage after the game.

"So this pro sent a boy out to clean the clubs and stay there until the owner of the clubs got ready to leave, then put the clubs in the man's car.

"Some members resented this but the pro told them that it was his job to keep their clubs clean and in good playing condition, and as members of a good club they had this service due them. Favorable comment of guests who also got this service stilled the complaints of members who started to complain loudly.

"It wasn't long before either the samples of the service or embarrassment or simple education got almost 100 per cent club cleaning service.

"Despite difficulty of getting good club-cleaning boys I have noticed this year that pros generally are training and supervising their club cleaners better. There is still plenty of room for improvement. I think that some pros may be dismayed to see ball paint marks on clubs that are supposed to have been cleaned, dirt in the grooves of irons, grips in bad condition and minor repairs receiving no attention. In these cases the member isn't getting what he pays for.

"The pro knows that wood and iron faces out of good condition can throw a ball out of line from 15 to 50 yards, but generally the member doesn't know this."

Work League Golfers — Schlax

Earle Schlax, Kroydon representative, sees sales prospects among industrial league golfers as one of the biggest new developments in pro merchandising. Schlax is a veteran expert appraiser of profitable selling ideas for pros. In *GOLFDOM*'s first issue, February 1927, he had an article on successful pro merchandising that forecast general use of ideas that have made millions of dollars for pros.

Now Earle observes:

"Pros located at clubs in industrial areas who have the facilities to handle the shop leagues have a vast sales potential. In order to crack this market the pro has to do promotional work which starts as soon as the leagues are signed up and even before play starts.

"In Cleveland's Eastside there are six courses where industrial leagues run a full summer schedule. The pros, Pat LaConte, Mayfield Heights GC; Ralph Bond and Ed Garfield, Lyndhurst GC; Bud Baker, Lost

Nation CC; John Austin, Black Brook CC; Gordon and Art Alves, Willowick CC; and Grange Alves, Grantwood CC, have their spring merchandise shipped early in the spring and on display. Knowing what leagues are signed for the year they get letters to the different men who handle the golf activities in the various plants.

"Some of the firms have women's leagues so naturally a letter goes to the party in charge so as not to overlook this market. The letter offers any assistance the pro can give in drawing up a schedule of events and invites all players to come out for a pre-season showing of this year's new merchandise.

"This preliminary promotion work pays off. The pros are able to get much closer to the league players. The players themselves are at the present writing drawing down nice checks each week and when they buy golf merchandise of any sort, they buy the best. The pro who takes the trouble to make them welcome as individuals and not just a member of another one of those golf leagues will cash in nicely as any of the above plutocrats will testify."

Educate Fee Player — Pezzullo

From the angle of the salesman who deals directly with the buyer of golf merchandise, Harry Pezzullo, pro at Mission Hills GC, Chicago dist., semi-public course, says that making pro shop selling service conspicuously "special" has been his most profitable idea of the year.

"It's been the most profitable idea for the buyers, too," says Pezzullo. He relates: "I make quite a point of examining the clubs of players at our semi-public course. Then I compare a customer's store-line club with a pro grade club. The balance, weight, swing weight, shafts, grips, finish, details of fine workmanship, coordination of woods and irons and fitting to the user's physical features and type of swing make subjects of a most interesting, educational and convincing nature.

"When the player learns for the first time what he—or she—really should have they want to buy instead of have to be sold.

"This idea also applies to trade-in clubs.

"Then with a larger stock of clubs and of good bags to carry the clubs, purchasing is further facilitated.

"Many of us in pro golf talk about pro service when we haven't given the first, most important of pro services, informing the player of exactly what should be bought for best performance with clubs."