

What A Difference 30 Days Make

When the weatherman started to cooperate, people began playing golf and business got a real shot in the arm

It doesn't come as news that the weather has an important influence on the state of the country's golf business — but its impact isn't fully appreciated until comparative figures covering an interval of only 30 spring days are considered.

GOLFDOM recently completed two surveys — one covering business as of May 15th, and the second, taking in the state of business as of June 15th. Professionals at selected clubs in every PGA section in the country were asked to determine in each instance if business was up over comparable 1959 periods and whether there were increases or decreases in the sales of such items as playing equipment, balls, accessories and sportswear.

In the southern section of the country, conditions were relatively stable when compared between both 1959 and 1960 and May 15th and June 15th.

In the North, however, it was an entirely different story. As of mid-May, quite a number of professionals reported that business at that time, compared with that of a year earlier, was from 15 to 40 per cent off. But only 30 days later, and even though there was actually only about two weeks of good golfing weather behind them, the shop operators declared that business either was back to or approaching normal.

Pent-Up Playing Urge

As one professional put it: "The snapback in June undoubtedly was due to the fact that the late, late spring built up more pent-up itching to get out and play golf than any year I can remember."

About the only section of the northern half of the country that didn't report a sharp recovery was Cleveland where business in mid-June was reported to be about 15 per cent behind a comparable time in 1959. One Cleveland pro, though, said there was quite a noticeable increase this year in the sale of rainwear and that club sales were more than holding their own because poor weather was keeping people indoors long enough for them to give the club stocks a thorough examination. "Maybe," he added, "they are buying them out of boredom. Meanwhile, they aren't beating up or losing enough golf balls."

Here is a section by section report of the golf market situation as of both May 15th and June 15th:

Southeast and Mid-South — With the exception of the Atlanta area, business in May in this section was about the same as it was last year. Play in Atlanta was down about 10 per cent due to weather and sales were off about 15 to 20 per cent. The latter was partly counteracted by the Dallas-Ft. Worth area where sales were said to be 10 per cent higher than they had been a year before. Business continued good in Texas in June, particularly in the northern part of the state, but the weather caught up with the Miami, Fla., area between May and June and resulted in a fairly sharp dropoff in both play and sales there.

Arizona and California — May volume in Arizona was about normal and increased slightly in the next 30 days. Business was booming in California. Courses were in excellent condition, getting plenty of play and sales volume was estimated to be up 20 per cent.

Northeast — Play in the coastal areas and about 200 miles inland was down around 15 per cent in May and considerably more farther west. This pattern continued during the next month, getting back to normal in the eastern half but still lagging farther west. Cleveland pros reported that business was still off in early June but in Pittsburgh and Cincinnati it had picked up and was from 5 to 10 per cent over last year.

(Continued on page 82)



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That 30-Day Difference

(Continued from page 38)

Midwest — Rain and cold weather kept golfers pretty much indoors in May and sales suffered accordingly. But the pros started to find the way back over the Memorial Day weekend and business either returned to normal or was up slightly over what it had been the year before.

Northwest — Weather was spotty in this sector during May, but where sales were down 20 per cent farther east, they were only 10 per cent below 1959 figures in the Northwest. A month later, the 10 per cent deficit had been converted to a 10 per cent gain.

Sportswear Sales Increased

As for the different items, pros in the southern part of the country and Arizona and California reported that sportswear sales continued to show a quite noticeable increase, clubs and balls were up slightly over the year before and accessories were at least holding their own. "Same as last year or slight increase" was an oft-used term in describing all items.

In the northern half of the country, all items suffered accordingly in May with golf balls probably being the biggest casualty. But toward the end of the month, when the weather righted itself, sales generally made a comeback with balls, in the opinion of most pros, making a valiant effort to even up the previous month's deficit.

Central Plains Field Day

1,000th Evans Scholar

Tenth annual field day of the Central Plains Turfgrass Foundation was held in Wichita, Kans., June 6th. Theme of the conference was "Beat the Summer Slump." Speakers and panelists included Eliot C. Roberts, Iowa State University; John Gaddis, Wichita University; Robert E. Lester and Emory Cox, City of Wichita Park dept.; Roy Rasmussen, Boys Town, Neb.; and Ray A. Keen, Kansas State U.

An Evans Scholar Foundation milestone was reached late in June with the selection of the 1,000th caddie for a scholarship. Dave (Red) Williams, 17, of Butterfield CC, Hinsdale, Ill., won the distinction of being the 1,000th youth picked by the Western Golf Assn. to receive aid in getting his college education. Within the next month, WGA will boost the total number of scholarships to 1,100.

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