



Cleaning & Storage

**Pros are divided as to whether rates should be increased . . .
Most make money on the service but many risks are involved**

The familiar saying, "He swings one way and talks another," might be applied to rates charged by professionals for club cleaning and storage.

When asked if these rates are high enough to assure breaking even on the club service operation, or even to realize a small profit on it, the first reaction of possibly four out of five pros is to say that they aren't.

But when it comes to putting facts and figures on paper, as several pros were asked to do in a recent *Golfdom* survey, about half say the rates are adequate. At the same time, about as many advance sound arguments for increasing the rate structure.

The average annual charge for club cleaning and storage across the country is reported as \$15.69. Two New England pros get as low as only \$10 a year for providing the service, while a West Coast shopmaster charges \$24 a year. These represent the extremes in the service levies, although in the western section

of the country the majority of pros report they get upwards of \$18 a year for the back room operation.

Break Even on Average Rate

Most pros who collect close to the \$15.69 average rate feel that they break even on the storage service, or do no worse than lose a small amount of money on it. One pro, in fact, who charges \$15 a year and stores and clean clubs for only 120 of his 500 members, maintains that he annually realizes a profit of \$400 on the service. Volume, in this case, apparently means little. This particular pro doesn't specify who runs the cleaning and storage operation for him, but the supposition is that he or an assistant handles it.

Some professionals, who hire back room attendants, state that they never have figured out to the last cent just what their profit or loss is on the club service. Several of them, however, say that they base their service charge on what it costs to hire a so-called club boy for the sea-

Club Cleaning and Storage Figures

	National	East	Midwest	West
Average Rates	\$ 15.69	\$ 16.66	\$ 15.50	\$ 20.50
Percentage of Use by Members	60.5	51.3	74.5	89
Average PROFIT or Loss	\$523 \$200	\$600 ...	\$675 ...
Percentage of Pros Suggesting Rate Increase	46	33.3	100	50

son plus insurance coverage costs. Others point out that the salary of the club boy can't be completely charged off against the cleaning and storage revenue because in many instances the employee doubles as a shop assistant, or may work part time on the starting tee.

15 Per Cent Lose Money

Actually, only 15 per cent of the pros who answered the questionnaire say they lose money on club service. In the majority of cases, their annual charge for tending members' clubs is from \$10 to \$12.

Forty-six per cent of the pros think that there should be rate increases. If their suggested rates were to be adopted, the average charge would be increased to \$22. It is interesting to note that half of those who feel that rates should be increased, report gross profits of \$400 and higher under their current setups. Their recommendations for rate increases are based on the service rendered and the problems involved in club cleaning and storage rather than on their current profit picture. One pro who reports a profit of more than \$1,000 a year at his current annual rate of \$17 recommends the greatest rate increase — to \$30 per year.

Several pros who do not recommend rate increases currently operate at a profit with higher-than-average fees. They

feel that they have established an appropriate charge and, therefore, recommend no increase.

Here's A Good Breakdown

One Rhode Island pro did some interesting figuring to support his recommended increase to \$25 per season. "An average golfer at our club plays three times a week — 38 weeks a year," he says. "That's a total of 114 times that we have to clean his clubs and 228 times that we have to remove them from the racks or return them. If we charged a straight 25 cents handling charge for each time this golfer used his clubs, we'd take in \$28.50."

Another pro, who recently came to the U.S. from Canada, states: "I am amazed at the low rate charged in the U.S. In Vancouver our yearly rate was \$30 or \$2.50 per month. Based on services rendered, this is a reasonable rate."

One pro reports that club cleaning and storage requires from 10 to 12 hours per day during the playing season. Wages for a man to handle this job run anywhere from a \$1 to \$1.50 per hour and more than one man may be needed during peak playing periods. A pro must realize \$1500 to \$2000 each season just to meet the payroll for cleaning and storage. One pro estimates that 3,120 hours per year are spent at a cost of \$5500 to provide adequate service to his 375 members. For-

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Cleaning & Storage

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tunately, this pro is one who charges a high rate, \$24 per year, and is able to realize an adequate gross.

More Playing Days

Increased play has knocked out the old "Memorial Day to Labor Day" golf season. Previously, the golfing season ran about 120 to 150 solid playing days. Now it is up to 175 to 200 days for most golfers. Seasonal rates established many years ago, in most cases, just do not cover today's extended play. One answer to this problem is offered by a pro who charges \$15 for May through September for cleaning and storage and adds a \$2 per month charge for those players who play beyond these months.

