



# PRO SHOP IN THE CITY

One time major league baseball player (catcher with six different teams) and present day raconteur and sports announcer Joe Garagiola sharpens his golf game with practice on Manhattan's East Side.

Sound improbable? Not only is it probable, it's convenient! Many of the city's golfers have found they can sharpen their game and get in worthwhile practice sessions in the course of a business day, in the heart of the asphalt jungle.

City pro shops are relative late-comers to the golfing scene. In New York the earliest of the breed arrived on the scene about 25 years ago. Then the business of the city pro shop was golf lessons. The shops were looked upon with some skepticism, and many said instruction indoors was tantamount to no instruction at all.

Despite this criticism, city pro shops not only managed to survive but have flourished and broadened their operations to the point where, today, sales of golf equipment and apparel occupy a place in the city shop that compares favorably to the country club pro shop.

The Town House Golf Club, located at 153 E. 52nd Street in Manhattan, is just that—a golf club and pro shop. Walter Reaveley, owner and head pro, offers yearly practice memberships to golfers for a fee of \$100. Members may come into the club and practice whenever they wish.

Golf instruction is a big part of most city operations. Town House, for example, is often booked for 35 to 40 half-hour lessons daily. From lessons come equipment and accessory sales.

"The important thing with people taking lessons in the city has to be that we show we're concerned with how they do. I suppose it's a personal touch, but whatever it is, they keep coming back and keep referring others to us for instruction. That's what keeps us in business," says Reaveley.

Another reason that keeps Town House in business is the use of closed-circuit television to study the golfer's swing as he takes a lesson and then show, by instant-replay, how the golfer looks. The instructor can analyze a faulty swing and correct it.

Town House offers the golfer 10 tees on which to practice or take a lesson. Along with this is a putting green and a sand trap to practice the gentle arts of blasting from bunkers and putting. "We try to give the golfer something for every situation he might encounter on the course," says Reaveley.

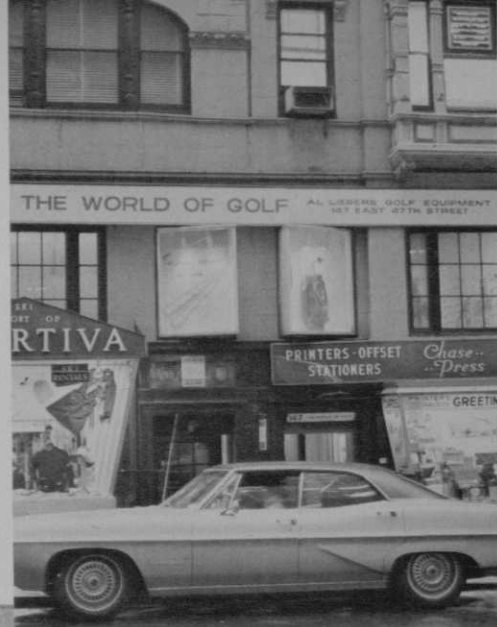


In the equipment field Town House stocks only pro-line merchandise. The shop does a healthy business in clubs and balls and a sizable amount of sales in items of apparel, gloves and shoes. The sell is soft and prices are always maintained at a competitive pro shop level.

World of Golf, located a flight above street level on E. 47th Street, was opened recently by Frank Malara, Jr., who is also the owner of Al Liebers Golf Equipment Company.

*Continued on page 50*

Amid the mayhem of Times Square, viewed (left) from the Allied Chemical Tower, Sam Sharrow's pro shop is like an oasis. At Sharrow's (fourth from top) and Richard Metz's shop (second from top) businessmen often stop for quick practice sessions during lunch hours. The World of Golf (top and third from top); uses well-lit displays to lure customers in busy city surroundings.



PHOTOGRAPHED BY LEONARD KAMSLER



## Pro shop in the city

*Continued from page 47*

Malara moved into the pro shop field as a means of expanding his club business. He decided to open his shop in Manhattan, where the Liebers plant is located and known to many. In mid-1968 he opened for business in a brownstone-type building with a limited amount of advertising and waited to see if the customers would come tripping in. He found that although many knew the quality of his equipment, there was no great influx of customers.

He was set up to give lessons and also allow practice for those who wished it. "We realized we were in the lesson business, but we were looking for bigger movement of the equipment we make. I'm a Professional Golfers' Assn. pro and thought it would only be a matter of letting people know where we are. In the beginning, our traffic just wasn't the kind you boast about. Then we installed the Swing Recorder and things began to look up."

According to Malara, the Swing Recorder takes the guesswork out of club fitting. A machine composed of complicated electronic circuitry takes a photographic record of the golfer as he swings through. It can measure the speed of the clubhead and take a picture of the trajectory of the ball and the ball in flight as it leaves the clubhead.

Like many other in-town pro shops, the World of Golf affords city golfers additional services. For example, golfers may leave a change of clothing on the premises and then drop in during the day for a lesson or whack away at some range balls. They can then shower, change back to street clothes and continue their business day.

