

Pro Sales Still Key to Condition of Playing Equipment Market

BY HERB GRAFFIS

Figures that tell what the score is in golf business have been studied with special care lately. Golf businessmen are trying their best to determine the weak spots in the current boom. There also is some concern about the producing capacity of playing equipment being enlarged to the danger point. This fear is not unique in golf business. It happens in many booming industries and temporarily disturbs markets and manufacturing companies. The golf business is trying to maintain sound growth. The effort isn't aided by government policy which has businessmen in every field afraid of cooperation in market stabilization.

Pro shop retailing is the key to the condition of golf playing equipment business. The 1962 figures on club and ball sales by manufacturers show that top quality clubs and balls, which are sold almost entirely through pro shops, accounted for 61 per cent of the total dollar volume of sales reported.

Pros Get 54 Per Cent

Of the golf ball sales of 5,232,145 dozen reported, about 54 per cent were of the top pro grade. That percentage hasn't changed much for ten years. In 1962, the report shows that woods of the pro top grade accounted for 36 per cent of the 8,686,960 woods sold by reporting manufacturers. In 1952, pro quality accounted for 31 per cent of the total woods reported sold. Maybe the five per cent increase indicates that the pro quality woods generally are sold in sets of four while the lower priced woods usually are sold singly or in sets of two or three clubs.

There is one big difference in percentages of the top quality clubs sold in 1952 and 1962 and that is in the irons. In 1952, pro quality irons accounted for 42 per cent of the total sales. Last year the first quality irons accounted for only 30 per cent of the total. What that change means

is something for manufacturers and professionals to determine. It may be highly significant.

A ten year comparison of bag sales is not possible. In 1952 there were three price classifications reported and the 1962 figure of 882,180 bags are divided into four price brackets with the top class accounting for 90,922 bags.

Golf goods accounted for 39 per cent of sales reported by Athletic Goods Manufacturers' Assn. in 1952 and 41 per cent in 1962.

Ten-Year Course Increase

GOLFDOM's list of U.S. golf courses shows an increase of 1,495 from the 1952 overall figure to the 1962 total of conventional courses (Par-3s not included) of 6,521.

The ten year increase of private 18-hole or larger clubs was 474 to a 1962 total of 1,704. There is a decrease of 204 private 9-hole clubs in the figures for that period. The decrease does not show true marketing picture as some of the 18-hole increase represent the building of additional 9s at private 9-hole courses.

Other facts noted in the 1952-1962 growth:

Semi-private courses grew by 1,004 to 2,250 (1,512 9-hole and 738 18-hole or larger.)

Public courses increased by 121 to 872 (410 9-hole and 462 18-hole or larger.)

Population increase in the ten years was about 19 per cent so golf course growth was about 15 per cent ahead of the increase in population.

When you look at the 10-year picture of golf playing equipment sales, as compiled by Ernst and Ernst, accountants, for the Athletic Goods Manufacturers' Assn., you may get the impression that everybody is buying golf clubs, balls, bags and other items and the easy way to get rich is to jump into golf.

Golf and Other Sports Goods Sales

	1952	1957	1961	1962
Golf Equipment	\$ 39,511,870	\$ 60,711,924	\$ 99,474,644	\$110,361,324
Baseball-softball equipment	20,494,320	33,074,046	35,338,280	36,664,472
Athletic shoes	9,007,185	22,073,466	27,192,344	30,290,359
Inflated goods	11,216,394	15,127,632	22,514,092	22,721,347
Tennis, badminton & related equipment	5,119,397	8,359,231	8,480,103	9,692,932
(Boxing gloves, helmets and pads, athletic cloth- ing and miscellaneous items added to make				
Total Sales	\$100,297,177	\$163,279,859	\$219,379,246	\$241,563,826
(Factory selling price including excise tax)				

Golf Course Growth

	1952	1957	1961	1962
9-hole courses	2974	3232	3439	3618
18-hole or larger	2052	2321	2746	2903
Total	5026	5553	6185	6521

Figures as shown in the tabulation that accompanies this article do not include all the major items of playing equipment produced and sold. Estimates are that possibly 95 per cent of the clubs and 90 per cent of the balls are made and sold by the reporting manufacturers.

Sales Triple in 10 Years

But the figures are close enough to show that nearly three times the dollar volume (at factory selling price, including excise tax) of golf goods was sold in 1962 as compared to 1952. But where the mystery comes in is that there certainly are not three times as many golfers now as there were in 1952 and, unfortunately for some, clubs, balls and bags are quite durable and don't change style often or radically enough to boost sales out of sight.

