

*Cheap golf merchandise is bringing the pro's prices under suspicion;  
He has to counter this, fight for his customers with more advertising*

Professionals throughout the United States have been shocked by baseless accusations of overcharging members for clubs, bags and balls. Complaining members cite as "proof" the advertisements that appear in some of the player magazines that the pros themselves have sold in their own shops.

These cut-price magazine ads have the usual "discount" deals, the "save-by-mail" invitations and the close-out come-ons to attract gullible people who hope to get something for nothing.

Eventually, the golfer who buys the poor quality products that are advertised becomes educated. He learns that cheap golf stuff is not for the member of a good club anymore than cheap whiskey is what he expects his club to serve his guests and himself.

## ***Why the Pro Has to Advertise***

By HERB GRAFFIS

However, cut-price golf advertising has been going on for years and probably will continue as long as it makes a fast buck for some advertisers and publishers. It has cost pros their shop concessions in some instances, and until the facts are fully revealed, the advertising of cheap merchandise will keep professionals under the cloud of bilking their members.

The problem of the get-it-cheap advertising hits the pro first, usually when he is having a tough time trying to make a living at a club where there are members not altogether qualified to belong to good private clubs. The private club is a mutual enterprise and not something spun off by the welfare state. Not having a surplus of spending money is no blot on character, but neither does it indicate private golf club eligibility.

Officials who have the unpaid job of trying to run a club on a reasonably sound business basis also are severely handicapped by members who don't know how to be members. These people haven't been educated to contribute the financial support that is essential to a good private club.

### **Tipping Over Price Structure**

The golf goods manufacturers are next in line to get hurt. The price structure in golf goods has to be balanced. Lower-price goods for newcomers and for people whose golf budget is limited constitute the quantity sector of the market. The quality sector is the pro part of the market which yields the largest revenue.

The 1963 Athletic Goods Manufacturers' census showed a reduction in the average price of golf clubs, indicating that the price-cutters are lowering the overall standards of the golf playing equipment market.

Obviously there is a pro, club official and manufacturer job of educating golfers so they will fully realize and appreciate what they are getting for their money in top quality playing equipment, expert service and convenience at the private club pro shop. It isn't only the newer members who need to be educated, but some older ones who could use refresher courses in what is expected of a golfer whose membership in a private club is supposed to be a benefit to the club.

Thousands of people who are highly desirable as golfers, and who account for heavy play at pay-play courses, need to save all the money they

can in buying golf equipment. They have to be sold on the fact that they get pro service with the purchase of golf equipment in a wide range of prices. When they become private club members, the private club professional certainly should welcome them and not drive them to buying from cut-price dealers. The pro also wants to protect his market against the damage of price-slashing advertising which offers few bargains in the final analysis.

### **Economics and Ethics Clash**

Earl Stewart, Jr., Texas PGA president and professional at Oak Cliff CC, Dallas, remarks that when economics and ethics are involved, the right answer may not always be easy to find.

Pros whose economic position is based on competing with cut-price stores don't regard themselves as unethical if their prices take sales away from other pro shops. But pros who give a vast amount of free service and get standard price on top merchandise, say the price-cutters among them are destroying the pro's reputation for quality along with the quality market.

### **Advertising Gives Pro Protection**

The efforts being made by price-cutters to come into the club market and take the pro's member purchasing away from his shop is going to be met by the strongest pro advertising that golf has seen. One reason for this is explained by a New York metropolitan district professional:

"The price-cutters advertise to take members' business and goodwill away from me," says this pro, "so I have to advertise to keep my members and their business with me. The competition has nothing more than cheap prices to offer. I have a good deal more to offer. This year, I began to tell my sales and service story through advertising. Next year, I plan to spend more in doing this. I have plenty to say."

### **Planning Pro Advertising**

A recent survey made by GOLFDOM shows that many successful pros budget their advertising on the basis of from three to six per cent of their annual sales volume. A pro in Ohio points out that his tax accountant recommends that he spend more for advertising, showing him how in past years his investments in GOLF-

## **PGA to Conduct Three Business Schools**

PGA business schools will be conducted in January and February of 1965 in Clearwater, Fla., San Francisco, Calif. and Dallas, Tex.

The Florida school, in its ninth year, will be held in the Jack Tar Hotel in Clearwater, Jan. 18-22. The San Francisco school meets at the Jack Tar Hotel, Feb. 8-12, and the Dallas instruction sessions will be held at the Executive Inn, Feb. 22-26. Curriculums of all three schools have been generally standardized and consist of 40 hours of golf professional instruction.

More than 2,300 students have successfully completed the PGA schools in past years.

Persons who meet the attendance requirements of the three schools are given certificates. Those who successfully complete the winter school course are credited with one year toward a fifth and/or final year of experience which is required for full PGA membership.

Application forms for the 1965 schools have been mailed to all PGA members, apprentices and approved tournament players. Persons wishing to enroll must return their applications 10 days prior to the opening date of the school which they wish to attend.

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DOM'S "Christmas Shopping at Your Pro Shop" catalogs paid off.

Numerous professionals report that after the Christmas Shopping catalog, letters are the form of advertising used most frequently by them. "My letters aren't exactly the last word in advertising," says a Pennsylvania pro, "but they tell what new merchandise I have to offer, what should be good buys in the coming weeks and what my members ought to have. I always try to get in a couple members' names in the way of testimonials. That goes over very well."

Frequently, pros who are strong on advertising get the help of club members who are in the advertising business. One

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## LATEST PROVEN METHOD FOR GOLF BAG STORAGE



Sample section shows the bag compartment dividers  
(Pat. Pend.) For Further Information Write or Phone

## RAC-ME

- Completely New — Stops Wear and Tear
- Lift In — Lift Out — Avoids Sliding Scars
- Accommodates All — Large or Small
- Space Saving — Increases Income
- Pays Off Investment Quickly
- Use Any Easy Index or Number System
- Prompt Delivery

**ACME IRON WORKS, INC.**

1240 Mount Olivet Road Northeast  
Washington 2, D.C.

(Area code 202) 526-1240

## Pro Must Advertise

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pro says: "I tell one of my members what I want to say and he writes it as I should say it. I only get out a letter at the start of a season and one along in late July when I want to clear out stock that hasn't been moving. I should do more of this, but like most professionals, I haven't got the advertising part of my business fully organized."

### Advertising Is A Sales Assistant

A practical slant on pro advertising comes from Texas. A Houston pro says: "I've got a young woman assistant who knows something about advertising. Her sales letters, signs, birthday and Fathers' and Mothers' Day cards have done so much good they are like hiring another assistant to do nothing but sell."

There is a fair share of pro advertising in club magazines, but unless the club's editor gives the pro special attention, the ads don't say much. However, when the pros write instruction articles they usually are decidedly good. Club magazine advertising misses many chances to focus na-

tional advertising on the pro shop. The GOLFING-pro merchandising campaign accents those tie-ups between the manufacturer's national advertising and the pro's own advertising whether it is in print or in displays in his shop.

The pro's personal advertising through local sports columns, TV and radio programs, night school classes and in clinics and demonstrations usually is remarkably good general publicity. But it is in direct, printed advertising that he needs to apply more imagination.

Shop signs are coming back and so are sales enclosures in club bills. The pro is beginning to see that his own advertising can be directed to reassert his command of the golf market. By constructive use of advertising, the professional can more than offset the destructive advertising that has lowered the quality and price standards of golf equipment, and has brought him under suspicion of exploiting his members.