

# Buy to Suit Your Customers

## Private

"Whether we like it or not, we are in competition with everyone who sells golfing items."

By **JOHN D. MARSHALL**  
Professional, Medinah CC, Medinah, Ill.



The buying problems at Medinah CC, Medinah, Ill., are rather unique among private country clubs. Three golf courses and three times as many members as the average club create large scale problems. Our inventory varies between \$30,000 in the winter and \$100,000 in the spring. We buy many items on a quantity price break so that we can take advantage of the lower prices.

Since we have 2,400 square feet of selling area we can handle a varied stock, which includes cocktail dresses, trench and rain coats (both ladies' and men's), ladies' jewelry, ladies' hosiery, gift items such as radios, TV's, and stereo outfits. We can also carry 700 pairs of men's slacks, 1,500 men's shirts, 200 pairs of golf shoes and over 800 bottoms for

the ladies (culottes, skirts and shorts).

Sales of women's items form the biggest part of my volume because our women members have time to shop and play golf frequently at Medinah. (Medinah has a ladies' golf course.) To sell successfully to women, I believe that it is necessary to employ a woman on the staff who can sell. I have such a person and my ladies' sales have increased each year. It is easier I believe for a woman to talk to another woman about her figure problems than to one of my male assistants.

Some professionals say, "Oh I can't put that item in my shop because they sell the same thing downtown." Well—maybe that's right, but I'll put it in my shop if it's a good selling item and maybe keep that downtown business right in my own shop. If we get enough calls for a certain item, I'll buy small amounts of the item to try out. If it sells, I'll put it in my inventory in depth. Whether we like it or not, we are in competition with everyone who sells golfing items (both soft and hard goods). Today as businessmen we have to be competitive or we won't get the amount of business we would like to have. I mentioned that we have to be competitive. We can't compete with the prices at the discount store, because our professional service merits a higher profit than the people at a discount store. Also we haven't got the traffic that a discount store has because we are limited by our membership. We can't make a living on a 10 per

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## Municipal

"Many pros have not fully explored the possibilities in the soft goods business."

By **U.C. FERGUSON JR.**  
Professional, Lincoln Park GC, Oklahoma City, Okla.



The days when men played golf in their old clothes are long gone. Today is the day of fashion, and if the golf professional doesn't capitalize on the way Doug Sanders dresses, he is missing out.

Golfers wear uniforms these days, same as football players and basketball players do. And the way a player dresses and equips himself can influence his game. If he has a beautiful pro-line set of clubs that fit him and nobody else, and if he has on the right clothes, he just naturally is going to feel better. And maybe play better. And that's where the club pro comes in.

In some ways a municipal course operation is different from a country club operation. The municipal course deals in numbers of people. At a country club one deals with the same people all the time.

If your merchandise is not selling as much as it should, pick out a good local merchant and get his advice on how to buy, how to display and how to stock your shop. Next, go to your salesmen and let them know what you anticipate your wants and needs will be—for example, that you will need some close-out merchandise, provided the quality is as good as the new model.

Some people at municipal courses have a limited budget. But if you give that person the proper attention and educate him to the difference between a commercial line of clubs and the professional line, the chances are that as soon as his budget permits, he'll want to buy a set of clubs from you. If you can sell clubs to only one member of a foursome, the others will come to you for their equipment instead of going downtown.

Another point: Lincoln Park doesn't handle any low-end merchandise. I don't believe in it because the people who play at Lincoln Park need more help than Arnold Palmer. Arnold Palmer could take any club in the house and manufacture a good game out of it. My golfers can't.

It has been said that if people bought clothes like they bought golf clubs this nation would be the sloppiest in the world. A professional must teach his staff to properly fit clubs to each individual. This kind of expertise is invaluable in building up customer relations.

A country club pro shop might display only one set of clubs. Mu-

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## Resort

"Buying is still basically a guessing game . . . But records will greatly reduce the chances of making mistakes."

By HARRY OBITZ and  
DICK FARLEY



A resort golf shop should be thought of as a seasonal business, because most of the business will be done in a relatively limited amount of time. Some shops, especially in the north, are open only part of the year. Shops in other resort areas, the South for example, may be open year-round, but their main sales volume will be concentrated into a few winter months. There are a few golf resorts which enjoy steady year-round business and whose clientele will stay about the same, day in and day out. This is the ideal situation, of course, and is the easiest to buy for because one doesn't have peaks and valleys in an inventory over the year, but a continuous level of inventory.

The importance of keeping re-

ords, as a key to the past performance of a business, is particularly true in buying for the resort golf shop (or in buying for any type of golf shop, for that matter). Without the guidelines these records provide, it is impossible for the buyer to order correct quantities and best-selling items without resorting to pure guesswork. With the aid of these records correct scheduling is practically assured. The records may be as simple or as sophisticated as time permits. We are not saying that mistakes in buying will be completely eliminated because of records. Buying is still basically a guessing game and does depend to some extent on judgment, but records will greatly reduce the chances of making mistakes.

Let's look at the standard tried and proven rules for buying.

- Analyze your clientele. What type of customers will you be dealing with? Determine what price range merchandise they will buy: high, medium or low. Are they likely to be conservative or will they want high fashion and color? Remember, most people away on a holiday are inclined to buy more expensive items and spend more money than they would at home. They are relaxed, happy and usually in an extremely good mood to be sold.

