



Dick Naughtin, pro-supt. at Lake of the Woods GC, grew up with the forest preserve course which is located near Champaign, Ill.

## It Works Two Ways



Tom Force, salesman for Jackman Sportswear, Oak Park, Ill., calls on Dick, gives him preview of a new sport shirt line.

*Champaign county in Illinois finds it advantageous to have a dedicated professional run its public course in exchange for the shop concession. Here's how it works out . . .*

**L**AKE OF THE WOODS GC, located near Mahomet, Ill., in the Champaign county forest preserve, is typical of the many publicly owned courses throughout the country that are being expertly and profitably operated mainly because of the practical business sense, versatility and ingenuity of a single professional manager. In this case it is Dick Naughtin, who oversees the maintenance of an 18-hole regulation course and 9-hole Par 3, with the help of his wife, Alvaretta, runs the pro shop, and each year is expected to produce a profit on the golf operation for the county.

Naughtin, who broke into the game some 20 years ago as a pro assistant to Charlie Jones at the Champaign CC, grew up with the Lake of the Woods course. Under the direction of Architect Robert Bruce Harris, he supervised the construc-

tion of its first 9 in 1951 and the second 9 in 1953. Four years later he designed and built the Par 3 there. So there probably isn't a blade of grass in the entire 200 acres with which he isn't familiar. And the same may be said of the hundreds or even thousands of golfers who, between March and Christmas Day of each year, play something like 32,000 rounds at the Lake.

#### **Runs Shop on His Own**

Naughtin is a combination of employee and enterpriser. About half of the many hours he puts in in a day in overseeing the course maintenance and keeping the playing traffic moving is in the interests of the county; the other half is concentrated in trying to turn a profit in the pro shop which he operates as his own enterprise. Dick also runs a snack bar concession in conjunction with the pro shop. Besides his wife who is a combination apparel buyer, saleslady and head bookkeeper, Naughtin has nearly a dozen other employees working under his direction. These include four summertime employees who work in and around the shop as starters, salesmen and snack bar attendant and a maintenance foreman and his crew.

Lake of the Woods gets its biggest play from persons in and around the twin cities of Champaign and Urbana. Since the preserve has facilities for fishing, boating and hunting in addition to golf, and because the nine-year old course has become so well known in the east-central Illinois area, there hardly ever is any lack of golf patronage, even in the late weeks of fall. The course is fairly long and is considered quite tough by public play standards. The greens, which average about 6,000 sq. ft. in area, are planted to Washington bent on the big course and to C-15 on the Par 3. Lake players, in the estimation of Naughtin, possibly take more pride in this course than most other public layouts he has seen, if comparative appearances are a criteria. Much of this is due, Dick thinks, to the fact that Champaign county authorities have conducted a continuous education program for golfers in the proper way to treat a course.

Naughtin has 1,600 sq. ft. of floor space in which to display and sell his merchandise. This gives him plenty of room in which to keep the different types of merchandise nicely departmentalized and also provides space for a lounge area which is usually a well populated spot because Lake of the Woods' clubhouse still is in the planning stage.

Most golf salesmen who travel the Illinois territory will tell you that Dick

Naughtin moves a surprisingly large volume of playing equipment and sportswear in a year's time. His shop is as extensively stocked as perhaps almost any in the Midwest. He handles both clubs and wearing apparel in three or more price ranges because his players represent at least that many income groups.

Naughtin advertises quite extensively in Champaign and Urbana newspapers. Usually he uses a two-column, 5-in. deep ad every day for three weeks in March, tapering off in the summer and advertising heavily again in September when he runs a closeout, and in December when he pushes Christmas gift sales. Since he has been in business for nearly nine years at Lake of the Woods, he realizes a large volume of repeat business. During this time he has taken great pains to properly fit beginning golfers, including those who buy cheaper clubs, because he has found that when they return for new clubs they almost invariably buy better grade equipment. Much of his pro line sales, incidentally, come through the lesson tee. Naughtin devotes as much time as possible to working in the shop on Saturdays and Sundays since these are the best selling days.

#### **Buying Habits Improved**

In comparing sales in the public course pro shop with those at a private club, Naughtin says that there isn't nearly as much impulse buying at the former and the pro generally has to work harder to sell his merchandise. Beginners and casual or occasional players are far more inclined to buy cheaper playing equipment than regular golfers because their approach to the game is rather tentative. But if they become pretty well immersed in it they soon start thinking about buying at least medium price clubs. "When they switch from cheap to medium price balls to the top quality ones," Naughtin observes, "that's a tipoff that they're beginning to take a real interest in the game and it shouldn't be long before they'll be buying better clubs, bags and shoes." In the nine years that he has been at Lake of the Woods, Naughtin has observed that public fee golfers in general have steadily upgraded their buying habits.

This, Dick adds, would come as quite a shock to one sportswriter who tried to discourage him from taking over the Lake of the Woods pro shop on a risk basis nine years ago. "Those public fee players won't buy enough to keep you in business three months," said the sportswriter. "You're going to lose your shirt."

But it hasn't worked out that way at all.