

HOW CONSUMERS VIEW PRO SHOPS

Only 39 per cent of golfers buy their first set of clubs in a pro shop. But three out of four got their present equipment from a pro

By the Editors of GOLF Magazine and GOLFDOM

Pro shops are still the golfer's favorite place to buy new and/or replace his golfing equipment, according to a survey conducted among readers of GOLF Magazine, GOLFDOM's sister publication. More than 84 per cent of the golfers responding to queries on their equipment-buying habits, stated that when they purchase new equipment, they will buy it through pro shops.

A new equipment survey conducted among the subscribers of GOLF Magazine shows that within the last three years, more than 63 per cent of the respondents purchased a complete set of golf clubs. In addition, more than 25 per cent of this number purchased a set of woods and well over 23 per cent, a set of irons.

This figure of 63 per cent indicates that golfers replaced their equipment with a high degree of frequency. Perhaps more important is that 74 per cent of those responding to the survey bought their present equipment in a pro shop, whereas only 39 per cent bought their first set of clubs in a pro shop. The obvious conclusion is that as a golfer becomes more sophisticated and invested in the game, he turns to the pro shop as one important instrument in improving his game.

The survey indicates that golfers are a cautious lot; 90 per cent of the respondents took one month to six months, or even longer, to

consider the purchase of new equipment before actually buying it. This would seem to indicate that the pro must continually be promoting his equipment to his customers in order to win the sales. Two-thirds of the respondents were considering replacing some item of equipment at this time. Many were considering replacement of more than a single item. Leading the list of items to be replaced were woods. Irons occupied second place and golf bags, third. About 33 per cent of the respondents said that they would replace woods; 28 per cent, irons; and 21 per cent, bags. About 18 per cent said they would replace some other items of equipment. Included in this category were putters, sand wedges and pull golf carts.

An overwhelming majority of purchases will be made within the next year—79.8 per cent. Only 7.5 per cent said they would make such purchases immediately; the remainder estimated they would take longer than one year to replace equipment.

Some interesting comments from golfers regarding purchase of equipment are quoted here to give pro shop operators an in-

More than seventy-four per cent of the respondents bought their present set of clubs from a pro shop; 21.7 per cent from a retail store.

sight into some of the reasons golfers buy as they do.

1. Consideration involved my ability to master additional clubs not included in starter set.

2. I consult my pro for correct swing weight and shaft length.

3. I have a set of irons that I could only buy in a pro shop. I have them made for me. I swing E9 woods and D8 irons.

4. Saw it, liked it, bought it.

5. Tried out a demonstration set from my pro shop.

6. Used different sets and swing weight clubs, also shaft lengths, before buying.

7. First set was bought 30 years ago.

8. I'm playing with the original set that I purchased in 1950. Was captain of high school and college golf teams.

9. Clubs are aluminum shaft.

10. Changeover from a beginner's set to a full set.

11. I knew what kind of clubs I wanted and had the club pro order them for me.

12. Probably could have been sold sooner with help by pro.

13. When I found good clubs that fit me at the right price, I bought them.

14. I needed larger clubs, wanted a better set.

15. Attracted through your ads—ordered through pro.

16. My first year golfing I had pro fit clubs right for me.

Continued on page 77

Study adds

Continued from page 74

9,400 facilities. As to the number of golf cars on nine-hole and 18-hole courses, an error arose from incorrectly stating the number of nine-hole and 18-hole facilities in the country. In fact, there were some 5,000 nine-hole and 4,400 18-hole facilities in the U.S. at the end of 1967.

The ratio of golf cars at these facilities cannot be accurately computed, other than the national average stated above. The predominant usage and number of cars, as indicated in the GOLFDOM study, would be at 18-hole facilities.

The revenue that golf cars contribute to total club revenues can only be stated in terms of a percentage of individual clubs, ranging from 2.5 per cent to 4.4 per cent depending on the size of the club, location and initial price charged.

There is no way of determining how much of green fees and car rentals is expended to offset course maintenance costs. Although there is some correlation between these two factors, the scope of GOLFDOM's First Annual Marketing and Research Study was not designed to show this relationship.

Consumers view pro shops

Continued from page 39

17. Deliberated one year because of price of clubs in pro shop.

The problems that confront the golfer and the pro in reaching a better understanding that would benefit both can be pin-pointed from the words of the following letter, a letter from a respondent to GOLF Magazine's new equipment survey.

'If my swing is wrong, I want to try to the best of my ability to correct it rather than have corrected equipment for a faulty swing. This summer I wanted to

Sixty-three per cent of the golfers responding bought a complete set of golf clubs within the last three years.

buy some better clubs, suggested by an ad I saw in GOLF. I went to a pro shop and they didn't have a brochure or literature to show me, just said, 'We know, we

know.' I was interested in seeing in black and white the specs of the clubs I was getting. I finally wrote to the company and they refused to send literature and said the only one that could help me was a golf pro. A very discouraging experience. I don't think this will change procedure, but I know a lot of amateur golfers who feel the same way.' □

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