

Apparel Merchandising Big Booster of Shop Revenue

By ERNIE SABAYRAC

LAST YEAR at about this time, it was a great honor for me to be able to make a speech on Sportswear Merchandising at the National PGA meeting. The speech had to do with the pros' potentialities in the sale of sportswear and I harped upon the theme that there was a business lying at their doors that could double their volume. I quoted figures on each item of apparel a member wore during the actual playing of golf at his club.

I very plainly pointed out that certainly I wasn't in favor of a pro switching his merchandising accent from playing equipment to sportswear. That is the furthest thing from my mind. The pros' first job is to provide his members with clubs, balls and bags. That's the source of the money enabling him to finance an apparel merchandising program in your shop. Certainly it takes money to get into any business and I have no secrets as to how you can get into the apparel business without investing some of your money.

I must confess that I was quite pleased that those who were in business other than being golf pros, were highly complimentary about my speech. Some of the golf pros also warmly endorsed it. Still I was disappointed that other golf pros did not particularly take any heed or offer any comments, good or bad, about the speech and frankly, I was looking for the reaction.

I made a mental note of every golf pro who went out of his way to compliment me and then looked at our books and found out that each one was doing a highly successful job of merchandising apparel. To me that proves conclusively that the job can be done, if done in the proper manner.

Then I looked over the group of those who had nothing particular to say or showed not too much interest in what I had to say and I found that there was a different breed altogether. I am not trying to belittle any one of those pros because certainly each must be a very successful professional at his own club and in his community or he certainly wouldn't be seen at the national PGA meeting. But

I did not feel that those particular pros really, as of yet, had any real idea or wanted to get into the real facts of the profit they are missing.

Success Story

In our own small way my sales organization has given a demonstration of profit in pro shop retailing of golf apparel.

My organization started with myself only, taking on a prominent shoe line for the mid-west territory. Then we added a shirt line from the west coast and then began a series of not only adding lines, but adding salesmen here, there and everywhere until now my sales organization travels the entire country calling on golf pros in every one of our 48 states and we are doing nicely, thank you. I don't mind telling you that when we started 4 years ago my total volume with golf pro shops was \$300,000 gross business mainly with the one shoe line in a few select mid-west States.

Last year in the October issue of this very magazine you were probably startled to see a success story of our organization selling well over a million dollars worth of apparel to golf pros wholesale-wise, meaning actually that in retail value there was probably an average of \$1,600,000.00 worth of business done. This year on another page somewhere in this same magazine you will see our second success story which we hope to be able to improve on every year. This story tells that we have done \$1,750,000.00 worth of business in apparel exclusively to the golf pros. This means that the pros have sold retail approximately \$2,800,000.00 worth of our apparel. It means there is a million dollars worth of profit divided among the pros in all parts of the country. The part that I think you ought to get concerned about is how much you ended up with in your own pocket as profit from the sale of apparel.

Now you would probably like to know how you could be successful in the actual merchandising of apparel in your own shop. Certainly it will add to your total annual profit.

What Well-Dressed Golfer Spends

To brief you on my statistics as to the potentials per member of your club in the sale of apparel so we will have a basis to work on, I'd like to point out again what is possible to sell each member of your club because I think you'll agree that the items mentioned are items that you personally see him wear every day and use up or wear out during the course of the season.

You will notice that we have not quoted the most expensive prices for any item of apparel, but only the average price that we consider for medium to a little better than medium grade apparel which is certainly what your members are wearing.

1 Pair of shoes	\$20.00
3 Pair of Socks	6.00
3 Pair of Slacks	45.00
2 Belts	5.00
4 Shirts	20.00
1 Jacket	10.00
1 Sweater	10.00
3 Caps	6.00
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	\$122.00

You can see that that totals \$122 a year which is business we feel you can get from your membership from the average guy who is doing business with you.

And we haven't even said anything about the ladies! They buy more apparel than men—for they often buy items for their men as well as themselves.

Apparel is something that the man is buying every year currently because we now are living in a fashion world. You know that as well as I. You certainly read enough to know that there are more sport shirts and slacks sold today than there are actual dress shirts and suits. That is a fact and you can take that from any apparel trade journal. That means also that every day or every week you can punch sales up on your cash register for apparel, a vitally important pro income factor compared to the infrequency of sale of club sets and sturdy bags, the replacement period for which is several years.