- Inventory. In a resort shop, the general rule is that if the item is not in stock when the customer comes in to buy it, the sale is lost. The day of the long vacation is all but gone. With this in mind, the resort operator is forced to carry a somewhat larger inventory and not

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cent markup with the amount of volume that we have. If an item doesn't move off the shelf in the first six weeks, it goes on sale; and we invest our money into something that will move.

We as retailers have to advertise and promote just like our competitors in the retail business do. One thing some professionals forget is that December is traditionally the biggest retail month in the year so I buy extra things for my shop just for Christmas business.

I go to two merchandise shows a year, one in the late summer and one in the spring. I also go into as many different pro shops as I can to absorb different ideas in merchandising and purchasing. I go into the stores downtown that I know have been successful and look over their merchandise and maybe find some articles that would move in my shop. By doing these I can also get many ideas on displaying my merchandise and ways to make the shop look different from time to time.

You have to be able to say "no" to the salesman who calls on you. Buy what is needed and what will sell in the shop. We buy for every type of member and we buy to fit everybody's pocketbook. We range our buying as follows: men's shirts, \$5 to \$15; men's sweaters, \$15 to \$50; ladies' blouses, \$4 to \$15; ladies' sweaters, \$12 to \$50; and golf bags, \$12 to \$150.

By arranging our buying in this manner we don't miss anybody's range and subsequently have higher sales. The more you can afford to handle, the more business you can do.

One advantage we have is that we are open all year. In the winter, we have a gun club that is very active, so two years ago I put in gun jackets and shooting accessories. Sales were very high. Now I am expanding that field.

I use several guides to buy suc-

cessfully. I use my inventory control book as a guide to purchasing, both in quantity and style. April 1st gives me a starting point for 90 per cent of my new spring merchandise. By July 1st I can tell what I should put on a summer clearance sale. September 1st gives me a starting point for my fall merchandise and gives me an idea what has moved in my summer merchandise and tells me what mistakes to avoid in ordering the following summer's merchandise. December 1st gives me our final inventory for tax and also tells me what mistakes I made in my fall buying. Taking inventory in April, July, September and December gives me enough information to be able to wisely purchase my merchandise. No one has come up with a foolproof method for purchasing pro shop merchandise, but keeping adequate buying records is the best guideline I know to turn your merchandise into a profit at the end of the year. □

## MUNICIPAL

*Continued*

nicipal course players, however, are accustomed to buying in super markets. No merchandise should be kept in the back. Keep it all out front where it can be seen. If you have developed the reputation of being a good club fitter, then they'll know that when they buy quality from you it signifies your approval.

It helps, too, to have a budget plan. Make it 30, 60, or 90 days, or a year. That, plus taking trade-ins, permits your customers to buy top merchandise.

Many pros have not fully explored the possibilities in the soft good business. It's an important area. I'll be honest. I never liked to mess with it, but with the new styles and colors, it's really fun now.

In this particular shop nothing but quality merchandise sells. Three years ago, the shop sold 48

dozen of one \$10 shirt style. That proved to me and to my staff that if you stock the right merchandise the municipal course players will buy it.

We're really lucky around here. In this area we have an association of golf salesmen. They have really educated the local pros on the soft goods market. They know our potential and they know the market. They keep up with what's going on throughout the country. They help us. We help them. And that's a good deal.

Here's something that's very important: Never leave the merchandise in one place. At least once a week change it around so it looks different. There are "hot spots" and "cold spots" in anyone's shop. When there's merchandise you want to move put it in the "hot spot."

A public course shop has to be kept as neat and clean and tidy as a country club's. You must do this. And be flexible. Try new methods. See if they work. Don't be afraid to try something that is different.

Another thing. Wear what you sell in your shop. When someone admires your sweater, he can buy one by taking about two steps

I recently added a full-time woman assistant to my staff. She does everything my other assistants do. And we're selling more women's apparel too. Gals who never have played golf come to our shop to buy clothes, because some of the merchandise we handle is impossible to buy at the downtown stores.

Remember, too, that business is good—just as good as you make it.

And don't forget to follow through on all sales. If you sell one of your players a new pair of slacks, a shirt and sweater, then, the next time he comes in wearing the outfit tell him how nice it looks. It's true. He does look nice. Why not let him know it? We should be as personal as we possi-

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bly can. Tell your customers you appreciate their business, because you do.

The municipal course player likes to be called by his first name. The more names you can remember the better. It will be reflected in your total sales at the end of the year.

Business goes where it is deserved. If you take care of the people who play at your course you'll be well satisfied at the end of the year. At least I've always found it so. □

## RESORT

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spread his selection of items out too much.

- Price ranges. When buying, remember that most basic items, shirts, sweaters, shoes and bags, should be bought in more than one price range. In shirts, for example, a low price range could be \$5 to \$7.50, a medium price range, \$8 to \$11.50 and a high price range, \$12 to \$18. A large operation might choose to have items in each of these ranges in order to provide a maximum selection for his clientele. Someone else may not have a market for the low price and will go with the medium and high. Another operation may wish to eliminate the high price range and offer the low and medium only. By using the price range method, after first analyzing the potential clientele carefully, it is easy to see that the operator will have an acceptable price spread for everyone.

- Styles and colors. In this day and age, men's clothing is beginning to take on the same style and color importance that women's wear did 15 years ago. The men are still way behind, but thanks to fellows like Doug Sanders, they are coming fast. Don't be afraid to follow along and buy the new

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