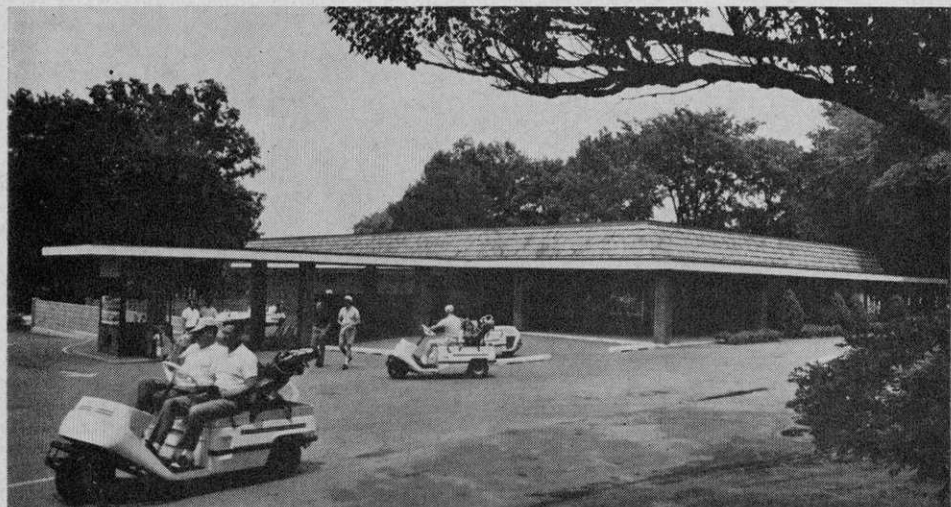


A see-through pro shop



Here's a look into a modern, glass-enclosed shop that offers club members a complete "golf" service center.

By JOE DOAN

The handsome new pro shop at the Medinah (Ill.) C.C. is something of an innovation. So much so that Medinah members prefer to call it the Golf Service Center. The prime movers among the members for the building of the Center—and other extensive clubhouse remodel-

elling—were George Hoban, and Cliff Domin, current and former club presidents, respectively, and George Dument, the current vice president.

The 70' x 100' steel, brick and glass structure sits atop a golf car storage basement. The front of the building, distinguished by an overhanging semi-mansard roof, houses a beautifully appointed shop which is glassed on three sides. The back of the building is used to store 850 golf bags and 350 carts.

The service center has influenced each member of the sales force to outdo himself in efforts to please the customer. Of course, this is paying off.

However, the new center is not the only innovation. Jack Bell, the club's pro,



Jack Bell, seated, with his staff. L. to R., D. Hill, G. Nackel, A. Palmer, M. Schmalz.

has introduced so many during the last two years that he is unable to single out any particular one that has caused sales to skyrocket.

Take, for example, the club and bag reconditioning program. Imagine that you are a golfer taking your clubs out for the first time in the spring and find that they have been refurbished from grip to sole; and that your bag has been saddle-soaped, its broken zippers repaired and a new bag tag put on to replace one that was discolored and frayed. If you found these things had been done without your requesting them, and at no extra assessment to the regular cleaning and storing charge, of course you'd be happy and somewhat inclined to increase your service center patronage.

Sometimes, dressing up a piece of merchandise in what may appear to be an inconspicuous way has a startling effect on sales. For example: About three years ago

Bell had the Medinah Club crest imprinted on umbrellas. So many golfers were impressed by this simple decoration that "bumbershoot" sales doubled for the year.

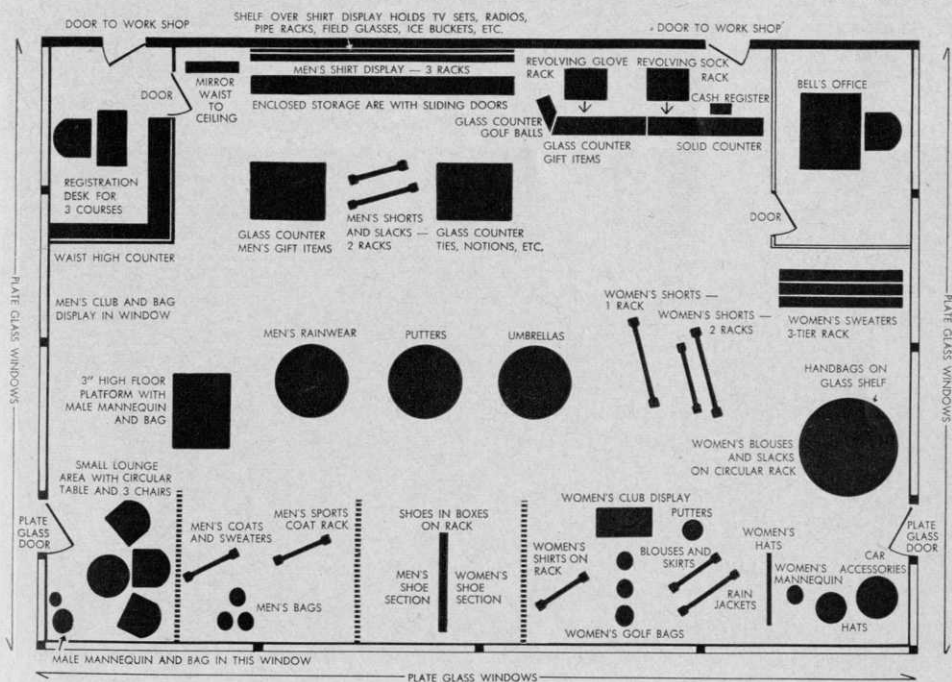
The only thing to do then was to put the crest on gloves, shirts, sweaters, jackets, shoes, golf bags and even golf clubs. Sales of these articles may not have doubled, but they certainly picked up.

