



If you're treating the lady like a worm, you can be sure it's costing you money

Change Your Attitude On Women Golfers

Illustrated by Bill O'Brien

By HELEN MACDONALD

MANY professionals have an archaic approach to the problem of selling lessons and merchandise to their women members and players.

They have forgotten, or perhaps never knew, that women "grew up" during the last war and no longer are content to be treated like a cross between the village idiot and something left over from the Queen Victoria era.

I have sold thousands of lessons and sets of clubs to women in the past 26 years. I find them highly appreciative when treated as if they were just as important and intelligent as a male customer. Which, I might add, they are.

I ask the same questions of a woman

customer as of a man when I am trying to sell her some clubs. I give her the same attention a man gets when she asks about the importance of club weight, length, or other data so far as helping her game goes.

Women, traditionally better shoppers than their husbands, are not content with any but the finest merchandise, assuming they have the money to spend, as most seem to these days. I also find that most insist on a complete set of clubs, although I suggest to the rank beginner that she start with four irons — 3, 5, 7 and 9 — plus putter and two woods. Somehow the initial outlay for a full set of clubs seems to frighten off women who never have played. Once bitten by the golf bug, however, they usually return for more clubs to fill in the gaps.

Feels Like A Worm

I have tried to analyze what is lacking in the sales' approach of some professionals to their feminine customers. A chance

Helen MacDonald, one of the first of the women pros, operates a golf studio at 18 E. Erie St. in Chicago.

remark by one of my pupils gave me what I believe is a most revealing answer.

"When I go to our club pro for a lesson," she said, "I come away feeling like a worm."

It seems to me that too many professionals have forgotten that they, like businessmen in any other trade, are servants, at least, while they are actually engaged in teaching or in selling merchandise.

By this I don't mean to suggest that they be obsequious or permit members or players to "step" on them. But I do believe their first thought should be: "How can I best satisfy the needs of this valued client?"

But many pros either don't know or don't think it matters that they are no longer dealing with women who are housewives and nothing more. This may have been true 25 or 30 years ago. It isn't now. Today the pro may be speaking in patronizing terms to women who hold medical or law degrees, who are teachers, psychologists or heads of their own business firms, or if some still are primarily housewives, are very well educated.

Is it any wonder, then, that when an intelligent woman finds herself being brushed off with only a half-hearted attempt to satisfy her, she takes her business elsewhere?

Suppose you went into a shop to buy some socks or a suit, and the clerk grabbed the first ones that came to hand, regardless of whether they met your requirements for size, color or price, and said: "Here, this is what you want."

Wouldn't your reaction be that you were dealing with someone who either was too ignorant to help you or simply didn't care whether you were satisfied or not?

Polite But Uninterested

Many of my women patrons tell me this is approximately the treatment they get from their club professional. He is polite enough, they say, but uninterested.

This attitude becomes even more apparent when it varies with the customer. Don't think women fail to notice it when the professional spends twice as much time helping Mrs. Jones, the club champion, select new clubs or correct some hitch in her swing as he does with Mrs. Smith, who is lucky to break 110.

They notice and they remember! I dare say that many a professional who is surprised to find himself out of a job at the end of the season never connects his dismissal with the fact that he has been indifferent, if not rude, to a portion of his

FBI Investigating Theft of Acushnet Golf Balls

The FBI is investigating the theft of \$130,000 in golf balls taken from the parking area of a Chicago truck company late in January. The balls were to be delivered to the Chicago warehouse of the Acushnet Process Co., and had been shipped from the firm's New Bedford, Mass. plant. Since the shipment was in interstate commerce, the FBI automatically entered the case.

Stolen from a trailer, parked in the trucking company lot, were 403 shipping cartons of balls, 99 of which were still in the trailer when it was found abandoned on the outskirts of Chicago. Missing were 9,000 doz. Titleists and more than 5,000 doz. Green Rays, Pinnacles and Club Specialists. All are pro line.

Pros or others who know or hear of Acushnet balls being offered for sale through unusual channels or under questionable circumstances are asked to get in touch with the nearest FBI office.

feminine members. Men heed their wives when it comes to hiring and firing employees.

Papa listens to Mama, and don't forget it!

Some professionals make no secret of their dislike for teaching women golfers. Yet, in many clubs the women golfers take more lessons than their sons and husbands. Surveys also have shown that many country clubs could not survive without the money spent by women. So don't alienate this lucrative income source.

I believe I am qualified to discuss the best approach to dealing with women customers, since my experience with feminine golfers dates back to 1931.

In those days, long after men's clubs were being made in different weights, lengths and degrees of flexibility, people still had the notion that clubs of a single weight and length were good enough for all women, no matter how they might differ in physical build or golfing capability.

Husbands even cut down their old clubs and gave them to their golfing wives, entirely disregarding the ruined balance of the clubs which made it impossible for a woman to play her best.

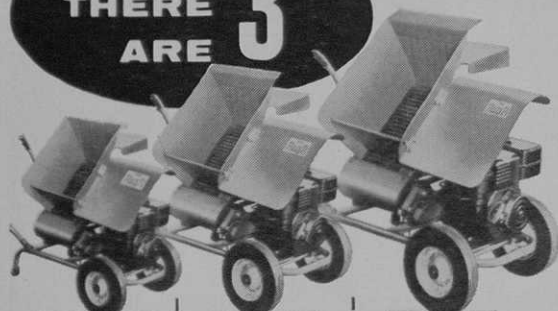
Tailored Clubs

So, I persuaded one company to send me on the road to sell the advantages of

(Continued on page 124)

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**Change Your Attitude
on Women Golfers**

(Continued on page 27)

clubs "tailored" to the needs of the woman golfer, as men's clubs were for them.

