

## Women's Buying to Bring Pro Shop Sales Boom

**PRO BUSINESS LEADERS SAY WHEN PROS LEARN HOW TO GO AFTER WOMEN'S PLAYING EQUIPMENT SALES THEY'LL BE RICHLY REPAID FOR SMARTER BUSINESS.**

By **HERB GRAFFIS**

**T**HE NEXT big increase in pro shop business will come from women golfers.

That is the forecast of successful pro businessmen in all parts of the U. S. They see the prospects of an increase in sales to women golfers comparable to the big boost in shop volume resulting from apparel and shoe sales.

In the opinions of many pros the women were to a considerable extent responsible for the development of pro shop apparel business. In numerous cases pros' wives as purchasing agents did such good jobs of selecting good buys of apparel that they established pro shops soundly as style and value leaders. This work was pioneered by pros' wives during World War II when very little golf playing merchandise was available and pros' wives running shops in the absence of their husbands in military service or war work figured out ways to make the shops profitable.

Amateur golfers' wives noting the value of pro shop merchandise that they could compare with merchandise they had bought elsewhere for their husbands, gave pro shop apparel the O.K. it needed to get the buying confidence of men. Most men don't know apparel values. Women do.

### **Women Don't Know Club Values**

However, women rarely have the slightest idea of values in golf playing equip-

ment and therein lies the weak spot and the necessity of education in increasing pro shop sales to women. Women may go anyplace to buy clubs entirely on a price basis and with no idea at all of the value of the clubs or their fitness for the user.

Furthermore a woman will boast about what she got "cheaper" and have no hesitancy about displaying her low priced woods and irons at her golf club. A man member, unless he's one of the "buy it wholesale" type, would be somewhat embarrassed to brag about beating the pro out of a sale.

The feminine idea is that if the pro didn't sell her the clubs he was wrong and he should do the worrying.

### **Women's Play Ahead of Sales**

At many private clubs women's play has increased 50 per cent over 1948. At semi-private and public courses pros estimate women's play has increased 25 to 30 per cent in the past five years.

Exact figures on the increase in the number of women playing and the number of rounds they played last year as compared with 1948 are not known. As near as GOLFDOM can learn from checking with pros in various sections there are about 25 per cent more women in the U. S. playing than five years ago and they're playing about 30 per cent more golf.

The increase in women's club sales



### NCR EMPLOYEES OFFICIALLY OPEN NEW COURSES

Louise Suggs, Marlene Bauer, Toney Penna and Jimmy Demaret, play the first official round of the National Cash Register Co. championship South course. The 9th green and the clubhouse are in the background. Some of the thousands of NCR golfers who now are playing the two 18s Dick Wilson designed and built view the shotmaking of the exhibition quartette.

hasn't been in direct proportion to the increase in women's play, except at comparatively few pro shops.

This disparity is a mystery to many pros as they work hard to help women golfers and women's golf committees and enjoy the respect and good will of women golfers. But the sales simply haven't kept pace.

#### Ball Sales to Women Lag

Ball sales especially haven't gone ahead with women. Pros marvel at the way women on Ladies' Days will tee beat-up balls that would have been in the shag bags of men players rounds before.

In this connection it is interesting to hear the reports of a number of pros who tell that one lower compression tough cover ball branded for women has increased in sales very noticeably this year although it hasn't been pushed. Other manufacturers are considering labeling, packaging and advertising golf balls made for women's play. Years ago U. S. Rubber had the Queen Royal but the market then didn't prove big enough or responsive enough so the ball was retired from the line.

#### Women's Shop Traffic Low

Pros who have done particularly well in getting women's business say the first job is to get more women's traffic into the shop.

Al Ciuci, Spencer Murphy, Mrs. Orville

Chapin, Mrs. Ed Furgol, Lou Strong, Jerry Glynn, Graham Ross, Pat Markovich and George Lake, among others who have worked up a good percentage of women's business in pro shops, say that when women golfers get into the men golfer's custom of dropping into pro shops to look around the main part of the women's sales problem is solved.

The matters of stocks and displays are less difficult.