Let me emphasize that I don't want my good club and bag selling friends to be peeved at the above statements. We want you in the golf club, ball and bag business with all of your energy because you have by now set up a reputation with your own pro members of selling the finest playing equipment available and that background of selling that fine merchandise provided

by the finest manufacturers of equipment today is going to help you sell apparel. The golfers have respect for you because you have sold them very fine merchandise and when they walk into your shop and see names that are just as big on apparel as your fine golf equipment names are on the equipment that you are selling, it automatically makes the selling of apparel much easier in your shop.

How to Sell Apparel

Since we hope we have pointed out to you logically what the potential is in the apparel business, we feel that some tips to you are in order on how to go about it. First of all, you must invest your money in stock and inventory. If you will note, the finest stores in the country today are doing a big job in turnover on apparel. You can see the reason why and it is because the merchandise is right in that particular store with a large variety of sizes, colors, fashions, etc.

Many years ago I started out selling golf clubs for one of the nation's leading manufacturers. At that time, which was in the middle 30's, I heard from pros "I can't sell in competition to the store. The member goes down to the store and buys his merchandise there." I kept pleading and begging and telling that there was no reason for the member to go down town to buy from the stores. I told pros that the simple reason that a member went downtown to a store to buy clubs was because the store had a big variety of different models, weights, lengths, etc. in a price range.

It took the golf club manufacturers some time to put that point over to pros generally but it did finally connect and as a result today the department stores don't do too well on high quality clubs simply because clubs are in the pro shops today in depth and variety of stock. That, plus your professional background of being able to prescribe the precise needs for the user's playing ability makes a sale in your pro shop of the finest clubs today a cinch.

I'm preaching the same tune as far as apparel is concerned. I'm telling you right now that you have the opportunity today of buying the finest merchandise in the way of apparel that is for sale in this country. You can get lines of varied apparel that any store in your city would be most happy to tie up for sale in their shops.

When we put this story to our pro clientele some have several alibis for not entering progressively into this business. I'll list a few:

1. "I haven't got the room."
2. "I have someone in my club who sells haberdashery downtown and it might hurt his feelings."
3. "It is outside my professional field to be in the sportswear business; they hired me to be a golf pro."

I think I have your answer for all of them! First of all you'd be surprised by looking into your local suburban neighborhood how much volume is done in spaces that are much smaller than yours. You'd be surprised how much room you can find when you know there is a dollar to be made by providing room for it. Where there's a will there's a way and I've never seen any pro shop yet that was so small that you couldn't do just as much apparel business as golf club business and combine them both at the same time.

Then your answer to No. 2. The guy who is downtown in the haberdashery business who you are trying not to interfere with is not sending you a monthly check for the upkeep of your family. Anyone who thinks there is any member of any certain club who is tying up the entire membership's buying volume in their own store is certainly 1000% wrong. The spirit of competition is what made the United States strong today and if this man is a better competitor than you are by virtue of the fact that he has better lines to sell at better prices and can offer better service, then he is entitled to the business. If he doesn't have that, then you are entitled to what you can get for the many services that you can render.

In your answer to No. 3, I think that when any golf pro has been hired he certainly is hired primarily for his professional ability to conduct a job which includes teaching the membership, conducting the various events which takes professional skill and above all, to provide service for the membership.

I maintain that the stocking of apparel and clubs and anything that you stock in your shop is a service as well as a business for yourself. There are many, many times that I know where a member has walked out to his shop minus a shirt, socks, etc., who had expected to be able to find it in his shop. It's a service that you give to your membership and the wonderful part about it is that it's a profit-

able service to you. I think we can all look around us here in recent times and see where the guy who had the one-track mind as a golf professional is missing at a faster rate than ever before.

The pro who not only offers the many professional services that he was hired to give plus the pro who maintains a well-stocked shop for the convenience and service of his membership is the pro today who is staying on the job a lot longer. He is the pro who is showing the membership that he is a good solid business man and is taking advantage of the many facilities offered him to be a business man.

Pick merchandise for your shop that has nationally branded labels, merchandise that can be found in the finest stores in town because you need that type of authenticity to show that you have the proper value for sale in your pro shop. A coat of paint brightening up the interior of your Pro Shop would definitely add quite a bit to the sales appeal of the merchandise around it. The open display of your many items of apparel **ALL DEFINITELY MARKED WITH THE RETAIL PRICE ON EACH ITEM**, is most important.

