

Salvage It!



Steve Blatnak reclaimed everything in sight when Ridgemoor's clubhouse was remodeled and used it to refurbish his pro shop. It took less than \$100 to complete a job that could have cost 15 or 20 times that much had he bought new material

Fred Kuehn photos

By **JOE DOAN**

If you're faced with the same problem that confronted Steve Blatnak when he took over as head pro at Chicago's Ridgemoor CC last spring, perhaps you'll want to borrow a few of Steve's ideas for restoring a shop that, to put it kindly, wasn't an ideal environment in which to push golf merchandise.

Steve's restoration work involved a great deal of scrounging for material to make needed additions and repairs, the expenditure of less than \$100 and plenty of do-it-yourself enthusiasm on his part as well as that of Herb Stubbs, his assistant, and Jerry Haywood, the Ridgemoor caddiemaster.

Mention of scrounging for material is important at this moment because if your club happens to be planning to make repairs or alterations to the clubhouse this winter, start looking around right now so that you can determine what can be salvaged (particularly in the way of lumber, for example) and then used in helping to make your pro shop the kind of merchandising outlet you've long dreamed about. Doubtlessly, much of the carpeting, plumbing fixtures and aforementioned lumber that the club may be replacing in its rebuilding project, is headed for the scrap heap. If you can reclaim part of it, it will save you money or give you a good bargaining position in appealing to the club directors to finance needed pro shop alterations.

That's what Blatnak did. But, with all

the material on hand, there was some doubt in Steve's mind as to what he and Stubbs and Haywood could do in way of restoring the pro shop because none of the three had ever qualified for do-it-yourself certificates or whatever is awarded the handyman type. On top of this, Steve's pro shop is located in a 115 year-old farmhouse (once Ridgemoor's clubhouse) and when three novices start knocking out walls, as Blatnak and his associates did, they quickly find that these antiquated structures were too, too solidly built. But the Ridgemoor trio persisted and within four or five weeks it had done a major re-wiring job that was pronounced professional by a member who knows about such things, introduced a hot water tap to the club cleaning section, rebuilt storage racks, fashioned new display racks out of the salvage lumber and laid carpeting that was thought to have outlived its usefulness and had been discarded at the clubhouse. But, as Blatnak points out, there is an amazing amount of good remnants that can be reclaimed from a fairly large swath of used carpeting. A little ingenuity in piecing it usually will cover most pro shop floors.

After all the heavy labor had been completed, Blatnak and his handymen repaired the plaster and then finished off the project by applying paint and wallpaper with what by now was no longer amateur dabbling. A study of the photos accompanying this article give an idea of



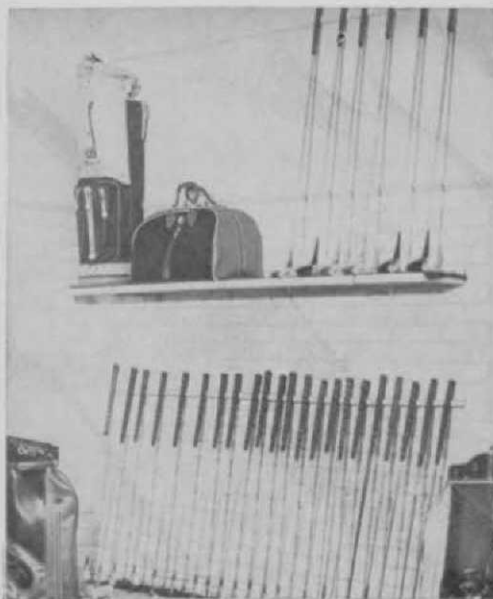
In building display racks, Blatnak strived to avoid overcrowded look, give his merchandise plenty of "show" space.

what excellent craftsmen the Ridgemoor threesome turned out to be.

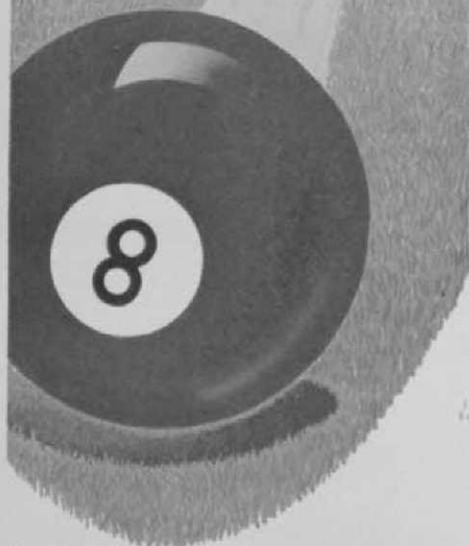
Nothing Under Glass

In looking over the photos, note that Blatnak keeps nothing under glass. Almost every article he has for sale is displayed on open shelves where the golfer can re-

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The Oglebay Park GC membership recognized the services rendered by taking the boys to the Ohio-West Virginia All-Star football game.

Bank Account for Each Boy

The camp director keeps a bank account for each boy. Money earned by caddying is deposited and credited to each account. The director also puts a value on balls a caddie finds on the course. Found balls are deposited like cash because they are sold to the golf shop and in turn are sold to golfers. At the end of each week the director deducts \$7 from each account to pay owner's board bill. Week by week the credit balance grows.

