



Dearborn CC was bought from the Ford Foundation in 1951.

Bianco: Give the Members What They Want — GOLF ACTIVITY



Faust Bianco, at Dearborn for 15 years, has developed an extensive intracub tournament program.

"Pros at many clubs don't pay enough attention to at least two details that are as basic to operating a shop as the clubs and balls they sell," says Faust Bianco, the diminutive package of energy who is the professional at Dearborn (Mich.) CC.

"I don't know if some of these fellows get carried away by pursuit of the dollar, whether they become too preoccupied with their own games, or what," Bianco continues, "but they neglect what I consider to be fundamental to the business we're in. For one thing, they don't plan, schedule and run nearly enough intracub competitions. And, second, they don't put themselves out to learn enough about the merchandise they handle. This applies even to golf clubs."



Mrs. Bianco (center) shows women's apparel in pro shop annex located in the ladies' lockerroom.



Two views of the main displays at Dearborn. Panel at left runs the width of the shop. Club display behind hat tree (at right) occupies entire wall.



Elaborating on these themes, Faust points out that it is oftentimes forgotten that a club pays a pro from around \$2,400 to \$4,000 a year. This isn't intended to be a mere retainer fee or a gratuity, although some pros seem to consider it as such. Something, reasons Bianco, should be given in return for this salary and, as far as he is concerned, it is an extensive round of golf events for Junior, women and men players.

Running club golf programs shouldn't be looked upon as an obligation so much as an opportunity for making money, says

the Dearborn shopmaster. What happens when play is stepped up through intra-club competitions? The pro gets rid of more merchandise, makes more money. The balls, clubs, apparel and miscellaneous items offered as prizes in each event add up to a real windfall in a season's time — if enough tournaments are played. What may be even more important is that rounds played at a club where there is a great deal of competitive action may run 40 or 50 per cent higher than if play is just casual.

Bianco's First Law

All this may be capsuled in what amounts to Bianco's First Law in the operation of a pro shop — More tournaments mean more play which means more merchandise consumed.

If you think Faust Bianco — all 123 pounds of him — is merely talking and not playing a good game, consider these figures: Between mid-June and early September, 18 Junior events were staged at his club in 1962; 30 tournaments of various types were played by the Women's 9-hole club last summer; the Women's 18-hole club held 35 competitions between late April and mid-September; as for the Men's schedule, it looked like something drawn up for the pro circuit. There were 40 dates listed for the five-month period.



Assistants Bob Hay and Gregg Grezlik are encouraged to develop a merchandising sense along with other things they have to learn about shop operation.

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Altogether, these add up to nearly 125 events for a single season. The 1963 season promises to be just as busy.

31,000 Rounds Played

If you're not completely impressed by the above figures, take a look at some more. The approximate 400 players at the Detroit suburban club posted 31,000 rounds in 1962, the most that were played at any 18-hole layout in Michigan. This isn't a record for the club, by the way. In 1961, when the weather was a little more cooperative, the Dearborn swingers managed a high of 34,550 rounds.

Bianco doesn't claim, by any means, that he is the sole instigator of all the golf that is played at the Michigan club. It started back in 1947 when Faust came to Dearborn CC at the time the club was leased from the Ford family. The 150 or so persons who formed the nucleus around which the present large membership has grown, decided that theirs was going to be a club at which great emphasis was going to be put on golf. They hired Faust with the understanding that this was what they wanted.

With this kind of enthusiasm, it wasn't too much of a job to get the various intra-

club events established. By 1951, when the club was purchased from the Ford Foundation, at this time the owner of the miscellaneous properties once held by the Ford family, just about everyone who played golf at Dearborn took part in the Men's, Women's or Junior programs. It has been that way ever since with the expansion of the intracub activities over the years being pretty closely tied to the expansion in membership.

"So, as you can see," says Faust Bianco, "my job now is to keep things coordinated. The organization work is pretty much in the past. We add a new event here and there and knock out some that aren't too popular. The main idea is to keep improving the competitions so that there is no letdown in enthusiasm for them. You can't take anything for granted with intracub events. Interest in them will fall off if the pro gets lazy and doesn't keep it aroused."

Three-Year Tenure

Still inclined to minimize his role in the success the club has had with its intramural competition, Bianco points out that it is due in a large measure to the fact that officials and committee members

at Dearborn CC serve for three years. Thus, anyone who agrees to serve on such as a golf committee doesn't do it with an interim attitude, but takes on the job realizing that more than just a routine contribution is expected of him.

Another thing that possibly assures success of the intracub events is that Dearborn CC is a neighborhood institution. Many members live within walking distance of the entranceway and hardly more than a handful live more than three miles away. So, it doesn't take long to summon a quorum when a tournament is scheduled. In the wintertime, incidentally, the Men's and Women's leagues repair to the bowling lanes, practically intact, to continue their competitions. So, there's an implication that members of Dearborn CC are just a big, congenial family.

Two-Way Knowledge

As for the merchandising phase of the business, Bianco feels that a pro's success depends on two things — thorough knowledge of the goods he sells and equally thorough knowledge of what the members will buy. The former comes

from making a close study of newspapers and magazine advertising and occasionally "shopping" the better department stores to keep abreast of the latest developments in apparel. In order to know what the manufacturers of playing equipment have in the production or design stage, Faust makes three or four annual trips to the factories. He doesn't stop here, either. A salesman rarely walks out of the Dearborn pro shop with an order without having traded a display or merchandising tip that Bianco might use. "You should never pass up a chance to pick a salesman's brains," he says. "Get one talking a little and he'll tell you something you should know."

Files on The Customers

Fifteen years of association with practically the same customers has given the Dearborn pro a fairly exhaustive knowledge of what they will buy. But, once, again, he doesn't take anything for granted. Fairly extensive card files are kept on each member with emphasis on his or her preferences in colors, styles, brands,

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Give Members What They Want

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etc. In a few cases, a record is kept of a member's dislikes, especially if these are pretty definitely asserted. Bianco encourages his assistants to mentally catalog as many of the members' preferences as possible. It is because, as he says, "You do something for a customer's ego when, without asking, you can hand him the brand he prefers."

Wife Runs Shop Annex

When it comes to merchandising and knowing the customer, probably nobody at Dearborn CC is quite the equal of Bianco's wife, Virginia. She is established in a branch pro shop located in the women's lockerroom at the club. This may be the only setup of this kind in the country. Mrs. Bianco handles the ordering and sales of all apparel and accessories sold to the women players through the shop annex and, of course, is called upon when a consultant's or troubleshooter's advice is needed in the main emporium.

Tom Kinsley is Bianco's No. 1 assistant in the main shop and handles a good deal of the teaching. Joe Cook, Jr., Mal

Coulter and Bob Hay work under him, and Greg Grezlik serves as the caddiemaster. Another of Bianco's summertime assistants is attending Notre Dame University on an Evans scholarship and is majoring in mathematics. So, it's apparent that the Dearborn shopmaster not only picks brains but surrounds himself with them.

Has A Voice, Too

Before coming to Dearborn CC, Faust Bianco put in 21 years at the CC of Detroit. That implies that he's been around long enough to be grizzled and gnarled, but the fact is he started at the latter club as a caddie when he was about eight or nine years old. So, he has quite a few years of running club tournaments and selling golf merchandise ahead of him. If you are wondering about his given name, Faust, it was bestowed upon him by his father, who happened to be as interested in opera as his son is in golf. When Faust is in voice, incidentally, he'll give you a stirring rendition of the "Soldiers' Chorus" which, of course, is from the opera of the same name as that of the Dearborn shopmaster.