



TARGET:

More Sales
to Women

Not Keeping Pace

Push Yet to Come In Equipment Sales to Feminine Golfers

EVEN though just about everyone agrees that the pickup in women's play is the most important golf development of the last four or five years, there is divided opinion among professionals as to whether the feminine swingers are even beginning to pull their weight as pro shop customers.

A survey recently made by GOLFDOM shows that views of the merchandisers generally come under two well defined categories in this increasingly important matter. The majority of pros say that outside of sportswear and related items, they are getting little patronage from women players. At the same time, the majority of these shop proprietors concede that where playing equipment, in particular, is concerned they have been deficient in promoting women's sales. They leave the impression that the push is yet to come.

On the other hand, a small but probably growing list of pros, looking to the long-term possibilities, are promoting the sale of women's clubs by refraining from trying to sell the feminine swingers complete sets but instead urge them to buy essential clubs such as No. 3, 5, 7 and 9 irons, a putter and, in most cases, two woods. The pros are handling these sales in two ways: Some sell the more expensive clubs on an open set basis with the suggestion that the complete set can be filled in later; others sell less expensive lines with the understanding that these

clubs will be accepted as trade-ins when the woman golfer decides she has graduated to better clubs.

Plenty of Competition

Pros who have lagged behind in club sales to women generally attribute their failure to get this activity off the ground to the omnipresent competition of the discount houses and downtown department and sporting goods stores. In many cases, this is all too realistic; in others, it is partly imaginary. One pro ventures the opinion that even though the woman holds the purse string, the golf playing husband preempts the right to buy more expensive clubs, either giving his wife his discards or persuading her to settle for less expensive editions. Another pro suggests that even though many women have been playing golf for a relatively long time they haven't yet reached the point where they are convinced that quality clubs will improve their games. This same pro adds that it is his observation that women generally regard golf in more of a sporting vein than do their husbands and it will be some time yet before they start buying clubs with an eye to their prestige value.

Harry Robb, Jr., the master of Milburn G & CC, Overland Park, Kans., feels that maybe the pros are too ambitious in trying to sell women more and higher priced clubs than the latter can afford. "If you

tell a woman it's going to cost her \$200 for a set of clubs," Robb says, "about nine out of ten times she makes a very quick retreat. Then she goes on a shopping tour, comes back with cheap clubs, throws them in your face and tells you how little she paid for them.

Experience Sets Price Range

"We handle clubs in all price brackets. The first thing I find out is how long a woman has been playing golf. The type and price range of the clubs I suggest are tied directly to the length of time she has been playing. When I sell a short set I guarantee to buy it back at exactly half the original price."

There is an important amendment to Harry Robb's remarks: "There are 250 women golfers at Overland," he says, "Very few have bought clubs elsewhere."

Red Dennison of Green Acres CC, Northbrook, Ill., opines that a pro will never sell much of anything to women until he has a ladies' dressing room in the shop. "At first thought," he says, "maybe this doesn't seem to have any connection with the sale of clubs. But it adds up like two and two. If the dressing room is handy, she'll patronize your shop more than if there is none. At first, she may buy only apparel. But she'll keep coming back if you provide the facilities she thinks should be there. Eventually, she'll buy a pair of shoes and after that perhaps a putter or a No. 2 wood. Then, in two out of three cases, she'll end up buying a complete set of clubs from you."

Started with Used Clubs

Leo Fraser of the Atlantic City CC, Northfield, N. J., has used a rather different tack in building up his women's club business. For the past three or four years he has scoured the market for good used clubs, reconditioned them and sold them to female players. Now, many of the ladies have outgrown the secondhand clubs and are buying new ones. Fraser, during this time, has set up a special ladies' club dept. which not only appeals to the feminine ego, but more important offers the kind of concentrated service that he feels can make any kind of a pro dept. succeed.

"There isn't a pro in the country," Leo asserts, "who can't beat the bushes for quality used clubs as a starting point for a flourishing women's club dept. The pro has this advantage: Used 'pro only' clubs, that have been reconditioned, are still far

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Miller Moves All-Star Show Back One Hour

"All-Star Golf", which again is being sponsored on TV by Miller Brewing Co., Milwaukee, starting Oct. 11 and continuing for 26 consecutive Saturdays, will be seen in all time zones from 5 to 6 p. m. By presenting the show an hour later than last year, the sponsors feel that there will be no chance of conflict with football and basketball telecasts.

The series will retain the same basic format as the 1957-58 shows. Prize and bonus money will be the same as last year but a flip of the coin won't decide the winners in case of ties. The contestants will return the following week to play another 18-hole match to break the deadlock and prize money will be doubled. Dick Danehe, West Coast sportscaster and former pro football player with San Francisco, will handle the commentary.

Pocono Turf Officers

New officers of the Pocono Turfgrass Assn. are: Weldon Garrison, Shawnee, Pa. pres., Frank Nause, Hazleton, vp, Ted Weiser, Scranton, treas., Bob Dunn, Dallas, secy. and Sam Spenser, Lehman, dir.

Big Push Yet to Come

(Continued from page 42)

better buys than inferior new ones bought in the stores and will match the price of the cheaper new clubs. If you keep preaching this in your pro shop, you'll convert most of your women players to this thinking."

Selling women's clubs through the clinic and group lesson approach, of course, is pretty much of a patented idea, but Jack Murphy of the Vestavia CC in Birmingham feels that too many pros are giving up on this tried and true method too soon. "After one or two lessons," says Murphy, "many pros junk the idea, especially if they don't make any sales. I think it should be carried on at least once a month all season even if only two or three women attend the clinics. There's no law saying that a woman who doesn't buy clubs in May won't buy them in September."

Shows Them the Difference

One of Murphy's favorite stratagems is to check a woman's store bought clubs, which usually are ill-fitted, and ask her to try pro-only brands that are correct for her in shaft-length, weight, etc. After swinging correctly fitted clubs only a few

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times she notes the great difference and immediately becomes a good prospect for a sale. Beginners, incidentally, are supplied with clubs from Jack's shop for the first two or three lessons so that he can get an accurate picture of their needs.

Not Completely Positive

On the not completely positive side of the women's club sales fence are fellows such as Elmer Voight, Sunningdale CC, Scarsdale, N. Y., Dan Langford, Oakwood CC, Enid, Okla., and Bill Corbett, Castlewood CC, Pleasanton, Calif. All deny the fact that there is constant temptation for women members to go bargain hunting and end up buying inexpensive clubs in downtown sporting goods outlets. Corbett, however, points out that not too many years ago men were doing the same thing, but educational effort and salesmanship on the part of the pro finally brought them around to making their purchases at the home course.

Corbett is convinced that open stock sets from which women initially are supplied with a minimum or essential number of clubs is the first step toward salvation. So is Langford, adding, "It's nobody's fault but our own if we allow too many of our women players to buy clubs elsewhere." Voight hasn't found any magic method for inducing his feminine members to buy pro-line equipment even though he does a bustling business in the sale of women's apparel. "The ladies," Elmer reasons, "are much more fastidious about their appearance than they are about their games or their playing equipment. But maybe that is a clue. Now if the manufacturers were to make the gals' clubs more colorful, maybe we could sell more of them."

Elmer may have something there!

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