



When groups such as the Carolinas Seniors come in, sportswear sales at Whispering Pines usually start jumping. This is because golfers are in a holiday mood, aren't counting their money and are buying freely.

## Pro Does More Than Run Shop at New Resort Club

*Whispering Pines, just becoming well established, depends on Avery Beck to bring golfers in, make their stays so congenial they'll want to come back*

By JOE DOAN

**W**hen Avery Beck moved, in 1961, from the Kinston (N.C.) CC pro job to the new Whispering Pines Club, located near Pinehurst in America's golf heartland, he had the usual misgivings that come with making a change. He was leaving a spot where he had been head pro for 11 years and had established himself in a



Avery Beck (l) and his son, Larry, operate the resort shop. Young Beck is also a PGA circuit player.

comfortable paying position for a fling with a resort operation, surrounded by ten other courses in an area covering not much more than 30 square miles. Beck's ticket, when it was written, didn't include all the customary guarantees. There was a chance he could lose some money.

There never has been any lack of vacationing golfers who descend upon the Sandhills area of North Carolina, but by the same token there isn't any lack of lodges and courses there to serve them. Where golf is involved, competition thrives in this part of the country. If legendary Pinehurst, with its 90 holes, Mid-Pines and Southern Pines don't make land developers think twice about sinking their money in golf resorts, then perhaps the others will. But Whispering Pines seems to have filled a need. It has been a profitable venture, practically from the day its 18 holes were put into play a little more than three years ago.

#### In Building Stage

Maybe this is due in a large part to Avery Beck. He is not only the pro but the club's goodwill agent and public relations man. As yet Whispering Pines doesn't have a clubhouse. The planned \$15,000 to \$50,000 homes are at the moment widely scattered through a huge development that it is hoped eventually will have several thousand residences. The resort lodge on U.S. Highway 1 is nearly five miles from the golf course. So, that means that the club's comfortable pro



Club sales ordinarily leave something to be desired at a resort course, but this attractive display tempts women visitors.

shop has to be the hub of the entire community until the development starts to fill in. And, it makes the pro more than just a person who operates the golf shop. He fronts for the whole organization.

Beck, of course, was aware of the picture when he took the Whispering Pines job. He hasn't yet decided what finally prompted him to make the move, but he feels that it was a combination of the superb 6,900 yard course that architect and builder, Ellis Maples, threaded through the loblolly pines, and the fact that a resort operation has a lure that perhaps a club job doesn't offer. Too, there may have been something of a pioneering urge involved.

Shortly before Beck was to take over in the new spot, he qualified for the 1961 PGA event at Olympia Fields in



Pro at a resort club has to know how to brew good coffee and rustle up tasty sandwiches because snack bar may be located in golf shop.



Huge, U shape practice green, located in front of the pro shop at Whispering Pines, is said to be the largest in the Carolinas.

Chicago. Anticipating that most of Whispering Pines' patronage would come from the Midwest and Eastern states, he combined his trip to the Championship with a business junket that took him into several northern states where he did some market research. Visiting shops in Pittsburgh, Baltimore and Hartford as well as Chicago, Beck was able to compile a comprehensive list of merchandise that Northern pros were reasonably sure Northern golfers would buy when they came to play a resort course in the South.

The idea worked out well. Beck was able to concentrate his original investment on golf goods and equipment that moved quickly off the shelves and racks and gave him relatively rapid turnovers in his first year at Whispering Pines. The profit he realized that first year gave him a solid base for expanding his business the second year. He feels that a study of the market he is going into is vitally important to a man who is moving into a new club, or is changing jobs. Setting up an inventory without checking to see if it has a good chance of moving can result in a large share of a pro's funds being tied up in merchandise that eventually will have to be sold at a sacrifice, or possibly

won't sell at all. When this happens, chances of expanding the shop inventory are set back or possibly knocked out completely.

#### Depends on Salesmen

The Whispering Pines pro depends heavily on the 20 or so golf manufacturer reps who visit him each month. They not only keep him abreast of what is developing in the way of new lines and the golf market in general, but they give him any number of good ideas for displaying merchandise. "There are two or three of these fellows who are very adept at display," Beck says. "I have them look over our setups and give their opinions as to how they look. I feel that they give us a fresh slant. Display is a very important part of resort shop merchandising. Players are

*(Continued on page 86)*



Golfers may be lured into false feeling of security on the front nine because they don't see water. But this large lake confronts them in a couple of spots on the back side.



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## Whispering Pines

(Continued from page 50)

in and out so much that you have to give them something that catches the eye in a hurry. So, I do a lot of brainpicking among salesmen in an effort to get the best possible arrangements."

Even though he is in a section that is highly competitive, Beck feels that his shop and the Whispering Pines course were able to get a foothold in the short time that they did because all the courses around Pinehurst are run on an ethical basis. There is no price cutting in the golf shops because of an unwritten agreement that has existed among the area pros for many years. The clubs themselves maintain a fee structure that is fair to all. A reassuring thing about the whole picture in the Pinehurst golf complex is that plenty of golfers pour in during the two heavy seasons — October-November and February-mid May. Overflows are shunted back and forth among the courses and probably more golfers than not are in-

terested in playing as many layouts as possible during their stays. As a result, there is enough business for all the clubs.