In ten years the number of rounds of golf didn't triple the 1952 figure in reaching an estimated 102,600,000 rounds. The 1962 rounds were up 29 per cent over 1957 and the 1952-1957 jump was about 25 per cent.

It also is a sure thing that the number of golf courses didn't triple in the past ten years.

Why The Big Increase?

So what is the explanation for the big increase in golf equipment sales? A possible explanation is that tremendous amounts of clubs and balls are sold to people who

play only a few times a year in some years. GOLFDOM, after years of checking with manufacturers, pros at various types of courses, and with some store buyers, figures that a man or woman who plays 15 or more times a year is a "golfer" in money that adds up to much in the equipment market. There are about 5,000,000 men, women and children who play 15 rounds or more a year. Your guess is about as good as that of anybody else in figuring those who play fewer than 15 rounds a year, but just for easy figuring make the total of all golfers 6,000,000.

Interests Are Mutual

Ball sales reported for 1962 were 5,232,145 dozen. The unreported volume of new balls and repaints probably brought the total ball sales for 1962 well over 6,000,000 dozen. Very few who have been around the golf business for long would estimate that ball sales average a dozen per year per golfer. The balls are too tough, don't cut easily, stay white and don't get lost now that short, weedfree rough (if any at all) lines the fairways. Don't forget that women play about a third of all rounds and they don't go wild buying golf balls.

Market figures plainly show the mutuality of interest of manufacturers of playing equipment and the professionals who sell it. When the pros are doing



Jimmy Thomson, Tony Manera, Claude Harmon, Harry Cooper, J. Bud Geoghegan and Charlie Biori, Metropolitan and New Jersey section PGA pros, recently staged a clinic for members of the New York Downtown A. C. and their guests. Several hundred people attended. This was the 16th year the clinic was put on. Claude Harmon, Winged Foot shopmaster, was the mc.

okay the manufacturers make money.

A close look at pro shop business is being taken by the smart and successful professionals as well as by manufacturers. The pro credit situation has some weak spots which undoubtedly are due to unwise buying.

The professional at an 18-hole club may carry 6 to 12 different brands of clubs and 8 to 10 brands of balls. A store seldom will carry more than three brands of clubs or balls. Manufacturers' advertising has to be sharply directed to move merchandise out of pro shops. "Close-out" clubs are affecting the top price lines. In some sections consignment deals on clubs are making pros careless or are confusing them. There are professionals who are not sure whether they actually bought clubs they have on display but eventually they get educated by falling into the middle between a salesman and a credit manager.

PGA to Have 168 in Championship Field at Dallas AC CC

There will be 168 players in the field when the 45th PGA Championship is played at the Dallas Athletic Club CC, July 18-21. A total of 79 professionals are exempt from qualifying and it is estimated that 925 others will vie for the 89 remaining spots in qualifying rounds.

The minimum purse for the 1963 Championship is \$30,000. Last year, Gary Player, who received \$13,000 for winning the PGA title, and the next four finishers collected approximately this much, with total prizes exceeding \$75,000.

Current champions of 27 of the PGA's 34 sections are among those exempt from qualifying. More than 40 PGA circuit regulars also are on the exempt list.

Texas, which normally would be allotted six qualifying places, earns three additional ones because it is the host section. Thirty-five sectional preliminary rounds are being played at this time to determine which players will get the remaining qualifying spots.

The 7,046 yard, par 71 Dallas AC course was designed and constructed by Ralph Plummer, Ft. Worth architect. It is a little less than 10 years old. A creek that meanders through the course has to be contended with on nine of the 18 holes. The greens average 7,000 square feet and, according to Graham Ross, Dallas AC pro, No. 16, which slopes in all directions, is probably the toughest to negotiate. There are 70 bunkers on the course.

Very few changes have been made in the course since the PGA assigned the Championship to Dallas AC two years ago. However, 300 trees have been transplanted to step up the demand on strategy and tactics. The longest hole is No. 4 — 573 yards; the shortest holes are Nos. 5 and 13 — both 206 yards.

N. J. Caddie Scholarships

New Jersey State GA has awarded six caddie scholarships for 1963-64 to youngsters who are employed at member clubs. They are made in conjunction with Rutgers University and are worth \$2,000, or \$500 a year. This is the seventeenth consecutive year that the caddie awards have