

## Pros Need Stronger Accent on Correct Club Fitting

By **HERB GRAFFIS**

**P**ROPERLY fitting clubs to players is a phase of professional club education urgently requiring attention by the PGA.

Observations of experienced professionals emphasize the need of training younger men in club fitting. In the past few months GOLFDOM's mail has contained many letters from studious and ambitious young pros asking where they can get the information they need on fitting clubs to their customers.

The truth is that unless the young men have received plenty of expert training in club fitting during their education as assistants under competent master professionals, the lads later have to learn by the tedious and expensive process of trial and error.

This blind spot in the pro educational plan has been discussed with PGA national officials who now have under consideration club fitting discussions at the PGA national meeting and during the educational clinics in the Monday winter school sessions at Dunedin.

But those two moves, if and when they are made, will be a long way from adequately supplying the needed information. The job is one that needs considerable attention from sectional PGA groups.

### Club Fitting Put Pros At Top

Proper fitting of clubs is an essential part of the foundation of the pros' authoritative position in the marketing of golf equipment. When pros were making clubs for their pupils and players the pros

worked themselves into a command of golf club retailing they never have lost. But, in the opinion of shrewd and observant veteran pros who know every detail of the game, pro golf is taking far too much of a chance with its market leadership by failing to give due attention to education in fitting clubs.

The margin that pros now have can be readily explained by watching players at public courses where the percentage of store-bought clubs is much higher than prevails at private clubs where expert club fitting service is provided. By querying public course pros GOLFDOM got the basis for the estimate that the big majority of public course players are heavily handicapping their games with clubs that don't suit them.

### Why Clubs Don't Fit

Even at private clubs where there is competent club fitting service available the percentage of poorly fitted clubs is too high. Pros know this and explain the situation as due to several factors:

First, at the better clubs, is the fact that members now aren't in the same physical condition as they were several years ago when they bought the clubs that fitted them then.

Another is that quite a few men who are middle-aged or older still think they're strong and supple enough to use shafts that actually are too stiff for them.

A third factor is that some buyers are so much in a hurry for new clubs they're

insistent on getting just what happens to be in stock rather than wait until the pro can get from another pro in the neighborhood, or from a factory, the clubs that exactly fit the individuals.

The fourth explanation is that some members, usually women, buy on price and are sold almost anything that looks like a golf club.

#### **Public Needs Education**

Regardless of what accounts for improperly fitting golf clubs the fact remains that pros generally, due to reluctance to appear to be high-pressuring sales, or lack of knowledge of how to fit clubs, are not impressing the golfing public with the importance of properly fitted clubs.

The pro, being the only one who knows and who can study the club buyer's physical make-up and swing, is the only golf club retailer who is in the ideal position to properly fit clubs—that is, if the pro knows how.

Older pros who are thorough in training their assistants make the club fitting training a part of the schooling in teaching. Willie Hunter, Claude Harmon, Henry Picard, Harry Bassler, Errie Ball, Eddie Williams, Al Ciuci—to name a few of the veterans who have trained excellent younger pros—teach their assistants to study the club factor in getting results with pupils.

And it's a sure thing that every successful professional has seen over the years that the lesson tee is the place where a great many club sales originate.

Jerry Glynn, professional at Glen Flora CC, Waukegan district, and a veteran who has done exceedingly well in satisfying Chicago district golfers with clubs he's sold them over many years, says:

"The pro knows how important correctly fitted clubs are to one's own game but a lot of his members don't, and that educational problem is the biggest one in pro merchandising of clubs.

#### **Message for Pro Shop Display**

"Tommy Armour had a line in his book that ought to be in big letters in every pro shop in the country—'Properly fitted clubs are the only part of improved golf that anyone can buy.'

"That canny remark in Tommy's best seller had enough of an effect on golfers to possibly account for more profit in club sales, by pros who know how to fit clubs, than Armour has made out of his book.

"Golfers are receptive to education in

fitted clubs and all pros who are qualified to hold good jobs must be able to do the required teaching and fitting."

Swingweight, which may or may not be much of a factor in fitting clubs, certainly has been a strong selling point but how it may be correctly applied to individuals is a mystery to pros who talk glibly about swingweight.

Shaft stiffness or flexibility, overall weight, lies, lofts, facing of the club straight or toed-in or toed-out, grips, weight distribution and other specifications to suit the buyer and user of a club; all call for expert pro fitting.

#### **Inventory Problems Minor**

The requirements aren't too extensive to create a heavy problem of pro shop inventory. Experienced pros say that probably 90 per cent of a club's players—or a public course's players—could be fitted very well from stock that should be in a first class pro shop—at the start of the season, anyway.

Some minor alterations in lies of irons may be dictated by the pro's judgment, with equipment now available and which the expert pro club fitter ought to be able to use properly. Guy Paulsen, pro at Medinah CC (Chicago dist.) reports that he has decidedly increased his sales by letting it be known among his members that this detail of exact fitting is available.

Now that the subject of club fitting is before you as a club professional you'll think of a lot more ideas beyond those relayed from successful older pros in this article.

And you'd better think a lot about pushing the idea of correctly fitted clubs to all club buyers, and making certain that the clubs are fitted right, because that is the big reason for golfers buying quality clubs from professionals.

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