



Buying for the pro shop

Careful scrutiny of past sales, pre-buying study and good financing are the keys to successful purchasing.

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Good buying is the foundation stone of any success that you, as a golf merchandiser, can hope to enjoy. You can be the greatest salesman, or an expert on display, but unless you have the right merchandise for your members, you're dead.

The starting point for intelligent spring buying is a thorough analysis of the Inventory sheets which you have been carefully keeping during the year. (See February, GOLFDOM.) Usually, the best time to do this is immediately after your Fall season closes. Your merchandise items are still fresh in your mind, and you can remember colors, fabrics, etc. Also, many items—particularly soft goods—are made up by the manufacturer well in advance of your selling season. They have to be scheduled for production, and if you wait too long to get your orders in, your delivery dates will be too late.

Taking an overall view first, study how much was spent in each inventory category—balls, clubs, bags, shoes, men's wear, ladies' wear, and accessories. If you find, for instance that you sold \$20,000 in shirts last year and only \$5,000 in clubs, it would naturally be to your advantage to budget the larger amount in shirts. This way you can allocate money correctly for each category.

Then take a look at the individual items of merchandise within each category. Besides noting those items that sold best, work out the price range which has sold to your particular members. Unless you can accurately determine your clientele, you will be at a gross disadvantage in ordering merchandise.

Pre-buying study—Before you start your spring buying, get in touch with the manufacturers, watch their ads and see what they are featuring. This way you will be well informed by the time

you want to make your purchases.

On the subject of advertising, here's a tip on the ads that manufacturers run with top grade players endorsing their products. It's well worth making a note of which player is endorsing what and keeping tabs on how good a year each man is having. For example, if a player is having a good year, you usually find quite a demand in your shop for the shirts, slacks, etc., he is endorsing.

It is important that, before you do your buying of soft goods, you research the new styles, new fashion trends and the new fabrics that will appear during the coming year. Ways you can do this are by looking at fashion magazines and newspapers, asking your suppliers and talking with good sportswear shop owners in your area.

Do not buy the first thing that a salesman brings round to your shop in the Fall. Many times you will buy something and later see something else that is better, newer and more suited to your operation. But because you have already committed your business to this first supplier, you will not have enough left to spend on what you really should have.

The better way to proceed is by shopping through all the lines first. If you are in a Metropolitan area, visit the showrooms of each manufacturer before you buy. Take a note pad and pencil with you and make notes on the things you like, jotting down also styles, fabrics and prices. After you have shopped all the lines, study your notes and then buy the things you feel will sell best.

Even if you have the advantage of visiting the manufacturers' showrooms, it is nevertheless important in the ordering of soft goods that you rely to a great extent on the salesmen who visit you as to the best selling colors and sizes. In addition, it is well to call on your own experience, if you have been at your club for any length of time.

Reputable companies—In buying, be sure that you deal with reputable companies only. They are the ones who have called on you consistently year after year. They are the ones who advertise in all the various mediums. They are the companies who carry the bulk of the golf business and have worlds of experi-

ence to draw on. When they present a line of merchandise, you can be certain that it will give you the least amount of trouble. And if something a reputable company sells you *does* go awry, you will have recourse.

Beware the itinerant—These fly-by-night peddlers have one idea: to make a fast dollar out of the golf shop. They will try and sell you untested specialty items that could prove a hard thing for you to handle—and you could get a lot of money tied up in them.

For example, it is not unusual to have a fellow come in and say that he's got a special new kind of umbrella that is bigger, better, but cheaper. Well, you get the umbrella, and, the first time the wind comes up, it blows down the golf course and you are stuck with about ten dozen of them because you made a "good buy."

Now if a regular salesman who has been calling on you for years comes in and suggests a specialty item, it might pay to listen. The reason, of course, is that he would not want to risk your business just to make a few dollars.