Another innovation is a revolving rack that seems to have such a fascination for customers that it is like wiring money into the cash box. The rack, made up of four sections, is 16" wide and about two feet high, and was made up for Bell by Fred Haas Jr. of the New Orleans Haases. Actually, there are two of these racks, one holding 32 dozen gloves, and the other about 150 pairs of socks. Both are located on a counter near the cash register.

Golfers can't resist spinning the racks when they come to the counter to buy golf balls or pay their bills. It isn't known

continued on next page

Schematic drawing of Jack Bell's Golf Service Center at Medinah CC, Ill., below. Plate glass windows on three sides of the shop are set on two-foot brick bulkheads.





Revolving rack holding 32 dozen gloves has proved most successful "silent salesman."

SEE-THROUGH SHOP

continued from preceding page

how many spins are necessary to produce a sale, but the ratio must be high. (Jack has since added a larger, revolving floor rack for wood covers.)

Finally—and this may be the smartest thing that Jack Bell has done in his six years as Medinah's pro—a young lady was brought into the service center to specialize in women's business.

Medinah is the only club in the U.S.

with a course exclusively for women, an 18-hole, 6,100-yard affair, and more than 350 ladies play it regularly. They account for perhaps 40 per cent of sales and practically half of the 2,200 square feet of display space in the center is set aside for women's golf equipment and fashions.

Bell was lucky as well as smart when he hired Mildred Schmalz to run the women's salon. Before coming to Medinah she was employed for several years in one of Chicago's largest department stores. She also completed a modeling course and attended a merchandising school. Besides selling, she handles the purchasing of women's wear, does most of the shop's bookwork and in the spring, runs the Medinah style show.

It takes innovations, ideas and all the know-how a pro and his staff pick up in the daily routine to turn over an \$80,000 inventory twice a year. Bell's three male assistants, Don Hill, Henry Nash and George Nackel, who have come up through the cleaning and storage stage, teach, fit clubs and work on the floor. In the six years he has been at Medinah,

Over-all view of women's department at Medinah. Mannequin's attire is changed every week.



Bell has graduated five assistants to head professional jobs.

Jack Bell doesn't doubt that personnel can make or break a professional. That is why he is quite fussy in selecting the people he hires. Every male applicant is told, emphatically, that he has to do a year's stint in the back room cleaning and repairing clubs and bags. If the applicant accepts it willingly he isn't necessarily assured of success, but the Medinah pro will do everything possible to help him.

When he is promoted to the front side of the center, Bell devotes as much time as he can spare to instructing him in teaching, club fitting and sales. The assistant pros also assist in the new employee's education.

"Our training program is as thorough as we can make it," says Bell, "because we want our members to recognize that they aren't dealing with a kid who merely worked in the storage room, but with a person who is qualified to help them buy sportswear and playing equipment and teach them golf." Attendance at the PGA's annual business school has been included in training some of his aides.

When the new man is promoted, he is given six expensive sports jackets—one

for each working day of the week. He and other staff members wear jackets at all times—perhaps gold ones on Tuesdays, and then maroon, raspberry, green, red and blue on the following days of the week. The men also wear white shirts and ties at all times, even while giving lessons, another Bell innovation.

