

Golf Equipment Again Leads In Sales of Athletic Goods

Golf equipment sales again led all other sports goods in 1961, according to the Athletic Goods Manufacturing Assn. Total golf volume amounted to \$99,474,644, based on manufacturers' selling price, including federal excise taxes.

Total volume of athletic goods sold by reporting manufacturers was about \$220,000,000. Thus, golf equipment's share of total sales was around 45 per cent.

More companies reported in 1961 than in 1960 when golf sales were pegged at \$86,775,170. Thus, the 1961 sales didn't actually represent an approximate \$13,-000,000 increase as comparative figures between the two years might indicate.

The hard fact may be that due to the increasing life of golf equipment, the overall growth of the market isn't as great as it should be considering the steady increase in both courses and players.

Baseball and softball equipment was again runnerup to golf in sales volume, amounting to \$35,338,000, a decrease of about \$400,000 from the previous year. Imported gloves and balls are said to have made quite serious inroads into domestically produced baseball equipment.

Ball Sale Increase

Golf ball sales in 1961 were up to 4,559,796 dozen. A drop in selling price from 1960 reflected a percentage increase in sales of cheaper balls. Top quality balls, sold mainly in pro shops, continued to account for about 56 per cent of reported volume.

Golf clubs also dropped slightly in average value although quantity sales increased to 8,231,765. Of these, irons accounted for 5,757,149, and woods totalled 2,474,616. In 1960, 6,684,254 clubs reportedly were sold.

In 1961 about one per cent fewer high quality woods were sold than in the previous year. They accounted for about 35 per cent of wood club market. In both years, top quality irons accounted for about one-third of iron club sales.

One set of figures in the 1961 report will fascinate and perhaps puzzle marketing authorities since the average factory selling prices of golf clubs and balls

were lower in this year than in 1960. It is a sure thing that manufacturing and selling costs were higher in 1961 than in 1960.

Obviously, the demand for golf goods in grades cheaper than pro quality is strong and growing among beginners. Pro merchandising will have to consider, with sound foresight, this condition.

Golf bag sales of 716,071 in 1961 were about 1,000 fewer than in the previous year. Cart sales at clubs totalled 200,414 and were up nearly 20,000 over the previous year.

To be fully accurate, any study of figures on sales of golf playing equipment has to take into account the resale of clubs accepted by pros on trade-ins, and reconditioned ball sales. However, most used balls are sold for range use. Golf-dom's surveys over the past few years show that used clubs are taken in partial payment in about 60 per cent of pro shop sales of top quality clubs.

Fall Tour Prize Money Increased by \$72,000

Prize money on the PGA's fall tour, which starts with the Denver Open, Sept. 6-9, and concludes with the Haig & Haig Scotch Mixed Foursome in Sebring, Fla., Dec. 13-16, will total more than \$400,000. This will bring the purses for the entire season to nearly \$2,100,000, a record.

Fifteen tournaments are scheduled for the fall circuit. Sponsors of nine of them are increasing purses by from \$2,500 to \$15,000. The other six, including the \$35,000 Carling Open which has been changed from a summer to a fall event, remain the same as in 1961. The fall prizes will amount to \$72,000 more this year than in 1961.

Sponsors of five events, the Denver, Seattle, Portland and Bakersfield (Calif.) Opens and the Sahara Invitational, are offering an additional total of \$19,000 in bonuses. Prizes amounting to \$30,000 or more are being offered in six tournaments.

USGA Record Book

The "Record Book of USGA Championships and International Events — 1895 through 1961," is scheduled for publication in late May. It runs to about 250 pages, has a hard cover and costs \$5. Page size is 8½ x 11 inches. It can be ordered from the USGA, 40 E. 38th st., New York 16, N. Y.