That, plus the constant consultation with the salesman who is servicing your account with these various lines, to be sure that you are buying the proper styles in the proper amounts, should make your merchandising of apparel quite simple.

What If You're Stuck?

We always hear the story of the guy who is wondering if he is going to get stuck with the merchandise at the end of the year. Some pros don't feel that they should ever at any time clear their inventory. This is not thinking as witness your finest stores downtown. Many pros will tell us that if they hold a sale the members wait for it. There I can only tell you that there isn't a fine store in the country today selling merchandise that does not hold sales to clear out inventory and I can tell you they couldn't keep their doors open on sales only.

Apparel buying is done on the spur of the moment, a fashion or style hits right away and when the retail price is around \$5 to \$10 the buyer certainly is not going to wait until you put it on sale.

Aside from that there are so many ways that you can deplete the inventory that you have left at the end of the year. If it is very small then I suggest you don't try to sell it at your golf club.

Certainly you have many neighbors, help at the club, caddies, etc. who would be very happy to pick it up at cost price. You certainly can't lose any money selling it at what it cost you. And if you do get your money back you are simply doing good business because you have that money available to spend for the latest styles that are being offered at that particular time.

Hiring Profitable Help

As we go around the country we find that probably the weakest point in any pro's merchandising program is the fact that he does not have capable help in his shop while he is out teaching and conducting the various activities of the club.

I think that is very poor business and it certainly costs a lot of money. There is no question that a pro hire some very capable help that doesn't have to come out of the clubroom or the caddy ranks for let's say \$300 a month and a probably 5% commission on what that person sells himself. In many cases you are paying at least \$200 a month for the same services.

Let's look at it this way: For another \$100 a month the chances are you can hire someone who is capable enough to keep some books for you at the same time he is doing a grand job of keeping your merchandise saleable and actually selling it and reordering it for the membership. A bookkeeper in many cases is hired on the outside by a golf pro for fees anywhere from \$20 to \$100 a month, so why not convert that into a very capable person who will always be in your pro shop and give you the extra advantage of having a bookkeeper in your shop all during the day rather than have to wait for him at the end of the month to pick up all your odds and ends of business already transpired.

Paint the back of your shop once in a while. Most bag-rack and workrooms that members see are dreary and dusty-looking and the members may think the pro has swept the dust under the rug.

Golf clubs can make good use of more suggestion boxes to gather ideas for the good of the club. A box in the pro shop, another in the men's locker-room and a third in the women's quarters will bring forth valuable ideas and prevent minor matters from becoming major troubles.

Bill Kaiser

(At Indiana PGA meeting.)

NEW GOLF BOOKS

From Tee to Cup. By Reg Manning. Published by Reganson Cartoon Books, PO Box 5242, Phoenix, Ariz.

Manning, a clever cartoonist has written and illustrated a book that slides some good sound sense on golf playing in between a lot of highly amusing cartoons. Maybe his pictures of skeletons taking swings will give many about as clear an idea as they'll ever get of what happens inside when a good swing is made.

Pros and supts. will get laughs out of the rather accurate way in which Manning treats of the funny problems of the funny golfers.

There's a cute little gimmick of a hole punched thru the book that serves as a focal point of cartoons.

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PLAY GOLF AND ENJOY IT. By Louis deGarmo. Published by Greenberg, 201 E. 57th st., New York 22. Price \$2.

Louis deGarmo, a veteran of amateur golf and an old-time insider on golf business, has written an interesting round-up of how you, too, can do as he's done; have a lot of fun shooting some good scores—or lousy ones—in good company. The introduction in it is tied up with reminiscences of the many great pros and amateurs with whom deGarmo played.

To those who have enjoyed golf with deGarmo over many years and those who've missed that merry experience the book will appeal as being brightly in the spirit of profound locker-room and fairway scholarship.

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GOLF AND BE DAMNED. By Lawrence Lariar. Published by Prentice Hall, Inc., 70 Fifth ave., New York 11. Price \$2.95.

Lariar, a versatile cartoonist and writer who previously produced "Fish and Be Damned", and numerous other humorous and fiction books has done a hilarious job on golf. There isn't any sense to it except by accident and malice and its 124 pages of humor are usually quite funny not only because of Lariar's lines but because they spark so many "that reminds mes."

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THIS IS GOLF. By Louis T. Stanley. Published by A. S. Barnes & Co., 232 Madison ave., New York 16. Price \$5.

There are about 150 excellent action photographs of leading U. S. and British