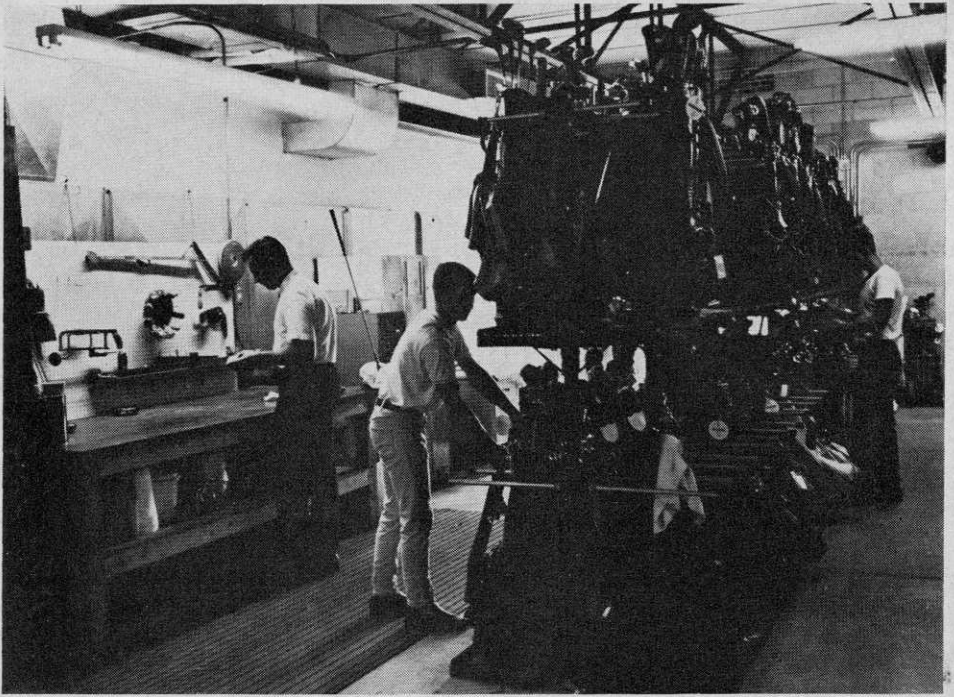
The purpose of the jackets is to lend color as well as dignity to the pro shop environment. And speaking of dignity, Bell doesn't allow signs of any kind in the golf center ("they would detract from the decor"). He refuses to put ad leaflets in billing envelopes ("no point in trying to alienate a captive audience"). And he doesn't advertise either in the club magazine or by mailing out sales letters, pamphlets, or folders.

The reason for this subtlety is that sales pressure or ballyhoo of any kind isn't necessary. "The club," says Bell, "has given us one of the most beautiful and roomy service centers in the country. We have all the fixtures to be able to display to the limit of our imagination. Our employes are trained to give helpful and courteous service. Traffic in our shop from 500 men and 350 women is almost continuous throughout the day. There is

continued on next page

Male mannequin highlights variety of men's attire offered by Bell. Note the use of golf bags.





The 7,000 square foot cleaning and storage area contains 850 bags and 350 pullcarts. Two driving nets are installed here in winter. Medinah golf center is kept open year round.

SEE-THROUGH SHOP

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really, therefore, no need to advertise."

The only thing of this nature he uses is GOLFDOM's "Christmas Shopping at Your Pro Shop."

"December has become a great month for sales in Chicago," says Jack, "for those pro shops that are open. The majority of the pros still close shop at the first whiff of winter and go down to Florida or play the Winter Tour. So, for those of us that stay open there's a wonderful market in Christmas sales.

"My business has become a twelve-month operation. I keep on three key members of my staff through the winter. After Christmas, there's a host of things they do which are impossible to get to during the season, such as club repair, bag reconditioning, painting, remodeling and changing displays."

Sportswear accounts for 65 per cent of Medinah's volume. With annual service center sales running well over the \$150,000 mark, a reasonable amount of the customer's dollar is left for buying clubs.

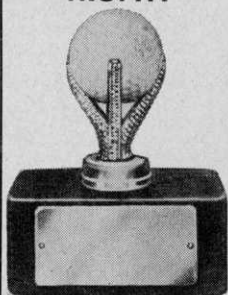
Bell is a strong advocate of offering golfers new sets to try out. Perhaps four or five of these are damaged enough each year due to the trial method of selling. They are downgraded and sold at or near cost, but Bell feels that the loss of the markup is well offset by regular sales.

The Medinah pro has several outlets for trade-ins. An important one is customers who, in many instances, arrange for him to sell their old clubs to their employees. Bell has never sold used clubs to members, even beginners. He has had a little success in selling second sets to players who take golf seriously. He recommends that they use clubs with soft shafts early in the season before their

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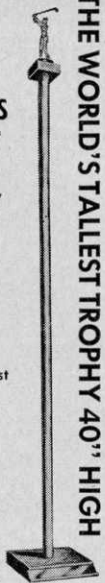


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SEE-THROUGH SHOP

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muscles are unkinked, and then switch to clubs with stiffer shafts later on.

