

# Pro shop needs Woman's touch

*Let a saleslady handle the apparel; it pays in moving merchandise for both sexes.*

BY ERNIE SABAYRAC



"Never underestimate the power of a woman" may be a dusty line on Madison Avenue, but that power is only now becoming evident to the golf professional. He is discovering that, apparel-wise, women spend far more money than men—and there's nothing like a dame to help them spend it.

Also, it is becoming apparent in the pro shops that the distaff side does much of the buying for the men—and the men who do their own buying prefer the services of a saleswoman.

My organization lays claim to being the first to market nationally-advertised apparel in the pro shops. We broke through in 1949. But it was not until 1956 that we offered our first complete line of women's sport apparel, everything from millinery to footwear. This latter concentration reached its peak in the past year when our women's business definitely exceeded our men's business in all types of apparel, from head to toe.

We don't say that we started women thinking of high fashion on the golf course. We simply sensed that our golf pro friends could profit by the trend and

we went along with it enthusiastically. It has paid off for our customers and us.

Women unquestionably have much more sportswear in their wardrobes than do men. For example, there are few lady golfers who don't have at least five or six different head pieces to go with their many outfits. We believe that we were the first sales organization to capitalize on this fact; we even beat the regular retail outlets to the gun in featuring all color-coordinated apparel.

Our strength is that we can supply pro shops with several different fabrics and styles on the "to-go-with" basis, in shorts, skirts, blouses, sweaters, jackets and shoes. Now, many smart women won't buy shorts until they find exactly what goes with the blouses they already own, or vice versa. The coordinates are right there in the pro shop bins for the style-conscious to inspect, try on and buy.

Possibly a smarter move than that was our encouragement of golf pros to hire sharp salesladies. Women like to talk intimately about what they buy and the best advisor is another woman.

We are firm believers in the theory

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## WOMAN'S TOUCH

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that a golf professional should be a golf professional, which means that the greater part of his time should be spent on the lesson tee, on the first tee, or on matters most directly concerned with his club's golf program.

This need not lead to neglect of the tremendous potential in his shop's apparel business. He simply should do what any fine retail store will do and that is to engage the best possible help.

Many pros seem to think that capable female help is hard to find. This is not so. There are many women who are willing and able to do this job.

Where can they be found? Simply contact one of your friends in the retail store business with ladies' departments and tell him that you're looking for a lady who prefers part-time work to the regular hours of a store operation.

These women need most of the time before noon to get their households set up, the children off to school, etc. They are then free from around 11 a.m. until late in the afternoon.

Most clubs have their greatest play from women possibly two days a week. These are the days when you want your female assistant on the scene in the morning. The other days she should be on the job around noon, from which time on most of the male members show up. Monday is usually the off day, with half-days on Saturday and Sunday. Many women—more than you think—are available for this type of job.

Most golf pro shops, governed by local conditions, will pay women a minimum salary, but they also offer the incentive of commission payments on the merchandise sold which does not include pick-up items such as balls, gloves, etc. Five to 7½ per cent is the usual commission rate. This is in line with what a good specialty shop pays a saleslady.

It might amaze you to know how many women customers do all the sports apparel buying for their husbands. Pull them in with a fine line of ladies' sportswear and they'll become interested in "What's for hubby?" That, of course, means you should also be able to have

your saleslady show the best in the house for the spouse.

With a gal selling in the shop, a pro can boost his golf club and bag sales by spending more time on the practice tee, to drop the practice balls down for the prospective buyer of clubs. We feel that the easiest way to sell golf equipment is to bring several different clubs with varying shafts, swing weights, etc., to the practice tee and let the member sell himself on what's best for him. You can do this when you have someone minding the store.

Another pro shop innovation for which we take a bow is the encouragement of sale periods. Even a "prestige" store cannot do business without special sales, clearance or otherwise. Pros who consider this undignified are three-putting themselves out of turnover money.

The apparel business, whether it be in a retail store or a pro shop, calls for the display of everything new, style- and fabric-wise. You simply cannot sit with last year's merchandise and expect it to move this year.

Many pros do not understand the purpose and timing of sales. The purpose is to *raise cash for new-merchandise purchase*, for fall or spring. But there are also many pros who say they have members who will not buy except at a special sale. They are lucky to have this type of customer, permitting the clearance of static stock. Most sales start with a 25% discount off the retail price, which still leaves a profit margin.

A sale attracts new customers and makes better customers of your old ones. High fashion is the buying incentive, so if an infrequent customer buys a well-known brand item on sale and is impressed by its service to her, she is likely to turn up for a new item the next time rather than wait a comparatively long while before it is put on sale.

The timing of sales is simple enough. You are sold a fall-weight line and a summer-weight line of goods. Your summer-weight stock remainders should go on sale by August 1st and continue at reduced prices through the Labor Day weekend. During this period you can also move goods left over from the pre-

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## PRO SHOP

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vious fall which has the added lure of immediate wear.

The second sale should be held in April when you can dispose of most of the merchandise left over from the previous fall in addition to spring and summer items that failed to move in the previous August's sale. The theory of immediate wearability also applies here.

No pro shop should have a continuous sale, especially at a private country club. The highest quality sportswear or equipment in the way of balls, clubs, etc., should never be put on sale. However, there are many changes in balls, bags and other equipment yearly and exceptions can be made for these in planning the August-through-Labor Day sales. Clearance of the older equipment will attract the "shoppers" in every club.

But let's rejoin the ladies. Nineteen of our 20 biggest volume pro shop apparel accounts have a saleslady on the floor.

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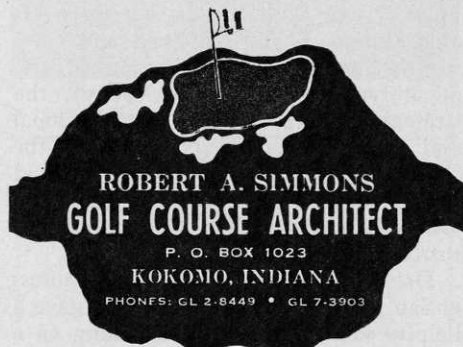
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shop apparel sales. Both sections are fully active in timely sales. Their results prove that the reduced-price clearance of season's-end stock gives you the wherewithal to buy new-style stock in depth for prime selling time.

The latest thinking by golf professionals is a definite narrowing down of the lines they carry. The successful pro shop today handles far fewer lines than in the past. The pros have learned the hard way that certain lines sell best. In the past, unfortunately, they did not buy enough of these brands but weakened themselves by purchasing unproven apparel. This created another problem: too few of the proper sizes in the shop because of the habit of buying any line "in the middle."

In other words, pros ended up in the ladies' business in sizes 12 and 14 and had nothing smaller or larger on the shelf. The shoes were always 9's and 10's and the great strength in selling by having the proper size in stock was completely lost. This is against all concepts of good merchandising.

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## PRO SHOP

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Think strongly about what I have said concerning where a golf professional's time should be spent. You will be completely respected by your membership when you reveal yourself as an executive with organizational talent. Remain the top man in taking care of the membership's demands for which you were hired—giving lessons, taking care of all golfing problems, furthering your congenial relationship with members by spending more time at the first tee. Delegate the duties of apparel merchandising in the pro shop to the person who can make it a solid success—a high-grade saleslady. Keep hiring promising assistants; put them in charge of starting, handling the overflow of lessons and especially in the promotion of junior golf under your direction.

Remember, a woman is no mystery to another woman when it comes to the buying and selling of sports or any other kind of apparel. Cherchez *your femme*.

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