



Exterior view of the pro shop at the 67-year old Dayton (O.) CC. Club gets such a heavy play from more than 500 members that starting times have to be reserved five days a week.

Be Alert to Every Possible Sales Opportunity, Says This Pro

That's been Norm Butler's policy for the 25 years he has been in business and he hasn't had many lean seasons



"Too many pros take their market for granted!"

"No member should pay a premium to shop in a pro shop!"

Who is this radical? What's he trying to do to the rest of us — ruin our business?

The radical in this case isn't an upstart professional — one perhaps who is just a few years off a college campus — and has illusions of revolutionizing the pro merchandising picture.

At Dayton Since 1954

He has been around — in fact, for 25 years. His name is Norm Butler and he has been at Dayton (Ohio) CC since 1954. Before this he served several years at the Wright Field course, also in Dayton, and at one time was at Scioto in Columbus.

For a fellow who has been at three choice spots in central Ohio for a quarter century, you'd think that he would feel that he has some kind of a sinecure that should guarantee him a large volume of

Norm Butler (r) is on the verge of closing a sale of a set of irons to Dr. Peter Granson. Butler says pros should sell more clubs.



Ed Likens studies bag display at Dayton CC. He may not realize it, but Dayton pro staff probably has noted that he's at least thinking about buying and will move in to make a sale.



Ed Brown, caddiemaster and assistant pro, rearranges sports apparel. Walls in interior of shop are a combination of off-white cement block and gray barnwood. Heavy rug is green with a golf design, and spot is a flexicor square drop.

sales year in and year out, and profits to match.

"I've never labored under that illusion," says Butler. "I have to scratch for sales the same as the next fellow. There is no reason why I shouldn't"

Scratching for sales, in Norm's estimation, adds up to nothing more than being alert and enterprising.

Alertness, as the Dayton pro defines it, means that the pro has an eye open,



Leo Weber was Norm Butler's assistant for about five years, but left early in 1963 to take a job with a trading stamp company.

and an ear cocked, for every possibility. In a shop that is patronized by something like 350 men and 250 women (although the number has been reduced this year at Dayton CC) there may be as many as 100 sales possibilities offered each day. That doesn't mean that the pro and his assistants are going to cash in on all, but if they are horse players, so to speak, percentage will take care of them. "Percentage," Butler observes, "is a wonderful thing if you try to make a big volume operation out of it. Even if your average is relatively low, you can still come out well ahead of the game."

How to Play Percentage

How does a fellow go about being alert enough to play percentage? Basically, it's quite simple. Every time a golfer gives a single item in the shop more than a passing glance, that's a tipoff that he may be interested in buying it. "You don't have to rush up and try to overwhelm him with an on-the-spot sales pitch," says Norm Butler, "but you can ask him if he's interested. Many times he is.

"And," continues Butler, "after you've been around a club awhile, you should learn what members can be given that little push that makes buyers out of them without delay, just as you should find out which react to the slow or rather coy approach. I've had to wait as long as two years to sell a few sets of clubs to some of my players.

Try This Line

"One fellow," Norm recalls with a smile, "put off buying a set of irons until finally I told him people around the club were talking about his terrible equipment. That moved him in a hurry. I've used that line on a few others since then, occasionally with some success."

Enterprise, as the Dayton pro sees it, adds up to promoting as much lesson business as possibly can be handled, and in having as many weekly golfing events going as the course has room for. Butler doesn't claim there is anything original or copyrighted, so far as he is concerned, in this formula, but there often is a let-down in both lessons and club tournaments if the pro isn't enterprising enough to keep pushing them.

At Dayton CC which is 67 years old, started as a 6-hole club and has been at its present site for about 62 of these years, the Men's Golf Association is a going concern. Membership in the organization costs \$12 a year, there are, or were, 360 members in 1962, and all fees go toward providing prizes in the tournaments that are held on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays.

\$4,000 Plus Guarantee

This assures pro sales revenue of between \$4,000 and \$5,000 a year, a tidy income that the shop can depend on. But the pro staff has to run the tournaments, maintain the handicaps and keep a record of the prize awards — a fair exchange, in Butler's estimation. The Association tournaments are so well established that interest in them rarely, if ever, wanes, but if it were to drop off, the Dayton pro points out that he would do everything possible to bring it back. You don't throw what amounts to a fat bread and butter account out the window.

If you are looking for thoughts and ideas that may give your sales a boost, Butler suggests that you toy with these:

- Don't be afraid to sell putters on an approval basis; this is an effective way of keeping them moving;

- Every pro should sell more clubs. The reason most don't is that they either

fail to keep abreast of improvements in clubs from year to year, or they don't emphasize these improvements in trying to sell them;

- December volume can be as large as that of May or June. But to get it you have to use Golfdom's Christmas Shopping catalog and keep your shop open in December. The business you don't get in December probably will go to some other merchandiser. In short, you won't get it later.

- If you were to go back and check sales records, you would find that December business can be an excellent guide in ordering for the coming year — perhaps the best that is available.

- Stop worrying about the discount houses. Qualitywise, everything is in your favor in competing against them. This is the point to emphasize. Your customers know this but they have to be reminded of it from time to time.

Relies on Past Figures

Comparative figures play a very important part in the operation of the Dayton CC shop. Norm Butler not only constantly checks his sales and purchases on a month by month basis, but goes back sometimes as far as two or three years to see how these items compare with those that have been recorded in the past. By doing this he gets a pretty fair idea of what kind of a profit he can anticipate for the current season and, in many case, it may determine his buying for the balance of the year.

Checking against purchases that have been made in past years, he points out, can be quite enlightening. A type of item that sold well in 1960, for example, may have been lost in the shuffle simply because the shop staff didn't realize, or had forgotten, what a good seller it actually was. This applies in particular to apparel. When it is seen that a potentially strong selling item of this kind is being overlooked, an effort is made to bring it back.

Unlike quite a few pros, Butler has no qualms about allowing the club handle his billing and thus seeing what his volume is. He gives several reasons for doing this. One is that it saves him perhaps \$700 or \$800 each year in bookkeeping expense. Another is that the club not only sees what his sales income is, but it finds out what the shop outgo amounts to. Finally, it lays to rest the many rumors that may make the rounds about the pro getting rich "off us poor golfers."