I held the job for two seasons, and this strange new gospel that women, too, were entitled to every advantage the golf manufacturer could supply, was received with tremendous enthusiasm. I sold an outstanding number of clubs.

That idea, first planted more than 25 years ago, has spread until virtually every woman golfer knows there is more to buying a set of clubs than walking in to a shop, pointing, and saying: "I'll take those." She doesn't buy anything else in that fashion, and she won't be content to get her clubs without looking the stock over carefully and being "sold." It's a procedure she follows in every purchase she makes from groceries to a new fur coat.

My usual practice, when a woman who never has played golf comes in to get some clubs, is to say:

"I'll sell you the clubs if you insist, but I'd rather sell you a series of lessons first. Then, if you are serious about the game, you can buy whatever clubs you like. But

it is far better to get the clubs after we have some idea of your playing potential than it is to sell you ones which might prove unsuitable because you don't have the power to swing them, or because they are too light for your swing."

If the woman brings a set of clubs with her that is usable I may tell her she doesn't need new clubs or suggest some additions to the set. Or, if she does need new clubs after the lessons are finished, I explain what is wrong with the old ones: Poor balance or design, perhaps, or simply that they are too worn to be serviceable.

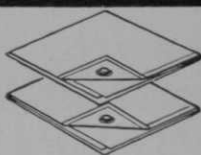
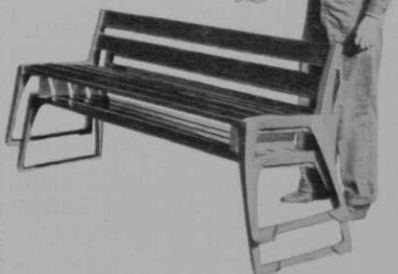
Treatment like this makes a hit with most of my feminine customers. They realize I am not trying to hurry them into a purchase, a thing no woman likes to have tried on her.

When a professional, either through laziness or a don't-give-a-damn attitude, permits any of his customers — men or women — to walk out of his shop with clubs not suited for them he not only is unfair to his professional code but is giving the maker of the clubs an undeserved bad name. I have had both men and women complain about their clubs — superb clubs made by the nation's top manufacturers. Actually there was nothing on

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earth wrong with them except that they should have been sold to someone else. They just were not suited to the ones who owned them.

When I first began teaching in 1924, men customers outnumbered women three to one. Now the ratio is about 50-50. My women pupils range in age from 12 to the admitted 50's. One woman of 64 showed up a few years ago and said she wanted to take lessons.

"My children seem to think I am going to be nothing but a baby-sitter from now on," she said grimly. "So I have decided to take up golf."

She developed a respectable swing, then headed for the course and, presumably, a taste of baby-free relaxation.

Accent on One World

I found her no different to talk with or sell equipment to than a woman of any age. But — again I must repeat — accent the word "sell."

Too many professionals think that because they are professionals — all they have to do is say: "This is it," and all discussion should end.

Women do not do business that way. They have to be sold. They have to be convinced by logic and courteous argu-

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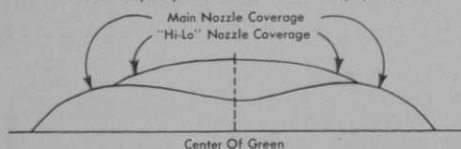
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ment, if necessary, that clubs of a certain weight and length, a certain low-compression ball, even a particular bag (which will fit easily on a cart when no caddies are available) are the ones for them.

It takes a judicious blend of diplomacy, wisdom, and, I suppose you could call it just plain honesty, to keep women customers happy. But it is well worth the trouble.

Golf professionals from coast to coast are missing hundreds of thousands of dollars yearly in sales lost to department or sporting goods stores. Why? Because the clerks there have no superiority complex, and the woman customer finds herself treated like a "Person Who Matters."

It's as simple as that.

Educating New Members

(Continued on page 46)

Members who propose and second him for membership can't diplomatically undertake his education. There is the possibility that they themselves do not know all that the new person should know.

So the professional should have the definite duty of welcoming and schooling the new member.

The chairman of the membership committee and the professional should work out a program for tactfully acquainting the new member with the benefits and obligations of membership.

Pro Knows the Ropes

The diplomacy required in the educational work is of a kind the pro has learned over the years in handling his job.

General policy and details of the procedure of getting the new member and the professional acquainted and having the pro be the greeter and teacher are matters that club officials and the pro can arrange.

The fact is that the club owes to the new member a reception and information program far ahead of what usually is done to welcome the newcomer.

I have a hunch that real estate experts, who are promoting a lot of the new clubs as centers of community development, will make valuable use of the pro's services in educating the new member.

Schneider Heads Kentuckiana

Ernest Schneider, Big Spring GC, Louisville, has been reelected pres. of Kentuckiana GCSA. Other officers are Charles Oller, vp and Morgan Boggs, secy-treas. Directors are Eugene Morehead, Joy Oller, Addis Lynn and Alfred Jones.