

*They're Pushing Ahead  
at A Slow But Steady  
Pace . . . Many of the  
Ladies Aren't Yet Pro  
Brand Conscious . . . The story is that*

## **Women's Club Sales Haven't Made Big Leap Forward**

**S**ales of women's golf clubs have not increased spectacularly in the last five years. They are moving along at a somewhat better rate than "slowly", but considering that women's play and the number of women playing golf are up at least 35 per cent over what they were in 1958, sales of clubs through pro shop outlets continue to lag.

In 1958, the pros estimated that they were selling clubs to approximately 50 per cent of their women players. Now that percentage is up to very close to 70. From the volume standpoint, the situation is brighter if, for no other reason, than there are more women players.

About one of three pros say that the majority of feminine golfers now are investing in three woods where, in 1958, they struggled along with two. As for irons, most women are content to go along with the 3-5-7 and 9 copies, the same as they did in 1958. However, more women than in 1958 are filling in their iron sets with 4-6 and 8 irons and wedges. About one out of seven women players owns full sets, according to estimates.

At one club, a pro reports, the ladies seem to have discovered the 4-iron. This came about when one of the leading women players at the club began telling everyone what a great weapon this club is. It wasn't long before other distaff swingers, seeking to emulate her success as a player, became interested in buying 4-irons and a mild boom was on. The same thing has happened with the sand wedge at numerous locations, although most pros point out that the majority of women are still satisfied to use 9-irons in extricating themselves from traps. A wedge, however, remains an excellent starting point for talking the ladies into expanding their iron sets.

Two out of three professionals, recent-

ly queried by Golfdom, say that they have their women's club displays set up in a separate department, and more than 90 per cent attach price tags to the clubs as well as the golf bags that are displayed along with them.

Approximately an equal number of shopmasters say that confidence in the pro and gratitude for his service are as instrumental as club prices in persuading women to buy playing equipment in the golf shop. Lesson tee suggestions also play an important part in the sale of clubs. Attractive shop displays, most pros agree, don't do any harm, but few feel they supply the spark that moves women to buy clubs. As one pro puts it: "You can sell apparel on the strength of good displays, but clubs are another matter."

### **Don't Know Values**

He accounts for this with the observation that women are completely brand conscious where sportswear is involved, but perhaps 75 per cent of them don't know an expensive make of club from a cheap one. "Golf clubs are golf clubs as far as the ladies are concerned," says this pro. "They haven't been sufficiently impressed with the idea that people play better with better playing equipment."

The champion salesman of women's clubs among pros queried by Golfdom undoubtedly is Ole B. Clark of Longmeadow (Mass). CC. He estimates that 85 to 90 per cent of the ladies who play at his club have bought their playing equipment from him and, of this number, 65 per cent own full sets. Nearly 250 of the 650 Longmeadow players are women. How does Clark account for his almost unbelievable success?

### **Teaching His Mission**

"I have made a mission of teaching," he says. "I want all my members to derive as much satisfaction as possible from play-



Joe Redanty, pro at LeRoy (N.Y.) CC, feels that pros at small clubs can supplement their gross by selling advertising space on golf cars. In his first year of selling space, Redanty got \$50 per car plus the expense of lettering. Next year he plans to increase the rate to \$100 because already he has three times as many applicants for ads as he has cars. Nearby Midvale CC, which owns around 50 cars, plans to copy Joe's idea in 1964.

ing golf. I think most of them sense this. It has given them confidence in me — so much, in fact, that many of them send non-members and guests to the shop to buy equipment from me. I don't thrust any type of merchandise at anyone. I only try to sell Ole B. Clark, feeling that this will take care of the rest."

Ranking close to Clark in getting the patronage of his women players in the club sales department is Maurie Wells of Cascade Hills, Grand Rapids, Mich. "Close to 19 out of 20 of the women golfers at Cascade," Wells says, "buy their clubs from me. However, no more than one out of four owns a full set, although I estimate that the majority carry three woods, five irons and a putter.

#### Feel It's An Obligation

"Unfortunately," Wells continues, "I can't contribute much to a discussion of how to spur women's club sales. My members give me nearly 100 per cent support in buying their golf merchandise. It is something they have been doing for a long time. Probably it's because they feel it is the right thing to do."

Another who is in the 90 per cent bracket is Pat Patten of Orinda (Calif.) CC,

although he concedes that something like only five per cent of his women swingers own full sets. "It isn't so much that they won't invest in complete sets," Patten remarks, "but that many of them don't see the necessity for 14 clubs. The 5 or 10 or 15 yards difference in distance that a woman might get by switching from one club to another isn't as important to her as it is to a male golfer."

