



# Flower of the South

*As golf shops go, that is an apt description of the new installation at Vestavia CC. It's the latest thing in design for pro merchandising*

By **JACK MURPHY**

Professional, Vestavia CC, Birmingham, Ala.

Many persons who have seen our new pro shop say that there is nothing quite like it in the South. Some enthusiasts have compared it with the finest shops they have seen in the U.S. I, of course, am not going to argue with either group because as you can note from looking at the photos on these pages, a pro couldn't ask for more beautiful surroundings. What's more, they are air conditioned.

We're knee deep in beige carpeting. When you walk on it the effect is a little like walking across soft turf. The entire



On this and the facing page are six views of Vestavia. The island panel is perhaps the most striking thing about the shop. It adds wall space for display purposes, yet gives the illusion of not being there. New shop was opened last July.

shop is panelled in natural birch and it is nicely divided by another island type panel that splits the shop and enables us to departmentalize our merchandise. The divider is shown in the two top photos on page 37. Almost half of our shop is exposed to natural light which is supplemented by fluorescent fixtures and three spots that are strategically located to dramatize both playing equipment and sportswear. A white, planked ceiling adds to the lighting effect.

*(Continued on page 87)*

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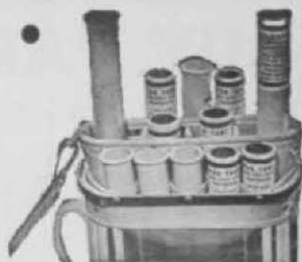
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## Flower of the South

(Continued from page 36)

There are 650 players at Vestavia, slightly less than 25 per cent of them being women. Demand is such that we carry a beginning and average inventory of nearly \$20,000 and I estimate that it will be turned over about three times in a year. We won't have final figures for a while yet since the shop was opened last summer. We operate on a 12-month basis.

We get, what I would say, is a fair share of equipment, accessories and sportswear business. In fact, our sportswear volume has been surprisingly good, much larger than it was in the old shop. So, I suppose that the moral is that if merchandise of this kind is displayed in a kind of inspiring setting, it can't help but sell well.

### Credit to Wife

In conjunction with this, I should mention my wife, Virginia. She is my assistant and a very valued one. I rather think that the increased sportswear sales are largely due to her. She is the buyer for the women's dept., head salesman and, in general, the alert type of merchandiser who makes the difference between an ordinary pro shop and what, in my case, is one I think is reasonably well operated.

I also have two competent salesmen in Nathan Smith and Charles Wagner, both of whom double as instructors.

Our merchandising theme is built around good display. As you will note in the photos, we use several types of display racks, carts and tables, but one thing we avoid is overpopulating the shop with them. That center panel effect also is used to great advantage in display. A good deal of merchandise can be displayed around it and it offers almost unlimited flexibility in the way in which we can arrange our stock. Since it isn't solid it doesn't cut down on the seeming size of the shop, nor does it cut down on light or merchandise visibility. What it amounts to is that it gives us two added walls for display purposes, yet doesn't interfere in

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any way with our operation.

To promote business, we hold special sales of women's wear on Ladies' Day and for the male golfer there usually is some kind of a special on weekends. If anything, our selling effort is slanted a little more toward the women players, even where men's goods are concerned, because we find them more responsive and even sometime suspect that they are in charge of the family finances.

Golfdom's 'Christmas Shopping at Your Pro Shop' has played an important part in my merchandising picture. I send it to players as well as non-players, of whom there are 600 at Vestavia, and much of my

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Christmas volume comes from persons who never come near the shop except during the holiday season.

As for equipment sales, as I mentioned before, we get our share of ball, club and bag business. Trade-in clubs never have been much of a headache so far as I am concerned because I always have been able to pass them on to new players or to smaller clubs in the area. About the most I can hope for on trade-ins is to break even or, at best, make a small profit.

### Lesson Time Published

Nate Smith, Charley Wagner and myself manage to keep quite busy giving lessons. I have long made it a point to have our lesson schedule printed in the monthly bulletin published by the club. The schedule shows what days, and hours of the day, either Smith or Wagner or myself are available for teaching. This is done because each of us has attracted a following among the players and we feel that it is very much to our advantage to have them know exactly when we are scheduled to teach. In the shop, the only reference made to

lesson appointments is through a display sign that is located near the cash register. I feel that it is very effective because it is constantly seen by everyone who comes into the shop.

I have been asked how much time can a pro and his staff devote to free lesson clinics. I don't have a ready answer for this. I think it depends on how much play there is at a course, how good or bad lesson business is, how much public relations is involved and how much time a pro can devote. From my experience, free clinics in the spring for women and Juniors has done much to promote lesson business. For the most part I have been able to dispense with them after around May 1st except for occasional Saturday sessions for the younger players. The clinic, as I see it, should be regarded only as a stimulator — something to get them started early in the season. At Vestalia, we always have made it a point to try to give individual lessons to paying students.

### Club Handles Billing

I employ an accountant who has full



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charge of the books and prepares periodic profit and loss statements. All billing is handled through the club. We use a Cardex system for keeping a perpetual inventory. Re-ordering is handled by myself and my assistants.

We're very careful in confining different types of merchandise to separate departments. This not only helps the customer in making his selections but enables us to run the shop with as few as two persons even when business is brisk. In addition to the main display area there is a small office, stock room, a section in which 700 bags can be stored and a club cleaning room.

*Jack Murphy has been at Vestavia since 1951. Prior to this he was head pro at Highland CC, LaGrange, Ga., and Maxwell AFB, Montgomery, Ala. He got his schooling at Syracuse University.*

### Wooster Field Days

The Wooster, Ohio field days (Sept. 20-21) will cover the needs of the professional turfman on the first day and the homeowner on the second, according to R. R. Davis, turf specialist at the Agricultural Experiment Station, who is in charge of the program.

### Grau's Answers

(Continued from page 56)

factory creeping bent fairways, one must plan on spraying fungicides whenever it becomes necessary to check a severe attack of disease.

Kentucky blue in your fairways can be improved vastly by stepping up your nitrogen fertilizer program. A generous feeding program can go a long way toward providing excellent turf. If after two or three years of good feeding of Kentucky blue, you decide to convert to bent, you will have provided a much more favorable condition for the seeding of bent than if you do it now.

While you are thinking of seeding bent into the fairways, let's examine your objectives. Undoubtedly what you are seeking is fairway turf that can be cut closely without injury, which will hold the ball up well for a good shot, which will be free of weeds to the maximum degree and which will be pleasing to the sight. Take into consideration the possibility of planting the fairways to zoysia. Zoysia has been growing well in the Chicago area for many years. In other parts of the country it has been planted into fairways and the results have been even better than anyone dared hope. Of all the grasses with which I have worked, zoysia comes the closest to requiring minimum attention, fertilization and watering.

Also consider introduction of Merion blue into the fairways. Since your fairways already are Kentucky, and since we know that Merion is superior to ordinary Kentucky, perhaps this is the grass you should be using.



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