### Golfers in Holiday Mood

A resort shop usually doesn't break any records when it comes to selling clubs. Putters and wedges get a fair play and there is some demand for specially built clubs. One golfer, for example, may swing a driver belonging to a person in his foursome and decide that it feels so good that he has to have a club exactly like it. Or, all of a sudden he may decide that he wants a duplicate of a 3-wood that he has been swinging for years. The best thing about being at a resort course is that the pro catches the visitor in a holiday mood. He isn't counting his money and he will break down and buy items that he has intended to buy for years.

This is reflected in his purchases of sportswear and to a lesser degree in lesson taking. The visitor might hesitate about buying a \$25 sweater at his home shop, but often when he sees a \$50 copy in a resort shop the wallet is whisked out and

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a transaction is made in a hurry. That is why Beck goes to such great pains to make his displays as tempting as possible. Lesson business at times can be bustling because, once again, when a golfer is on a holiday he may suddenly decide to get some flaw corrected that he may have been living with for a long time. Avery does most of the teaching at Whispering Pines with assists from his son, Larry, and another aid, Sam Ward. Young Beck, incidentally, plays about 20 PGA tournaments a year.

### Job Is Attractive

The holiday or festive air that prevails around a resort course possibly makes a pro job there more attractive than one at a regular country club. Or, at least, that is the way Avery Beck feels. A shopmaster at one of the Pinehurst area clubs has to be, as already pointed out, as much a goodwill and public relations man as a professional. Running the shop may become a secondary issue because the pro has to think more about making the golfer comfortable than selling him merchandise or servicing his mere golfing needs. In a

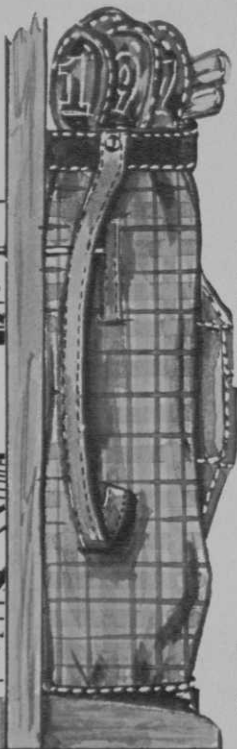
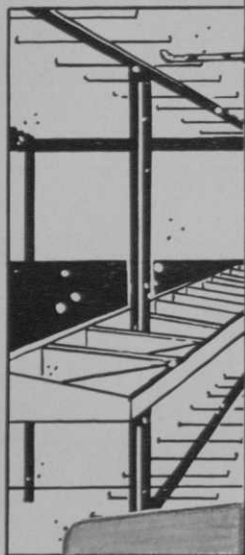
way the pro has to be as expansive as the visitors. So, the job can take on what is accepted to be more in the province of a club manager than a pro. The whole aim at a resort club is to make the place so congenial that the golfer will want to come back.

That is why Beck prefers the resort job to the club job. It gives a person more chance to move around, to show his resourcefulness. This may be even more true at a place like Whispering Pines than at an older resort club. The new club may be on the map, but it still has a long way to go to get that star in front of its name.

### Will Have 36 Holes

Whispering Pines' 18-hole course will be expanded to 27 this spring and eventually to 36. There is a large lake to contend with on the completed second nine. This is one of four lakes in the development. There is a marina on the largest of these, but motor boats aren't permitted on the other three which are reserved for swimming, sailing and fishing. Palmer Maples installed large bent greens on the

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course already completed and putting surfaces on the second 18 also will be planted to bent. Tees are planted to 328. The present 18 is completely irrigated and plans call for irrigating the second layout. Lin Harmon is the supt. at Whispering Pines.

### Has 200 Members

The golf club has approximately 200 members, half of these North Carolina residents. The balance of the membership is made up of persons from other mid-South states, the Midwest, Northeastern states and Canada. The North Carolina Ladies Championship was played at Whispering Pines in 1964 and late in the season, the Carolina Seniors staged their annual Open at the resort course.

The Whispering Pines golf courses, recreational and shopping areas, and real estate development, which will feature many lakeside homes, are being built and promoted by Sandhill Properties, Inc., of which A. B. Hardee is president. William T. Shore, vp, is in charge of real estate

sales. The resort is described as an ideal place "to spend the rest of your life." A golfer driving the winding five miles from the lodge through the pine forest and suddenly coming upon such a magnificent spot as the Whispering Pines course probably wouldn't dispute this description.

### Second Pittsburgh Golf Show

The second annual Pittsburgh golf show will be held in the Civic Arena, Mar. 12-14. The Tri-State section of the PGA is sponsoring the show which is expected to attract at least 7,000 persons. Golf clinics, fashion shows and an exhibition by Paul Hahn will be featured. Free driving ranges, sandtraps and putting greens will be available for visitors. Proceeds of the show will be divided among the Tri-State benevolent fund, Western Pennsylvania GA caddie scholarship fund, and a special fund that has been set up by the PGA section to help young men get started in pro golf.