While we're talking about specialty items, here's a useful tip. Keep in constant touch with the club manager, and the chairmen of the social and tournament committees, so that you are well aware of any special events that are coming up in the spring. You can buy specialty items for these affairs, and make a nice piece of change.

Check "specials"—One time we learned the hard way about buying was when the fishnet shirt was first coming into prominence. One of the bigger manufacturers had a special on this item, whereby if you bought five hundred dozen you could get them for roughly fifty cents a shirt. The regular wholesale price of the shirt was something like two dollars each. We bought the shirts, but when we opened the boxes, we found that they were all smalls—and this size would barely fit a small boy. We still have some of these left, and it's eight years later!

Storage space—A most important thing to keep an eye on is storage space. Make sure that you have got everything clean and shipshape, ready to put the equipment in once you buy it. There is nothing

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worse than to have a big load of equipment come in and then have no place to put it. This impairs buying in volume, and when you do that, you are cutting down your income.

Staggered delivery—Very often the way to beat the storage problem is to ask the manufacturer to ship on a staggered basis. Many items you know you will not sell the first week they arrive—for example, woods, irons and golf bags. These items are bulky and take up a lot of storage space. If you buy a sufficient quantity, the manufacturer will be willing to ship them to you, say, at the rate of ten sets or items every two weeks. You can do the same thing with hats and caps and other items that you can buy from companies who can give you fast delivery. This way your merchandise is always fresh and inviting.

When the shipment arrives, see that you receive what you actually ordered. Check colors and sizes and make sure the company hasn't substituted a lot of "dogs" for the items you asked for.

One tip on Spring buying that we would like to pass along is that it is not advisable to buy bulky things like heavy sweaters and jackets. These are actually Fall selling items. If you buy them in the Spring, you'll have to warehouse them or have them standing around the shop gathering dust all Summer long. Other such items during the Summer for Fall delivery (after the first of August).

Moving to new club—each year there is a big turnover of professionals' positions at clubs. Quite often you will move, say, from a private club to a municipal job or vice versa. In this case, a fellow should make a good study of the kind of merchandise that will sell at his new club. Make it your first job to find out exactly what league you're in.

Influence of climate—When relocating, remember that merchandise that will sell in one region may be quite unsuitable for another. For example, in the North heavier things sell best, and slightly darker colors are popular. You would also have a hard time selling white shoes in Boston, but no trouble selling them in Memphis or New Orleans. Study what

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the better department and mens' clothing stores are selling in the area and you can get a good idea of what to buy for your shop. Remember, too, that local turf conditions can make a deeper or a shallower faced wood more suitable for your new customers.

Finance and credit—Ability to finance your purchase is one of the most important aspects of buying. Many professionals, for instance, don't take advantage of the terms of loan rates at banks.

Say you borrow \$10,000 at 6% per annum. If you keep the money for a year it will cost you \$600. Now if you use short term financing and borrow \$10,000 for a period of 120 days, one fourth of the year, you will be getting it at a quarter of the interest rate, which means you are paying only \$150 for the use of \$10,000 over the four months.

Now this is an adequate time to have the cash, because actually you should plan to finance a good size shop with one-third cash and two-thirds credit. The credit is provided by the manufacturers—provided that the professional is prompt in paying his accounts when due.

As regards building up credit, not enough professionals pay attention to it. These fellows let bills pile up on their desks—even though they have the money in the bank. They could just as easily write the checks, take the discounts and establish a much stronger credit.

Don't overlook the possibility of financing through the club. Quite often the professional has been at the club long enough to be reputable, club officials will know how much he is going to take in during the season and are quite willing to advance him five to ten thousand dollars for a short period.

What we would like to emphasize is that you should explore all means of credit and financial plans before you make your Spring orders. A fellow who does not buy boldly and in sufficient quantity is only cutting down his income—and if he does this because he hasn't arranged adequate financing and credit, he could be the world's greatest golfer—but the world's worst businessman.

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