



George Lake, Recreation Park pro, behind main sales counter of his small muni shop.

Pro-Operation at Long Beach Muni

By **CHUCK CURTIS**

GEORGE LAKE, professional at the Long Beach (Calif.) muni courses in Recreation Park, has an impressive list of credits in the development of young assistant pros, many of whom now have head club jobs throughout the country. He also has been a vp of the national PGA, a chairman of the PGA junior golf teaching committee, a pres. of his PGA section and general chmn. in the 1958 PGA National meeting in Long Beach.

Former assistants at Recreation or amateur players at the course who later became head pros have included Jackson Bradley of Houston, Bob Judson of St. Andrews, Ill.; Harry McCarthy of Balboa Park, San Diego, Calif.; Wayne Otis, who took a head job in 1958 in Whitinsville, Massachusetts; Darrel Hickok, in Illinois; Gary Nixon, White Sulphur Springs, and Joe Warburton, Don Willis and Jimmy Ireland, all at Southern California clubs.

Most important to the financial well being of his family, Lake also is an outstanding home club pro and merchandiser.

His bookkeeping setup, for example, gives him a quarterly report on sales.

One of his two woman assistants, Zamona Schoepflin, also is his bookkeeper, keeping a daily record of sales. A certified public accountant audits all records quar-

terly, preparing tax returns and giving Lake a financial statement.

Profit Ratio Determined

The statement shows the percentage of profit in different categories of sales: soft goods, clubs, bags and balls. Thus an abrupt change in the ratio of the sales and profit margin gives Lake a guide to pricing changes in order to move slower selling goods.

Lake, himself, does all the ordering of clubs (except for re-ordering of basic items which the assistants handle). Miss Schoepflin orders all soft goods, keeps track of prices, attends style shows where golf clothing is shown, and advises Lake on pricing of soft goods.

Although this is entirely a public course operation with heavy transient trade (including large numbers of Navy personnel), the soft goods business amounted to 30% of total sales in January of this year.

Lake has one of the smaller shops among Southern California public courses, yet he ranks among top pros in that thriving golf area for yearly sales.

"The big thing is to have things out where they can be handled," George says. As a result he has about 90 sets of irons and woods constantly on display. And he sells a good deal of merchandise to players from other clubs and courses.

"Lighting is a big factor in any size



Zamona Schoepflin, one of Lake's two fulltime women assistants, shows golf ball display drawer.



Old fireplace in Recreation Park shop was rigged into a display with use of pegboard and shelves.

shop," Lake declares. His shop now has overhead fluorescent lighting as well as a number of individual spots which are directed at featured displays.

"One of the major mistakes a pro can make," Lake says, "is trying to hold up the price on closeout merchandise when by marking it down he can clear the space and realize money for new purchases.

Doesn't Go Overboard

"Another error is in allowing too much on old sets, George maintains. As an example, he mentions that a pro might quote an over-allowance on old clubs for a specific set of new clubs. The deal would give the pro a fair profit. Then the customer changes his mind and selects another set of new clubs on which the pro's margin is not very large. The customer wants the same inflated allowance on his old clubs and the pro is stuck with a profitless sale.

Lake has a splendid arrangement in his lease from the City of Long Beach.

All green fees are paid in the golf shop (a separate cash register is used for this, also for locker rental and shoe shines which the city gets). He owns the rental carts and operates the driving range, renting out the canvas buckets of range balls from the shop.

He pays a flat rental, rather than a percentage of sales.

Under the operational plan every golfer including the players who use the practice range come through Lake's shop.

Lake's rental pull carts have detachable handles which are stored in the shop. When a golfer rents a cart he is required to put up \$1 deposit, of which 65¢ is re-

turned at the end of the round when he turns in the handle. Strangers are required to leave a driver's license or service I.D. card for rental of golf clubs.

Rental sets have Lake's name and the words "rent set" appear on the clubhead. They are matched sets. He feels these not only are more foolproof against theft than ordinary sets of rental clubs, which are just unmatched sets of old clubs with no positive marking, but that they also lead to sales of complete sets of matched clubs in the same swing weight and shaft as the rental clubs.

Code for Stock

Lake's staff of two men and two women (in addition to considerable part time help) marks merchandise with a code letter when pricing. Thus the letter "D" stands for 1959 and every January the entire stock is examined and all year-old items are marked down. Lake won't allow anything to stand around much more than two years; after that it's priced down to a sure selling point.

Lake's assistants, who teach on their own time, are on a straight salary, no commission. They average 42 hours a week in the shop but are paid overtime for the longer summer days. "My girl assistants are paid better than many men assistants in the area, possibly because they are better trained in pro shop work," Lake declares.

Recently Lake, working with the restaurant concessionaire, had equipment for canned music installed in his pro shop. Now the would be purchaser can examine or purchase clubs or equipment to the accompaniment of soft melodies.