An increase in rates, many pros feel, would not drive business away. The inadequacy of many club lockerrooms for club storage, the inconvenience of transporting clubs and carts by car make pro

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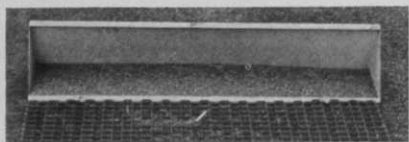
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Lanny Wadkins (r), National Pee Wee Senior Boys' champion from Richmond, Va., checks his score as interested youngsters watch at recent Orlando, Fla. tournament. Wadkins shot 73-74-147 to win title for the second year in a row. More than 225 boys and girls from 3 to 15 competed in five age divisions.

shop service a necessity rather than a luxury. In support of this thought, one of the pros at a New England club mentioned above as charging only \$10 per season, reports that 20 per cent of his members currently store their clubs in the pro shop. Another who gets only \$10 a year reports that 90 per cent of his players use pro shop storage. The relationship between the amount of the rate and percentage of members using the cleaning and storage service thus is not significant.

"The PGA should take the lead," one pro suggests, "in establishing a uniform rate for club cleaning and storage."

Plenty of Headaches

Profit and loss stories can't be told completely with figures. In businesses other than golf, rewards are usually paid in relationship to the risks and problems involved. If this principle were applied to club cleaning and storage rates, many pros feel rates could never be increased to a point where profits would cover all the problems involved. Few members and club officials are aware of the many headaches associated with club storage.

If a pro services 200 golfers, each with a set of 14 clubs, he must keep track of 2800 clubs plus bags. In addition, he's responsible for gloves, balls, umbrellas, sweaters, raincoats and other accessories. While many pros say they make additional charges for cart storage (usually 50 cents a month), one pro claims that

cart revenue is completely out of proportion to the problems involved in cart storage. "We have a number of husbands and wives who use the same cart," this pro says. "The transfer of bag and clubs plus accessory items involves danger of damage and mis-placement. To top it off, we give a special rate to husband-wife golfers and receive less revenue than we would from two other individuals.

"Every mis-placed or lost club is lost in the rack room, according to the member," this pro continues. "I know that seven out of ten times the fault lies with a caddy who may have carried double, or is due to the player's own negligence. Still, I'm the one who gets the beefs when the player discovers a club is missing. It's not only embarrassing, but I can't afford to assume responsibility for lost clubs for the sake of public relations. This situation causes a lot of friction. About all I can suggest is that the golfer check his Home Owner's insurance policy to see if it will cover his loss. But that kind of advice is seldom welcomed by an angry club member."

Insurance Rates Another Expense

In reply to a query about insurance, one pro states that he dropped his coverage because the rates are too high. Many others indicate that they rely on the members' personal Home Owner's policies. Fifty-six per cent of the pros report that some type of insurance is carried to cover the clubs stored in the pro shop. Rates reported range from \$1.00 to \$6.00 per player, further cutting the pro's cleaning and storage revenue.

Few of the shops have suffered burglaries involving the clubs stored by members. Most rely on local police checks periodically during the night. Several clubs have watchmen who check the shop during their rounds.

Campaign for Extra Revenue

Few pros feel that an increase in storage volume is the answer to the poor profit picture. Greater patronage of club cleaning and storage facilities, they say, might actually cut down whatever profit is now made if rates are not adjusted to cover additional man-hours requirements.

Four pros suggest ways to encourage members who don't use club cleaning

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and storage facilities to patronize the service. A simple explanation of the disadvantages of dragging clubs from course to car, examples of carefully cleaned and repaired clubs should convince a prospective customer of the value of pro shop storage, they say. Another pro, at the beginning of each season, mentions that there are only a few spots left in the rack room — *this always brings in several new customers.*

Christmas Sales Start

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customer's shopping and a neat, orderly shop adds to overall convenience. Kennett observes that a small shop has it hands down over the large department store, assuming that merchandise is attractively displayed and arranged in a manner that's convenient for both browsers and the pro staff.

The question of refreshments in the pro shop depends on your customers. Many enjoy the casual conviviality that coffee and rolls add to Christmas shopping. Some pros feel, however, that the practice hampers service to customers.

Additional promotion may aid your Christmas sales. Many pros follow their mailings of "Christmas Shopping" with a brief personal phone call. These are especially valuable when you know a golfer's Christmas wants and you may be of real service to someone wondering just what to give. The club bulletin board and newsletter are naturals for reaching potential customers. Important in any promotions that you may use are your efforts to reflect the high quality of your merchandise — many have found that poor promotion techniques cheapen the value of merchandise, hurt sales and reduce profits.

Len Kennett was pro at the San Gabriel (Calif.) CC for seven years before moving to Los Verdes GC several months ago.

The Encyclopedia of Golf, originally published in 1954 by Nevin H. Gibson, has been revised and contains records through 1962. Records of leading U.S., British and international tournaments are included. A. S. Barnes & Co., 8 E. 36th st., New York 10016, is the publisher.