It is interesting to hear Bell and Mildred Schmalz talk sportswear. Jack volunteers the information that men's attitudes about buying have changed a great deal in the last two or three years. "They are a lot more style conscious now than they used to be," he says. "They're going more for color and it has to blend or match or they won't buy. It's the same with fitting. Once, if there was a reasonable amount of shirt to tuck into trousers, the golfer would buy it. Now he wants to be *sure* there is enough.

"Maybe it's because we now have dressing rooms," Jack continues, "but men customers are a lot fussier about how their slacks and sports coats fit than they once were. They are using the mirrors more than they did before. Why, it's come to the point where they even bring stuff back if they're not satisfied with it!"

continued on page 72

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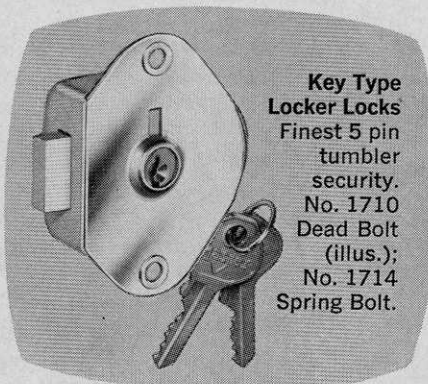
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SEE-THROUGH SHOP

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"That's the best thing that can happen in any sports shop or store," Mildred Schmalz observes. "Many times people are unhappy with what they buy but they don't take it back. That can also mean some of them don't come back—period.

"Give me the shopper who is fussy," Mildred adds. "When she leaves the shop you know she's satisfied with what she bought. Most merchandise returns are from the woman who takes the first thing she notices."

The way to get around a woman like this, Mildred explains, is to refuse to sell her an item which doesn't fit or doesn't look right on her. "Sometimes you have to be blunt," she says. "If a woman doesn't look good in green, or an outfit doesn't flatter her, it is best to tell her so. You may lose a sale now and then, but then you won't lose her business."

The trend away from sportswear com-

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SEE-THROUGH SHOP

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binations to blending in the last few years has been a big help to pro shops, Mildred points out. Formerly, when a combination was broken it was hard to get rid of the remaining piece. Now, manufacturers have introduced blending so that leftover shirts or shorts, for example, can be readily matched to a half dozen different colored blouses or shirts. It cuts down on returns to manufacturers and keeps the pro shop finances better balanced than they were before.

One thing that Mildred advocates is changing the basic sportswear supplier every two or three years. "If you switch lines now and then you can give your customers more variety," she says. "That picks up business."

"Like everyone else, designers for manufacturers get in a rut.. Their clothes carry the same body lines year after year

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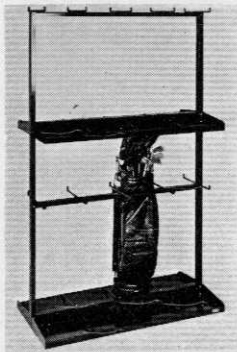


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SEE-THROUGH SHOP

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and they are inclined to get in a bind on colors. Switch away from them now and then and you are able to offer your customers something different in styles."

A full inventory of the Medinah golf service center is taken every month, but for the purpose of keeping every item in stock, especially the fast moving ones, constantly replenished, the well-known eye-check is made every day. Each assistant stakes out a section of the shop and keeps a constant inventory on it so there is no chance that popular articles aren't on hand when customers want them.

When price tags are affixed to items that go on display, they are coded so that the cost can be determined immediately. Thus, when a sale is to be held, the code tells how far a price on an article can be marked down and still kept at or above cost. Code information also comes in

continued on page 82

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SEE-THROUGH SHOP

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handy at inventory time in helping to determine the value of stock on hand.

Bell keeps a further check on his business by maintaining a daily report. It shows the income that is derived from a dozen different sales categories. Cost of sales also is shown, where applicable, along with cash payouts and the day's bank deposit. The daily report is kept on a cumulative basis so that receipts and disbursements for the month-to-date and year-to-date are shown.

This requires a good deal of bookwork, more than some pros can afford, but it is recommended by accountants for determining how a business is currently faring.

Summing up, maybe a new service center and innovations aren't the only clues to the success of Jack Bell's operation. Thorough knowledge of merchandising and fingertip control of inventory, sales and profits apparently have as much to do with it as anything else. •

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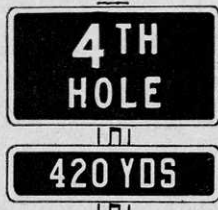
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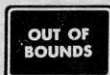
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