

**8 per cent overall gain reported  
but 10 per cent of shops fall behind**

## **Pro Sales Increase But All Don't Share in Bonanza**

**BY HERB GRAFFIS**

**P**ro shop sales through mid-september of 1964 are nearly 8 per cent ahead of the corresponding period of 1963.

Christmas golf gift sales will boost this figure substantially as holiday sales account for the second largest month in the sales volume of numerous professionals.

The sales increase is spotty. Approximately 10 per cent of the pros haven't fared as well this year as they did in 1963. Among reasons stated for failure to beat the previous year were poor weather early in the season, unusually large business (generally at new clubs) in 1963, and the cross-fire effect of cut-price competition. Price slashing competition has hurt pros at clubs with moderate income members with increasing effect. Price cutting also has complicated trade-in deals. However, in several cases where professionals have shops at public courses, their buying, advertising and merchandising jobs had the price-cutters gasping.

### **Play Up 12 Per Cent**

Despite a poor spring in some areas and turf troubles that hit hundreds of courses hard, play this year is reported to be about 12 per cent ahead of last year. That means that approximately 122,000,000 rounds will be played in 1964.

This year, (to Sept. 15) the following new courses were opened:

18-holes and larger — 115

9-holes — 143

Par-3s — 100

In 1963, 283 standard size courses and 124 Par-3 courses were put in play.

What you have heard about the tremendous increase in the number of golfers because of the television golf impetus isn't echoed by pro reports. There has been just a normal year's growth which would bring the number of golfers (playing 15 or more rounds per year) to 5,570,000. Many semi-private course golfers have graduated to private clubs. The Par-3s have been doing a good market development job. Golf course-real estate combinations have been quite active in bringing women into the game. Farmers and their families are coming into the game as course owners and operators through the Farmers' Home Administration program for long-term loan conversion of farm land into recreational areas. Almost 60 golf courses have been built in 1964 through FHA financing.

Only a few golf course-subdivision promotions have gone broke. There's been a slowdown of under-financed promotions but, according to golf course equipment and supply dealers, most of those situ-

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### **The Selling Season . . . at a Glance**

- **Pro Sales increase by 8 per cent over 1963**
  - **Play up 12 per cent — to 122,000,000 rounds per year**
  - **Lesson business increases by a slight margin**
  - **Women buy 20 per cent of golf merchandise — take 65 per cent of lessons**
  - **Trade-ins figure in 82 per cent of new club sales**
  - **Playing equipment accounts for 62 per cent of sales — golfwear for 38**
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ations will work out in two or three years.

### **Women's Play 35 Per Cent**

With very few exceptions pros reported that lessons are "the same" or slightly ahead of the previous year. At many established clubs, the pro staff has been booked nearly to capacity for each of the past three years. Where increases have been registered, the usual figure is 10 per cent ahead of 1963. Percentage of lessons to women generally ranges from 90 to as low as 25. Nearly 65 per cent of the lessons are given to women.

Women's play at private clubs accounts for about 35 per cent of the total. At semi-private courses, women's play runs around 20 per cent. Rarely did women's play fail to increase this year at private or fee courses. The increases amounted to from 10 per cent to 30 per cent, with 20 per cent being the most frequent figure cited at both private and public courses.

At several private courses, women play half the total rounds. At many clubs there are half as many women as men golfers. Pros say that at metropolitan district private clubs almost 40 per cent of the golfers are women. Women golfers, however, haven't been getting much of a welcome at daily fee courses. But it apparently is only a matter of a few years before the percentage of women's play at the semi-private courses will be the same as at private clubs.

### **Women Buy 20 Per Cent**

Pro shop sales to women range from 5 per cent of total volume (at several public courses) to 60 per cent at several private clubs. Of all professionals reporting from a wide variety of clubs, the average of shop volume bought by women is 20 per cent.

Junior classes and play have had a good year. At numerous clubs more than 100 youngsters have been in pro classes and have played through the summer. The kid players range from 9-year-old youngsters playing three-hole competitions to 16-year-old boys and girls who score in figures their parents envy. Junior class lessons and play at most private clubs this past summer had enrollments of from one quarter to a third of the combined membership of men and women.

The percentage of trade-in deals on new

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## **Four Writers Picked Winners**

Only four of more than 150 golf writers who took part in Golfing's annual contest to name the winners of the USGA Open, PGA Championship and National Amateur were wearing their psychic uniforms when they made their selections. They were Jack Goodwin of the Minneapolis Star and Jim Falkner of the Baton Rouge Morning Advocate, who picked Ken Venturi to win the Open, and Mickey Porter, Louisville Courier-Journal and John Whitaker, Hammond (Ind.) Times, who foresaw Bobby Nichols' victory in the PGA. Not a single scribe predicted Bill Campbell's Amateur triumph.

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club sales increased over 1963. This year it is approximately 82 per cent. Only a few pros won't take trade-in clubs. A few report that only about 10 or 20 per cent of new club sales involve trade-ins, but the great majority say that in from 80 to 100 per cent of the deals, they have to take in a used set. That means, of course, that two sales have to be made.

Pros were asked to estimate what percentage of their players customarily bought their golf playing equipment and supplies away from the pro shop. There was a good showing of member loyalty despite cut-price attractions. Fee course pros say the extent of competition and its cheap prices were brutal. One public course pro mentioned that 18 retailers within a few blocks of his shop are selling equipment at cut prices.

To again illustrate that there isn't an "average" golf club or semi-private course pro shop are figures on the division of pro shop sales between golf playing equipment (balls, clubs and bags) and sportswear and shoes.

The division ranges from 90-10 with clubs, balls and bags being the big selling items to 70-30 with apparel and shoes accounting for the larger share of the revenue. Overall at both private and fee courses, shop sales revenue for 1964 has been about 62 per cent from balls, clubs and bags and the remainder from sportswear, including golf shoes.