

TRY PROMOTION

By JERRY CLAUSSEN

Jim Bailey, Hyland Hills' professional-manager, believes in promoting himself and his services, and he does so with gusto



A public course golf shop and clubhouse need not be cramped and austere. Proof is at Hyland Hills GC, Westminster, Colo., where Jim Bailey is the professional-manager.

In February, 1969, grand opening was held for an ultramodern new clubhouse which climaxed five years of dreaming. Its popularity since has justified the theory of thinking big.

Westminster is a growing suburban town adjoining Denver. The area's recreation district, which owns the course, has a population of about 50,000. The six-year-old, 27-hole golf course, was already jammed with 80,000 rounds a season when clubhouse planning began.

"The budget was about \$70,000 when the bond issue passed in March, 1967. But when the citizens advisory committee did their research, they discovered advantages in a complete facility that could serve as a community meeting place. Their report pushed the budget up to \$164,000," reports Bailey.

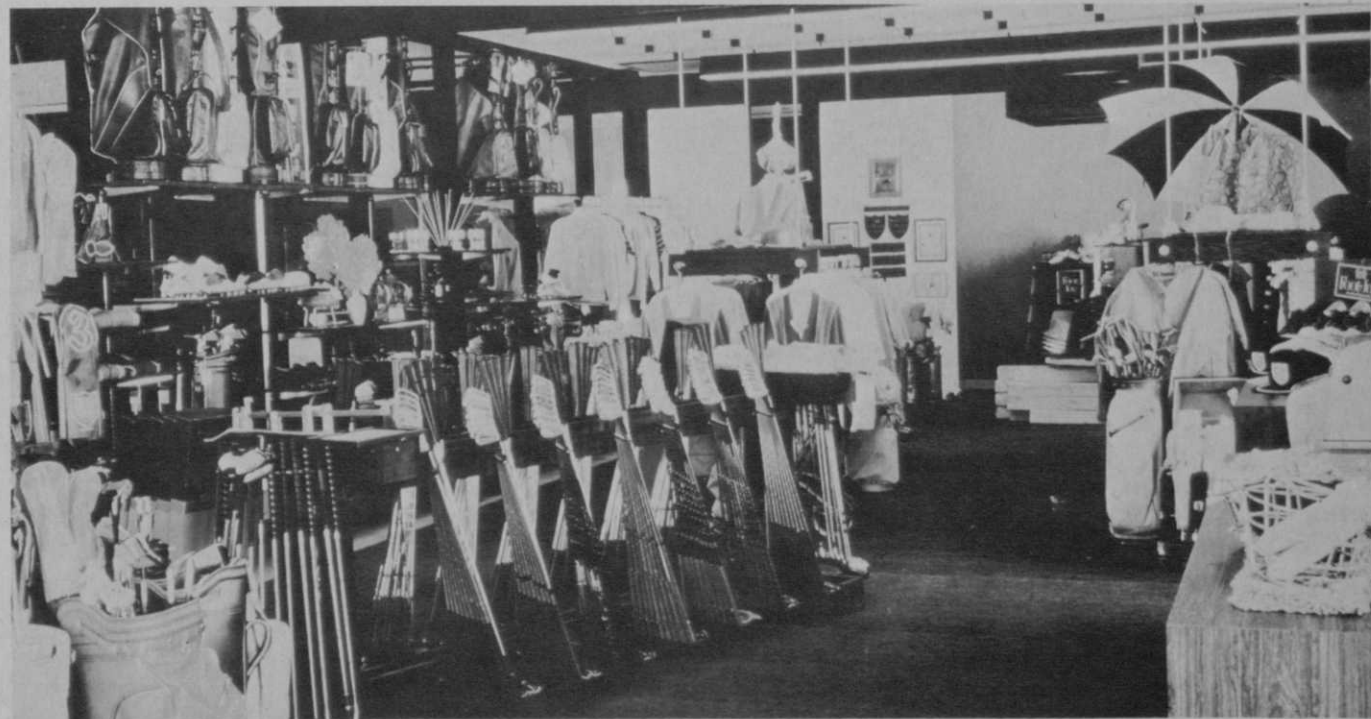
The advisory committee was composed of profession-

als in law, insurance, food service, liquor dispensing, sanitation and recreation. After a nine month study, they reported to the district board. The board agreed with the overall "big" concept, then chose an architect, with experience in restaurant and store design. Bailey and three board members met often with him over five months until plans were finished.

Construction was begun in mid-1968 and Bailey and staff moved in from their tiny temporary shop in January, 1969.

Many of the design concepts that went into the golf shop are geared to insure maximum customer traffic. From the golf shop, one door leads outside near the practice green. Two doors at each end channel traffic to and from a central hall, through the full length of the shop and past the cashier's counter. Most of the interior shop wall is glass for easy visual access to merchandise displays.

