

In a way this increase was an unexpected windfall. Because of economic conditions, most professionals felt at the start of the season that their players would go right on deferring their club purchases. Another rather unexpected windfall has also come from the sales of golf bags. Because these are deferrable when there is a pinch, the professionals generally thought they wouldn't move this year. But for reasons for which nobody can fully account, bag sales through mid-July were up a solid 5 per cent over 1970 and in several cases as much as 10 per cent.

As for the increase in lesson business, averaging around 8 or 10 per cent at most clubs, it is attributed to the good lesson-giving weather along with the increase in play.

If there has been a slightly disappointing facet to pro shop business this year it is in the sale of women's sportswear. In spite of the lift that has come from doubleknit slacks volume, it is no better than it was last year and in some places is dragging by a small percentage. One professional who had a poor year in 1970, ordered heavily for 1971 on the hunch that there would be a strong comeback. But it didn't work out that way. His conclusion: Women are more cognizant of the recession than men. To get rid of his overstock he pushed his annual women's sportswear sale up to July, the earliest he ever held it.

Although most professionals were happy and a few overjoyed with their sales records through mid-July, all aren't sure that they are going to show a bigger net when the profit and loss statement is drawn up for the year. The reason is that costs, mainly labor, have gone up, and not just inched up. At many shops the assistants have been around for several years and to keep them, rather substantial merit increases have to be paid them year after year. Eventually, longevity lifts them into a fairly high salary bracket. If there isn't a steady increase in sales volume and lesson revenue to take care of their increasing salary requirements, the professional has to dig deeply into what otherwise would be his net to pay them.

Here are some interesting sidelights to GOLFDOM's midwestern survey:

At one club where this year's business is up 25 per cent, a new ap-

proach to selling was introduced. Salesmanship is completely desensitized and an honest attempt is made to point out any flaws in the merchandise as well as its strong points.

About one out of four or five shops handles tennis sportswear for accommodation purposes. This is where clubs have courts, but no pros. About half of the sales are to persons other than members. Little attempt is made to sell tennis equipment.

Due to a \$1 million fire that last winter destroyed the clubhouse at one club, the pro shop is doubling as the clubhouse. Play is down because of lack of locker rooms and dining facilities and members' clubs are stored in trailers. However pro business is almost as good as in 1970. One reason is that sale of replacement golf shoes for those lost in the fire boomed early in the season. The professional reports that he hasn't been able to keep up with demands for one brand of top line ball even though the number of rounds has been considerably reduced.

In spite of the excellent weather, play at one affluent Northside club had been cut down by at least 5 per cent through mid-July. A fairly large percentage of the members are stockbrokers, and none are very optimistic about the economy making a definite recovery before next year.

According to most professionals, nobody is doing much talking any more about the recession—at least not in the pro shops. Last year it was a much discussed topic. The consensus is that either people are taking the recession for granted and aren't talking about it or most of the talk about it is carried on in the locker rooms, beyond the professional's hearing.

A professional who is at his club for the second year is riding a near 25 per cent increase in sales. He's convinced that it takes a year for members to warm up to a new man, and that a fellow just has to starve a little until he is accepted. And there is no way the breaking-in ordeal can be speeded up.

One of the brightest notes that a few professionals have detected: Expense accounts apparently are being restored and a new era of the big loose free spender shouldn't be too far around the corner. □

been popular," he adds.

In this operation only one of the two 18-hole layouts was permitted for tournament use last year, but both are being used now, which may account for part of the increased car rental where both courses are almost entirely on flat ground.

At another municipal course with a heavy trade in close-outs, business is up at least 20 per cent over last year. The professional there explained that some of the increase is the result of normal growth at a course that is only five years old.

Recently, sales stimulation has occurred, especially in club sales, from the installation of computer club fitting and swing analysis. Complete analysis is included with the purchase of clubs or sold separately to any golfer who's interested. Although club sales benefit most from the analysis, the increase in business applies to all departments of the shop. "We're learning more about our customers," the professional says, "we're giving them better service, a better selection and a bigger inventory."

Another municipal operator says that his shop volume is running about 8 per cent behind last year's and cites the increased competition from two other municipal courses which have opened recently. Also, he says, the economy in his area is pegged to the electronics industry, which has laid off substantial numbers during the year.

He is fighting back with a complete remodeling and rebuilding of his shop, which re-opened in May with an additional 1,500 square feet of floor space. Display and exposure of merchandise has been improved significantly. He has converted almost entirely to lightweight steel shafts and continues to feature specialized fittings as part of the superior service he offers to his customers. □

Nicklaus, Caponi win National Golf Day

Jack Nicklaus and Donna Caponi were the winners of the "Round of Champions" for **National Golf Day**. The tournament was held at Old Warson CC, St. Louis, Mo., and sponsored by Chevrolet.