#### 9 Clubs Standard?

James D. Fogertey of Sunset CC, Sappington, Mo., and Bill Clarke, Hillendale CC, Phoenix, Md., are in the 70-75 per cent class, with sales of full sets running from five to ten per cent for both. The 9-club set (putter included), in Fogertey's estimation, has to be accepted as standard so far as women are concerned. "If we try pushing more at them," he adds, "we may build up a lot of resentment. Our apparel sales to women compensate in a fairly large way for the club sales we don't make, and we don't want to take a chance in disturbing these. But don't think I'm stopping here," the Sunset pro continues. "We're just starting to dent the general women's market. Eventually, the 10-club

*(Continued on page 107)*

that it seems to be impossible to cut down on help when children are served at them. Beverage sales, it was generally agreed, drop off when buffet type meals are served.

### May Favor Customer

Barbour pointed out that the advantage of holding buffets may well be with the customer rather than with the club. Price is one item that definitely favors the diner. There also is more for him to eat, he can pick and choose and his waiting time is reduced. But, on the other hand, he usually has to contend with a sameness in food.

As for the advantages to the club, a majority of managers still feel that buffets bring in more revenue; a show of hands revealed that three out of four say they can serve a buffet with less help than is needed for table-set meals. In addition, Barbour pointed out that both the manager and chef usually can get more recognition from members through the serving of a buffet style meal than a more formal one. "The buffet table," he said, "gives the manager a chance to display the artist that is in him. And, a meal of this kind gives the chef a chance to experiment with new dishes. If both make a hit, that is a big boost for the dining room operation."

### Women's Club Sales

*(Continued from page 66)*

set will become standard and someday, the 12-club set. These are goals we'll have to build toward — they won't suddenly develop."

"I'm inclined to agree with Fogertey," says Bill Clarke. "Five years ago I could not have claimed that 50 per cent of my women players bought clubs and apparel from me. Today, 70 per cent buy their clubs in my shop and more than 90 per cent buy all or part of their sportswear from me. That's a pretty respectable increase. I don't think I should push too hard. If my overall sales to women go up 30 per cent or so in the next five years, I'll be quite satisfied."

### They're Price Conscious

Bill Hook of Kenwood CC, Cincinnati, and Joe Paletti, Ozaukee CC, Mequon, Wis., estimate that between 40 and 50 per cent of their women golfers have purchased clubs from the pro. Neither hesitates in stating that price is the most important factor in determining whether women buy clubs or perhaps don't buy



Here is the PGA National Golf Club clubhouse and general office building as it looked under construction in mid-September. Opening is announced for late November. Two 18s adjoin the building which will cost, furnished, "around a million and a quarter," say PGA officials. PGA members have not been advised of operating budget of course and clubhouse which are features of the Palm Beach Gardens subdivision development.



them. Where clubs are concerned, Bill Hook observes, women are extremely price conscious. "They want the best, but the majority hate to pay the price. But being women, they don't feel this way about apparel." Bill's conclusion: "Change the way women think and you'll change the club sales situation."

Joe Paletti puts it this way: "The first thing a woman sees in a club is the price tag. She certainly isn't to be condemned for reacting this way. She knows better than her husband what the family golf budget will allow and she won't rationalize as much as he will in figuring how she can buy a club or a set of them. If she didn't take this attitude, perhaps her husband wouldn't be the good pro shop customer that he is.

### Tie-In With Lessons

"At any rate," Joe goes on, "most of my club sales to women are accompanied by a lesson of 30 minutes or one hour. Wom-

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en expect this and so do, for that matter, many men. Whether it is only one club, or a set, I always demonstrate at least two or three brands. I have never advertised free lessons with the purchase of clubs, but they do seem to offer a strong buying incentive or a good sales-closing one. Perhaps I and other pros should be widely advertising lesson giving with club selling, offering a series of lessons with the purchase of a set and scaling them down when fewer club are bought. This is the one way we probably can beat the competition."

Speaking of competition, the pros still are keenly aware of it. But it isn't quite as acute as it was five years ago. Sporting goods and department stores remain as formidable rivals, but there are signs that competition from the discount houses is abating. This is probably because golfers are more sophisticated today than they were in 1958 and want better equipment. This applies to women as well as men, although it is generally agreed that women aren't yet nearly as conscious of the "pro line" brands as are men. One pro writes: "It's because they aren't so status symbol oriented, if you'll pardon my high blown analysis of the situation."

### Keep Their Business

Many pros report that they continue to sell sub-pro line and reconditioned trade-in clubs to keep the women from going outside the shop to make their purchases. This is done, of course, with the thought of selling the same women better clubs later on. It is generally agreed, however, that this isn't quite as prevalent as it was five years ago, probably because the women's club buying habits have been somewhat upgraded. The lesson and the clinic are potent forces in club sales, but some pros venture the opinion that they still aren't being exploited as they should be.

Most shop operators agree with Bill Clarke and Jim Fogertey that club sales to women can't be pushed too vigorously for fear of jeopardizing other sales. It's a matter of waiting until more women are ready and willing to buy, and to increase their present 8- and 9- club sets to perhaps 10 or 12.

Mickey Wright's 11th victory of the year in the Visalia (Calif.) Open was the 51st of her career, a new record. The old mark of 50 was established by Louise Suggs.