Occasionally the caddie camper comes face to face with a business depression or recession. Caddy fees, found balls, extra work for the park, in fact all sources of income may fail to produce enough funds to meet expenses which amount to that weekly seven bucks. Such misfortune is usually due to poor weather. On these occasions the director makes a single entry on the books. It squares the account of the caddie for the week no matter how small the amount of his credits. Everyone starts a new week with a clean slate. Obviously Oglebay Park shows no profit on Caddie Camp operations at the end of the year but the surplus of goodwill grows steadily.

A typical Caddie Camp report shows that there were 4,250 nine-hole rounds caddied during the season for which Oglebay Park golfers pay \$3,814.10, or an average of 92 cents per round. Of this sum collected by the caddies and deposited with the director \$1,289.20 was returned to them, an average of \$40 for each kid. Congratulated on his season's success, one lad smiled and confided, "And we got tips, too."

Complete information about the Caddie Camp can be obtained from Homer Fish, supt. of parks, Wheeling, W. Va.

Blatnak Salvages It

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move whatever strikes his fancy and examine it closely. Particularly interesting is the sportswear display (see photo) which features pegboard and glass shelving and is top-lighted.

Blatnak, a pro for nearly 20 years, has had a fling at the winter tour, has qualified for PGA Championship and National Open Tournaments and usually does well in local and state tournaments. He was head pro at Chicago's Bunker Hill for



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several years before that club fell victim to the subdividers, and from 1953 through 1956, served as assistant to Howard Davis, who was Ridgemoor's head master for 35 years.

Ridgemoor, incorporated as the Irving Club in 1901, is one of the oldest courses in the Chicago district. It was moved to its present location in 1908 and the farmhouse in which the pro shop is located, served as the clubhouse until 1918. More than 200 persons are playing members of the club. One of the encouraging things at Ridgemoor is that more and more younger members are playing more and more rounds than ever before. Both Blatnak and Herb Stubbs are doing everything possible to enlarge this trend by getting out and playing as much golf as possible with members in the younger set. Steve, in fact, tries to squeeze in at least one round with each member during the season.

Encourages Youngsters

He also runs a very lively Junior program, conducting free class lessons for the youngsters every Saturday. In addition, practice balls are rented to the kids at the most nominal kind of a rate in order

to get them to spend a lot of time on the proving ground range. Ridgemoor's youth movement also extends to the caddies. Under Blatnak's supervision, Jerry Haywood gives his caddie crew plenty of tutoring in the fine points of bag toting and the game with the result that Ridgemoor caddies have the reputation of being among the best in the Chicago area. Players submit appraisals of the caddies after each round.

Since this is Blatnak's first year as head man at Ridgemoor, he doesn't have all the figures available to show how refurbishing the pro shop has brought increased business. But he estimates that the increase is considerable simply because players who never dropped into the shop before this season are now regular patrons. Then, too, all the favorable comment heard around the lockerrooms early this spring about the club's newly renovated pro shop hasn't subsided even at this late date.

How Blatnak solved one merchandising problem that other pros may be saddled with is worth re-telling:

The first tee at Ridgemoor is located about 50 yards from the pro shop and until Blatnak hit on the idea of setting up

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✓ a merchandise display in the lockerrooms
✓ early this summer, he figured that busi-
✓ nesses was suffering because of his remote
✓ location. Many members were launching
✓ their rounds without first visiting the pro
✓ shop and Steve's conclusion was that too
✓ many of them were buying balls, sports-
✓ wear and equipment off the premises be-
✓ cause he couldn't get them exposed to
✓ his merchandise. But the lockerroom dis-
✓ plays reminded everybody that he was in
✓ business down at the north end of the
✓ course and no sooner had they been set up
✓ than sales began to spurt.

It's merchandising schemes such as this,
plus ingenuity in scrounging around for
materials and putting them to work for
him, that is making Steve Blatnak's opera-
tion at Ridgemoor a real profitable one.

Winterkill Protection

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ate fungicide in combination with pro-
cessed sewage sludge has proven a satis-
factory control for this disease. Treatments
are made in late fall-early winter, prefer-
ably after growth activity has ceased, the
ground frozen and before snowfall which
remains. Mid to late November or early
December appears to be the best time for
application.

2. Keep an adequate supply of fungicide
on hand to treat greens should snowmold
develop in early spring.

Heaving

A light rolling to press heaved plants
back in contact with the soil will reduce
damage. Heavy rolling, particularly when
the soil is wet, may do more damage than
that caused by freezing and thawing.

Winterkill is responsible for the loss of
considerable turfgrass each year in North-
ern U. S. and Canada. Desiccation, thatch
and mat, snowmold and heaving operating
alone and in combination, are the basic
factors involved in winterkill. There are
no techniques that will completely control
winterkill, but there are practices which
may help reduce the severity of the damage
and speed recovery in the spring. This in
itself would be a great accomplishment.

Tucker Tournament

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College and universities which sent dele-
gations to the 1956 Tucker event included
Hardin Simmons, Western Illinois, Nor-
wich, Tulsa, Arizona State, Texas State