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JOHN WALSH

It just dawned on us
that you might miss
page 63. Please don't.



Why pro shops fail to sell correct clubs: opinions

Letters and comments at the Professional Golfers' Assn. Merchandise Show expressed agreement that a large percentage of private club and public course players were not playing well because their clubs didn't fit them. Explanations of the failure to sell correct clubs or even to sell a reasonable number of new clubs a year at many pro shops were in wide disagreement, however.

Some opinions:

Pro salesman: Not enough professionals or assistants know about clubs, lofts, lies, shafts, design, construction, head features, weights or grips. Some can't tell a \$25 club from a \$15 club. How can they sell when they don't know what it is they are selling?

Senior professional: Most selling is weak now. How long has it been since you were "sold" an automobile. You have to "buy" one. Pro shops sell more apparel than clubs, not because apparel styles change or because apparel wears out faster, but because apparel is better displayed. Clubs are hidden along the walls at many pro shops.

Professional: A first-class set of woods and irons and a bag now cost about the same as a year's dues at our club. We have a good club in a city of about 40,000. Somebody's got to tell me why a head and a shaft and a grip put together cost what a club does, then maybe I could sell the story to my members.

Veteran pro salesman: The younger fellows don't know how to use the lesson tee to sell clubs. The older ones still take two or three clubs in addition to the pupil's clubs to try to learn if the clubs make a difference. Sometimes the member has outgrown his or her clubs or has been

using clubs that were bought solely on the price.

Professional: I've rather wealthy members whose clubs are seven to 10 years old. I would like to see a list of improvements in clubs that have been made in the last 10 years. Other than aluminum and lightweight steel shafts, what improvements would better a game?

Pro salesman: We all must take a new look at the top-quality club picture. When a top limit retail value of \$200 is set by the United States Golf Assn. on an amateur prize, and that's less than the price of a set of irons, something's out of line. When a man can fly to Spain and back for a golf vacation for less than the cost of a set of clubs, we all had better think about the "quality" club sales situation. Maybe it isn't the professional's fault.

Professional: When a professional's members don't realize he has the best and latest clubs that can help them, the professional is losing his standing as a golf authority.

Professional-superintendent: What we need to sell more good golf clubs is the same type of educational and advertising job that golf course equipment makers and salesmen have been doing. My grounds chairman allowed \$15,700 for new mowing and other equipment. I have been trying every way I know to get him to buy new woods, but I can't convince him new clubs are better than his 12 to 15-year-old clubs.

Cape Cod Turf Managers' Assn. is lucky to have as its volunteer publicity man **Owen Griffith**, now retired. For years Griffith was golf editor of the Hartford (Conn.) Courant and an official of the Golf Writers Assn. He now lives in Chatham, Mass. **Stanley Brown** of the Whaling City CC, New Bedford, Mass., is the Cape Cod group's president, so the association

isn't geographically cramped. **John E. Moss**, Bass River CC, won the Cape Cod TMA championship last fall. **Brian Cowan**, Eastward CC, Chatham, is treasurer. **Milton Brown**, Allendale CC, New Bedford, is secretary. Griffith says these fellows don't just meet to talk. When a fellow member, John O'Connell of the Blue Rock course, had an emergency situation, his association comrades came in to help with brains, muscle and cheers.

Remarks in this column about the enduring works of art of the old masters of golf course architecture and their influence on today's designs brought reminders of the classic jobs of **Herbert Strong**. He was first secretary-treasurer of the PGA. Among his courses are Canterbury at Cleveland, Saucon Valley at Bethlehem, Pa., Ponte Vedra near Jacksonville, Fla., and Manoir Ichelieu in Canada. When he died, he had built more courses on which national championships were played than any other man. He was also a professional-superintendent. His brother Leonard came along when course maintenance became a heavy and variegated responsibility and at Saucon Valley, he was one of the top superintendents. He also was a GCSAA president.

In commenting on the statement about how few courses now are satisfactorily completed before they are opened, Leonard Strong said that his brother Herbert was one of the four-some officially opening every course that he'd designed. He built courses with neighboring farm labor, and if the course wasn't in good condition for opening, Herbert was held accountable. Leonard said that that was the customary thing in those days.

Veterans of golf business, writing us about the ways products of earlier architects have stood up as pleasant and interesting tests, say that there isn't a lot of difference between the distance of the present ball which is mostly carried on watered fairways and the carry and roll of the old ball on the hard fairways.

Several correspondents referred to how surprisingly well greens, fairways and bunkerings of the old masters fitted in with modern machine maintenance.

A few wrote about the valuable work in developing high standard of golf that **Floyd Farley** has done in

and around Oklahoma and the late **H.C. Hackbarth** in the Arkansas sector.

Several letters referred to an extraordinary number of pioneer amateurs whose golf architecture continues to be outstanding. Oldtimers mentioned Devereaux Emmett, A.W. Tillinghast, Charles B. MacDonald, Walter Travis, George Crump, George B. Thomas Jr., Robert Hunter, William Langford, William Diddle, Perry Maxwell, W.C. Fownes, Jack Neville and Bill Gordon.

Thomas in addition to designing

fine courses on his own, collaborated with Billy Bell on several famous Pacific coast courses. He also wrote "Golf Architecture in America." Hunter wrote "The Links." Both these highly interesting and useful books are out of print.

Frank "Open" Oscapinski has a record in golf that I doubt will be beaten. Frank was assistant to Spencer Murphy at Glen Oaks (N.Y.) Club for 41 years. When Murphy retired, so did Oscapinski. Club members gave him a substantial check with thanks and cheers. □

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