



Dick Masterson (seated) is head pro at Sunnehanna. His assistants are Dave Metro (l) and Don Graffis.

## Cleaning-Storage Isn't Routine Job at Sunnehanna

*That rack room produces a good income and should get as much attention as the rest of the pro operation, says Dick Masterson*

**D**ick Masterson of Sunnehanna CC in Johnstown, Pa., has the reputation of being one of the most capable pros in Western Pennsylvania.

Sales reps for both equipment and apparel manufacturers and professionals at surrounding clubs vouch for this. "Dick doesn't do anything spectacular like standing on his head when he's making a sale," says one of his fellow journeymen. "He hasn't got the biggest or best looking shop in the district, and he doesn't have any more members than the rest of us. But when the books are closed at the end of the season, I have a hunch he has sold as much merchandise as anybody around."

Now in his 13th year in the golf business, the last four of which have been spent as the shopmaster at Sunnehanna, Masterson is pleased and he pleads, just a little puzzled, to hear all the good things that are said about him. "I just plug along," he says. "This business is about 90 per cent plugging and 10 per cent hoping that what you do for your players is appreciated. Every pro in the business has heard that several thousand times and so I'm afraid that perhaps they won't find a description of how my shop is operated very enlightening."

### Only One Commodity

A little probing of how things work at Sunnehanna reveals that Dick Masterson lives by an important piece of intelligence he picked up as an assistant to Dick Shoemaker at Beechmont in Cleveland, and later as Lew Worsham's aide at Oakmont in Pittsburgh. It comes down to: "Service is about the only commodity we have to offer. If it's anywhere near what it should be, the patronage of the members is its reward."

Service, in the estimation of Masterson, primarily covers two aspects of the pro's operation: (a) the handling and storage of clubs; and (b) the club's teaching and tournament program. Everything else is secondary to, or is an offshoot of these two functions.

Handling clubs in the back room, the Sunnehanna pro concedes, is a pretty prosaic thing, and it's probably because of this that the cleaning and storage operation at a great many clubs is far from being a model one. But it provides a steady source of income, perhaps from \$3,000 to \$4,000 a year at most clubs, and Masterson feels that the pro and his staff should extend themselves in making this service the best possible one.



Exterior and interior views of the Sunnehanna pro shop are shown at top. At bottom, is the heavily trapped 10th hole with No. 14 behind it. This view is typical of the club's up-hill, down-dale course.



He and his assistants, Dave Merto and Don Graffis, try to take the monotony out of the rack room operation by keeping ahead of their clients in spotting clubs and bags that are in need of repair. "We're always a little chagrined," says Dick, "when the member has to request that we repair his equipment. We like to spot needed repairs before he does."

#### Check With Front Office

The Johnstown professional feels that so far as tournament activity is concerned, members at most clubs get a fair share of this. Pros as a whole, he concedes, are quite ingenious at devising club events in which the entire membership can participate from time to time. If there is any



failing here at all, it may be in not keeping in touch with the front office and finding out when parties and other clubhouse affairs are going to be held. "Many times," says Masterson, "a pro may miss

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## Storage, Cleaning Aren't Routine

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a chance to tie in a tournament with a social affair simply because he isn't aware that a party has been planned. We all know that every time he overlooks or misses a chance to throw in an extra sweepstakes, mixed event, or maybe a twilight tournament, he's passing up a chance to make some money."

Tournaments, it's granted, are held often enough at most clubs to satisfy the competitive urge of practically all the members. Masterson, though, wonders if the same thing can be said about clinics. "Many pros give up on them too soon," he opines. "They start out strong in the spring, but by June all the group lesson sessions are forgotten. We run a Junior teaching program from June until September. We arrange free instruction for women in July and August. Maybe we should even do this for the men.

### Good for Business

"The point is," Masterson continues, "that clinics are good for business. They lead to more individual lessons. They may not always produce much in the way of on-the-spot sales, but ultimately they help your sales. If you work with the kids and help them to become fairly good players, you're going to realize a lot of patronage benefits from their parents. You give away a little free time in running clinics, but you can charge it off to building goodwill, something you're always trying to do in a pro shop. In the long run, it's convertible to money."