All display fixtures are portable and flexible. Some are original. A wooden floor rack holding 24 full sets of clubs plus putters at the ends was built by Bailey's then-assistant, Gary Wuster, for \$125. The commercially-made quote was \$700. An old refinished sea chest makes an eye catching, sales building "sock box."



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Bailey is assisted in display, women's merchandising and teaching by wife Marcia. During the summer the shop staff also includes one assistant, at least two starter-rangers and a woman cashier. The restaurant-bar personnel include a woman manager, at least three waitresses, cook and bartender.

The expected increase in clubhouse and pro shop business has materialized. About 90 non-golf meetings and dinners were staged in 1969. Bad weather hurt golf traffic in late spring and fall, but the clubhouse grossed \$93,000, netting \$6,000.

(Golf course income was only slightly down from 1968. Gross income was \$132,000, netting \$32,000. Almost 25 per cent came from special group tournaments.)

"Opening our clubhouse and shop in February was hard," Bailey suggests as a tip to others. "The expense of stocking and staffing would have been easier to meet nearer the peak of the golf season."

But aggressive promotion and public relations work rapidly to build traffic. Those ingredients have been big factors in building volume traffic at Hyland Hills.

The campaign to make the public aware of the new clubhouse started while it was being built, carried through grand opening and continues. Here are some techniques Bailey used:

- During construction, Bailey frequently contacted editors of two local weekly newspapers about its progress. They were supplied with facts for stories on plans, construction, unusual features. A club member took pictures to supply to the papers.

- Bailey talked up the clubhouse to community clubs, about 25 times over six months. He invited all to visit the building and encouraged use of it for meetings.

- For grand opening, the Baileys sent out about 500 engraved invitations to a special mailing list of business leaders, press, government officials and golfers. About 800 people showed up for free food, drinks and a look at the building. Cost: over \$1,000. Then a breakfast was held for dignitaries, and the state's lieutenant governor cut the dedication ribbon.

- Since the men's golf club was already established, Bailey reached many other organizations by word of mouth through his golfers.

- The week after grand opening, large advertisements were run in the two large Denver daily newspapers, announcing "We're Open," and listing the shop's services.

- Radio spot ads were also used. One especially effective series was broadcast during five-minute radio reports on the Colorado Open in June.

- With the course as part of a recreation district with many sports programs, award dinners and meetings can often be held at the clubhouse.

- Finally, this past winter Bailey made followup calls to chairmen from groups using the clubhouse last year. By early March twice as many functions had been scheduled for 1970 as were held in 1969.

"In the end, our best advertising is satisfied customers," says Bailey. "If a group holds a tournament and dinner here, we will provide all help and materials they need, right down to score sheets and pencils. If we do a good job, they want to return."

That same philosophy extends to Bailey's pro shop merchandising program. He feels personal service and advertising are musts.

"About 60 per cent of my business is in golf clubs," reports Bailey. "As a public course, my market is unlimited. But I'm competing in price range with stores. So I have to do a good job in professional service."

"What I'm trying to do is build and keep a good long-range reputation—as a person, a professional, a teacher. I stock only top line clubs. I can stand behind them. I make sure a customer is satisfied when he buys a set. I watch him hit balls, give him some swing help."

"If a man buys from me, is happy he did, has confidence in the clubs, he'll tell his friends and they come, too," says Bailey.

Here are some other promotional tips from Bailey's merchandising program that helped increase sales 20 per cent in 1969:

- Advertising on sports pages of newspapers, especially for major sales in spring and fall. Bailey says he first tried this in spring, 1968, with a few modest ads in the morning metropolitan daily paper. He had a big stock of close-outs on pro-line clubs. It was strictly a test then. It snowed the first morning an ad appeared, but he had 13 phone sales in two hours. He sold enough the first four days to pay for the ads.

- Concentrating on big sales in spring and fall, and planning merchandise orders for those peaks. For example, in early March, Bailey got in 145 sets of pro-line close-out irons. By buying in volume he can sell 25 per cent off regular and expect to move them with 30 days.

- Keeping the shop neat, clean, and well-lighted—adding special display lights if necessary.

- Using plenty of signs, on the displays, on bulletin boards, in other traffic areas, to remind golfers of new merchandise and sales. Both signs and displays are changed often.

- Having a smart, attractive sales girl in the shop. Women are more likely to buy from her and the men like to see her, too.

- Wearing his newest and best lines of golfwear, Bailey tests and models for the regular golfers who like to be in fashion.

- Working with the men's club, in planning tournaments, social events, lining up programs and speakers, Bailey is always helpful, always a friend to his golfers. Meanwhile he is trying to educate them. For example, one men's club program this year will have merchandise representatives describing the manufacture of balls and clubs. Of course, the quality of pro-lines will be stressed.

"But most important is to be available to the golfers. It's a personal business above all," declares Bailey. □