Stocking to increase women's business usually calls for attention to wider price ranges, wood sets of two or three clubs and iron sets of five or seven clubs.

What some pros don't seem to realize is that women who score from 95 to 110 are not going to be eager to spend \$140 to \$175 for golf clubs. Their husbands may spend for top grade complete sets for the wives (and that's generally the case of the top grade sales) but the women haven't been educated to see the value.

Pro salesmen often say bluntly that they're surprised that some pros sell as many women's clubs as they do because these pros never display prices on merchandise. Most women golfers are price shoppers. They'll go into a store and see price tags conspicuously on sets of clubs, then buy and bring the clubs back to their own courses where the pros probably had—or could get—something better for the same price but never had gone to the

trouble of letting women know the pro shop could compete on price.

#### Women's Locker-room Displays

One of the smartest merchants in golf business says that where the pros are missing their biggest bet in women's golf market development is by failure to display merchandise in women's locker-rooms at their clubs.

He says such displays, frequently changed, and always featuring some moderately priced item such as golf gloves or headcovers, will get women into the habit of thinking of the pro shop as a shopping place.

Now, he says, about half the women who go into pro shops go in principally to mark scores on their handicap cards. He adds that any pro who doesn't have the handicap card rack located where a good display of some feature merchandise catches the eye can't call himself a golf businessman.

Several pros with whom we've talked and corresponded lately say the quickest growing part of their club business is that of girls' clubs. They say that now a girl who is around 15 years old has grown about as tall as she'll be and her folks can start her with a good open set of clubs knowing that she won't outgrow them. Moderate-priced clubs for women seem to be selling more to members'

daughters than to their wives at many pro shops.

#### Girls' Golf "Little Leagues"

At the National Open I was chatting about business with some home club pros when one of them came up with an interesting idea. He said that there was a lot of attention being given to boys' Little League baseball in his community and the little girls from about 9 to 14 feel left out.

This pro has started a Little League of girls' golf at his club and the experiment is catching on with the youngsters and their parents. He noted that an amusing part of the venture to date is that the little boys, seeing that the girls are having a competition that attracts attention, now want a Little League golf of their own.

#### Green Section Reports on Research, Club Service

CHAIRMEN, superintendents and others on USGA Green Section committee met at Baltusrol June 16 for dinner, listening to tape-recorded reports of Green Section regional directors, and a general discussion.

Dick Garlington, chmn. Green Section committee, and Dick Tufts, former chmn., told of the USGA service plan now being used by 299 clubs to decided satisfaction of superintendents, chairmen, and club officials and players. Research, through USGA coordination and allotment and supervision of various grants, is not only increased over previous years but is in sharper focus on regional conditions.

Alex Radko, northeastern director of the Green Section, presented an impressive map of research projects now in operation. This map and other information presented at the meeting brought out plainly the value of the Green Section's help to courses of all sizes. It was emphasized by the Green Section regional directors that during a service job at any club the supt. and chairman both should be present.

Norman Johnson, Pres., Golf Course Supts.' Assn. of America read the GCSA Education committee resolutions approving the Green Section Regional Turf Service plan, and pledged fullest cooperation in extending the joint work of the USGA and GCSA for all possible improvement in course maintenance.

Garlington said that the USGA hopes to be able to open Green Section regional offices in New England, Mid-Atlantic and Midwest territories in 1955.



#### WATCH THE FORDS GO BUY 500 ENTRIES IN GOLF DAY

Ford Motor Co. Ford Division at Detroit has 14 golf leagues and they led nation's industrial golfers with 500 entries in National Golf Day competition against Hogan. Fred Chalfant of Ford's Employees Services dept. on the right is turning over the \$500 check to Fred Riffin, Sr., Pres., National Golf Fund, Inc. Next to Riffin is Dale Bourisseau of Possibilities Unlimited, one of the beneficiaries of the fund, and alongside Dale is Horton Smith, Pres., PGA, co-sponsor with Life magazine of National Golf Day. There are 64 golf leagues with 2500 members in all Ford plants in Detroit.