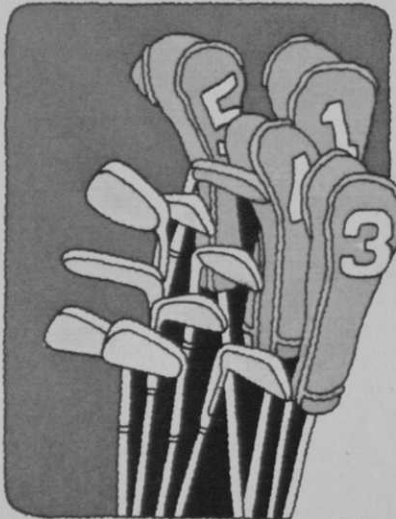
For George Boss of Golf Trading Company the challenges of operating in the city are very different from those Frank Malara cites. "I feel we're right alongside our country cousins in the pro shop

business," he states. "We've got a club here that has what I call 5,000 members."

Golf Trading is located on 35th Street a few doors west of Fifth Avenue. Its one similarity to the World of Golf is its location: one flight above street level in the building it occupies.

"We have nets here for instruction and practice but only about 10 per cent of our business is lessons. We're a pro shop in the merchandising sense of the name. We sell all types of pro-line equipment both new and used along with apparel and other golfing items."

George points out that the lessons given at Golf Trading do eventually convert into pro shop sales and in that respect his busi-



ness is like other city shops. The shop has a full schedule of lessons. Group lessons are a big source of revenue.

In the 10 years the company has been in business George and his partner have worked hard at maintaining an image that is relaxed and relaxing.

"Golf has its own mystique. A golfer wants what he thinks is best for him, and we try not to steer him to something else. I believe honoring the customer's feeling is what has spelled success for us."

"Most pros I've known have failed to make themselves known to their audience. They have a captive audience at their club, but lose out on a lot of business by

remaining aloof from their membership."

Another big part of Golf Trading's business is done in used clubs. One customer has come back to George and traded clubs five times, each time buying a new set and stepping up in class.

The very large number of people who do business with Golf Trading has prompted the partners to launch a subsidiary, Golf Tours, Inc. Golf Tours is designed to do just what the name implies, arrange golf tours, acting as tour director and making all travel and hotel arrangements—done at no additional cost to the golfer. Golf Tours profit comes from the commissionable air fares and hotel accommodations.

A city pro of a different order is Richard Metz, who has only recently entered the pro business on his own. His shop is located on Lexington Avenue between Bloomingdale's and Alexander's.

"I've got a business founded on just one concept," says Metz, "teaching people to play golf or improve their game. And just about all the people who come in here for instruction live in the city."

The shop is two flights above the street and he's added a touch of elegance to the interior with decor that's a combination of wallpaper and wainscoting. Despite the fact that he labors within the shadow of two giant retail operations he sells apparel and equipment through his shop, although admittedly this part of his business is still small.

"Right now about 90 per cent of my business is lessons, but my equipment and apparel sales are increasing every week. As a pro I have to recognize the necessity of this part of my business. A golfer has faith in his pro and will listen to him when it comes to equipment."

Descending from the height above Lexington Avenue and traveling downtown a mile or so over to the West Side, in the vicinity of

*Continued on page 52*

*From practice and instruction New York City's pro shops are branching out to offer golfers not only equipment and apparel, but a golf haven*



## Pro shop in the city

Continued from page 50

the new Madison Square Garden is the Phil Galvano Golf Academy, presided over by executive pro John Consiglio. This shop rather than being located above street level is in the lower lobby of the Penn-Garden Hotel.

Entering the shop one is immediately struck by the neatness of the merchandise and equipment display in the foreground that acts as an introduction to the netted targets in the background where

practice and instruction take place.

John Consiglio is a man of decided opinions about golf, pros and how to run a pro shop. "I feel my role is to help people enjoy themselves. The average golfer plays to enjoy himself and finds more enjoyment the better he plays. If I help him improve his game I've helped him enjoy life."

He concurs with the opinion of other city pro shop people who try their hand at the practice and instruction nets. "This is a referral business. We get calls from

people who want to learn or improve their game. After that it's up to us to give them service. Our sales depend on three things—service, knowledge and quality.

Presently Galvano's is doing about 75 per cent of its business in lessons and the remainder in equipment.

"We've always taken great care fitting our customers, being certain they get the club that's right for their type and style of play. We're now coupling this with a greater accent on merchandising and our apparel and accessories sales are on the way up. Our business is built around this personal service."

Perhaps the oldest of the city pro shops and the one that does a sizable dollar volume is Sam Sharrow, whose shop is at "the crossroads of the world"—Times Square. For Sam Sharrow, owner and founder of the shop, merchandising is the name of the game.

Lessons play a less important role in his operation with the accent on sales and merchandising. The entrance to Sharrow's shop, on the fourth floor of the 42nd Street building that houses his shop, is an eye-catching display of equipment and accessories. It is in the recesses of the shop that lessons are held and practice nets are located.

"Our business is giving the customer a proper fit. We sell everything the golfer could want, right down to the little novelties, but we know continuing sales are based on satisfied customers—customers with the right fit on the equipment they buy."

For the pro shop in the city, downtown competition is a much closer thing than it is for the country club shop, but by accenting knowledge and service the city shop has thrived.

Each of the pros cited above has recognized what it is that makes good customer relations and confidence. Each has kept his pro shop business moving ahead by recognizing that the customer has come to the shop to be served by an expert. In each instance this expert service by a professional has made the success of the city pro shop possible. □



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