

One Dark Cloud on Otherwise Cheerful Horizon

Manufacturers who responded to Golfdom's queries concerning playing equipment and accessory sales, pointed to another record year as the golf market continued to boom. But one executive of a large distributing firm painted some gloom over the encouraging picture, at least so far as the pro is concerned, by suggesting that sporting goods and other outside merchants are making serious inroads into his business. Here is what the manufacturers had to say:

Golf's Growth Continues with Tougher Competition for Pros

By W. D. Schaffner

Pres., National PGA Distributors

Every post war year has brought an acceleration of golfing interest and player purchases of equipment. This gives assurance that the years to follow will, in turn, bring new highs. Credit for this upsurge goes largely to the home professional whose "grass roots" encouragement to millions of beginners has attracted their regular participation.

This effort has been helped immeasurably by The National Golf Foundation, financed by many suppliers, which has encouraged and aided the establishment of hundreds of new courses. Something new and gigantic has come into being. Perhaps the most significant development of 1960 is the proved popularity of televised golf. Still in its infancy, this type of programming will expand rapidly to influence and popularize golf even more.

It appears that 1961 will top all past years. It is difficult to focus attention on any matters of unusual significance insofar as the industry itself is concerned. Every individual golf professional should diligently analyze his particular situation. He may be less secure than careless thought could lead him to believe. Growth carries no automatic guarantee the professional will equitably share the harvest. The gain in golf has gathered an army of commercial followers.

Over 10,000 sporting goods stores now compete. This figure does not include additional thousands of department, hardware, drug, grocery, gasoline, variety, auto, sundry and other establishments which have entered the golf field. Many of these are using a tool not readily available to the professional — advertising. Much of it is phony, exaggerated or even false. Some of these come-ons appear illegal, and the government has promised to investigate. But relief will be slow to come. Meanwhile, the professionals will continue to lose sales. Although the exact information is not published, available data indicates to many observers that there are now more clubs sold outside pro shops than within. This trend seems to have started at least three or four years ago.

The home professional who genuinely desires his personal economic growth to keep pace with that of the industry must make full use of his natural advantage and talent. One method is to use his prestige constructively and combine it with the equipment he sells and the methods he employs to sell. This includes offering merchandise which is available only to pro shops and providing careful instructions concerning each article's proper use. Coupled with an ability to make sensible trades, this is his greatest competitive advantage, and should be fully exploited.

It is certainly true that the game cannot grow without the services only a professional can provide. More job opportunities are offered as a result of the increased number of courses. But the quality of these opportunities cannot improve unless the full merchandise potential of each can be captured and held.

Scored Better on Courses and in Pro Shop Sales in 1960

By Edward G. Dowling

Vp, Marketing, A. G. Spalding & Bros., Inc.

The contribution that fine equipment makes to the game and business never was more obvious than in 1960. In performances and sales of Spalding woods, irons and balls our pro staff consultants and pro customers have recorded better figures than ever before.

Every year we have built our equipment to more precise standards. Our investments in research and development personnel and facilities have resulted in startling innovations and improvements. The Spalding Distance Dot, a new concept