There are about 400 playing members at Sunnehanna, 125 of them women. This is a total increase of about 75 over 1962 and, according to Masterson, has greatly stepped up play and sales at the Johnstown course this year. It is estimated that women's play is at least 25 per cent greater than it was in 1962.

### Has an Artistic Touch

The display room at the 14-year old Sunnehanna pro shop encompasses about 400 square feet, which is rather small considering that approximately 90 per cent of the 400 players are steady patrons. The walls of the shop are faced with pegboard which goes a long way in helping to solve the eternal quest for sufficient display area. Four niches, used for showing shoes and apparel, give an artistic touch that is further embellished by a pair of golf still-lives that were painted

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for Masterson by one of his members, Mrs. Gladys Henderson.

Masterson carries a \$20,000 inventory at the start of the season and then lets it dwindle to about \$10,000 by October. Since he stays open through December, and does quite a thriving holiday business, his stock carryover into the new season is comparatively small. Practically all of his advertising is handled through the club's monthly bulletin, although he supplements it with a spring letter announcing the opening of the shop. One of the best sales standbys he has is an apparel catalog, published by Ernie Sabayrac, Inc., through which he sells on an order basis. In the last two years, Masterson has supplemented his clothing line with sports coats, ties and shirts plus women's handbags, but sales of these items have only been fair.

### Owens Golf Cars

All revenue from the golf car concession goes to the Sunnehanna pro shop because Masterson is the outright owner of the club's 10 cars. The number of vehicles is restricted since the course, located 2,200 feet above sea level and high above the city of Johnstown, is repleted with dips and rolls. The car rental fee is \$7.50 for 18 holes and \$4 for 9. The liability policy that Masterson carries on the cars also covers his merchandise and the clubs that are stored with him.

Some manufacturers' representatives point out that Dick Masterson does a somewhat better job of selling clubs for them than most pros in the area. Once again, Dick disavows any particular talent in this endeavor, saying that he does no more than most in keeping an eye out for a possible sale. His best selling clubs are the wedge and putter. The wedge, for example, serves as a talking point that can lead up to sales not only of this club but of others. "Most players," Masterson observes, "still don't own wedges. Those who do, may have old copies that don't compare with later models. You demonstrate why the newer wedges, with wider flanges and front edges that don't dig too far into the sand, will help them improve their trap play. You let them play around with the club for a while and many times it sells itself. When this sale is made, you suggest that new woods or irons may produce the same good feeling that the wedge has. It's all a matter of suggestion."

As for putters, Masterson and his assistants constantly offer to let their players take out new models on an 18-hole trial

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basis, figuring that they are trading on a weakness that is the lot of most golfers — they are naturally fine or even great putters, but the trouble is they never have found exactly the right club. Here's a chance to give them the putter they have been looking for. Trial runs with wood and iron sets probably are more prevalent at Sunnehanna than they are at most clubs because Masterson is convinced that at least 50 per cent of his sales are made only after his customers give the equipment the 18-hole test. The soles of the woods are taped when they are put out on trial. Nothing, of course, has to be done with the irons because their brand new look can be quickly restored with cleaning and polishing.

## Equipment Needs Overlooked

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and keep a course operating in satisfactory condition, according to numerous dealers.

C. E. Griener says: "We have made up equipment lists and maintenance budgets for people intending to build courses and, in almost every instance, they were sur-

prised to find the costs more than they had expected. In some cases the prospective builders were able to find enough money to do the job. Others gave up."

Bill Robison observes: "In the past five years, many clubs and builders have been sadly disappointed by the net cost of construction plus the cost of getting the course into playable condition.

"There was not a practical estimate of the amount of equipment necessary. The repairs and maintenance required in keeping the equipment operating was overlooked and so was the cost of equipment replacement."

J. D. Baker, sales mgr. of H. V. Carter Co., Inc. points out that new people in course building often are misled by hopes of buying machinery at low prices. They don't realize that there simply isn't any way of cutting under what an experienced equipment and supply dealer recommends as minimum equipment needs.

## Sound Start For A Course

Baker says that he recommends these things in getting off to a sound start with a golf course:

(1) Secure the services of an experi-