

If that oft-repeated expression about women—you can't live with them and you can't live without them—were only 50 per cent true, the latter part would describe golf's sentiments toward them. Here are some of the reasons why.

About 25 per cent of the estimated 10,400,000 adult golfers are women (an additional 1,216,000 are considered junior players by the National Golf Foundation). Their purchases of women's apparel represent the fourth largest category of total sales in golf shops alone, over \$29 million last year, and, let's face it, they influenced men's buying of clothing to a great degree as well. They take more lessons and attend more clinics than men do and, the real eyebrow-raiser, they are giving more lessons than ever before.

In two other important positions in the golf industry—as club managers and golf course superintendents—the surprises are not as great. There currently is only one woman superintendent in the country. Of the 2,600 members of the Club Managers Assn. of America, only about 100 are women, several of whom are affiliated with golf courses.

It all means that women are a golden force that has to be reckoned with or is about to reckon with you. Moves toward these ends are already being made.

In George Buck's fashionable shop at the Fountains in Lake Worth, Fla., Linda Branstrom offers her clients a four-point inducement: 1) a pleasing atmosphere; 2) a complete inventory; 3) quality clothing, and 4) excellent service.

"All new items are displayed immediately and the latest styles are featured on our center rack. That's where customers look first and they'll stop by to check even when they do not intend to buy.

"We also limit our assortment. This not only protects customers who want as nearly an exclusive product as possible, at least on their own course, but it stimulates them into buying quickly. They realize it may not be available later, if they wait too long. We offer many pro-only lines because the downtown stores can't.

"We carry a rather expensive

Women in THE GOLF INDUSTRY

As consumers, players and professionals, women are making themselves felt as a major force in the golf industry. Two areas elude them, however, and they are club management and golf course superintendency

by ROGER GANEM

line of clothing, yet it is competitive, price-wise, with the downtown stores. If the department stores do get their items cheaper by purchasing in bulk, they do not seem to be passing the savings on to the customer. Many have told me that our items are less expensive.

"The wives are responsible for the men's purchases about 70 per cent of the time. If she sees something she thinks would look good on her husband, she'll either ask us to put it aside or in no time at all he is in buying it. The women know what they want for their husbands.

"I often wear and model the clothes I'm trying to sell and to show what is new. This is a big factor, because the customer can see her selection in motion.

"And the other big factor is providing service, in filling requests, expediting special orders and furnishing one-day handling on all alterations, at no extra charge."

The women are making the cash registers ring a merry tune in the golf shops, where the leading income producer is golf balls, followed by irons, a major purchase not within everyone's capabilities, men's apparel and women's apparel. Most irons that are sold are men's. But that is changing. As the women golfers become more skilled, their need for better equipment increases. Those mongrel

clubs are being discarded.

The outside-the-clubhouse activities reflect the influences and the work of the Ladies Professional Golf Assn. (LPGA). Of its 210 members, over 120 are listed as qualified teaching professionals. Some instructors are also participating on the tour, preparing themselves more fully for teaching during the off-season or when they retire from competition. But many now hold responsible jobs at very respected clubs. There is Sybil Griffin at Old Westbury Club on Long Island, where the great Helen Hicks, the first champion to turn professional in 1934, held forth at The Sewane Club in the 1960s; Jackie Pung in Kamuela, Hawaii; Claudette LaBonte at Mashpee, Mass.; Nancy Gannon, Reidsville, N.C.; Ann Casey Johnstone, Stevens College Columbia, Mo., and perhaps the most active of them all, Peggy Kirk Bell. Peggy not only teaches but conducts junior and senior golf classes at her Pine Needles CC in Southern Pines, N.C., and authors many instructional articles.

The women teachers are doing very well in the fees and recognition department and, because their games are very similar to the average man's, a good many of their regular and satisfied customers are men. They are being made welcome at the clubs where they are working. As Jane Read, chairman of the LPGA Teaching Committee, states, "I can't imagine any ill feelings among the male memberships at their clubs; it was mainly through them that the girls got their jobs in the first place."

There are accomplishments on the tour that are worth noting. The LPGA prize money has hit \$1.4 million for the first time in history! Competing for this bonanza are some 68 to 75 players per tournament. This compares with a total purse of \$164,000 and an average of 35 to 40 players in 1958; \$264,000 and 45 to 50 in 1962, and \$552,155 and 45 to 50 in 1968. And Charlotte Ivey, executive secretary in the LPGA office in Atlanta, reports that requests for membership information reaches her desk almost daily during the summer months.

When Helen Hicks turned profes-

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sional in 1934, she was "it" for two years. "I was all alone, employed by Wilson, given a small salary we called pocket money, my expenses and a royalty on the equipment sold that bore my name. It was the most lovely job in the world and for a short while I was the only one who had it. What a heady feeling. During those years we would play for the sport of it, for the social life it offered and for whatever glory we could get in participating. I remember well those exhibitions for charity with Bob Jones, Henry Cotton and Gene Sarazen. But now girls are playing for over a million dollars. Wow!"

Take a look at how they are scoring. Wow again!

Last year Kathy Whitworth averaged 72.38 for 84 rounds of competitive golf! Other leaders were Sandra Haynie, 72.93 for 68 rounds; Jane Blalock, 73.41 for 80 rounds; Mickey Wright, 74.00 for 27 rounds; Donna Caponi (Young), 75.46 for 64 rounds; Sandra Palmer, 73.32 for 84 rounds and Jo Ann Prentice, 73.94 for 84 rounds.

If a man played as well, his handicap would be scratch and he just might be representing his country in the Walker Cup matches or get an invitation to play in the Masters, not to mention a few dozen member-guests around the country. If he remained an amateur, that is.

In just about every area of golf, women have arrived. And they are here to stay. □

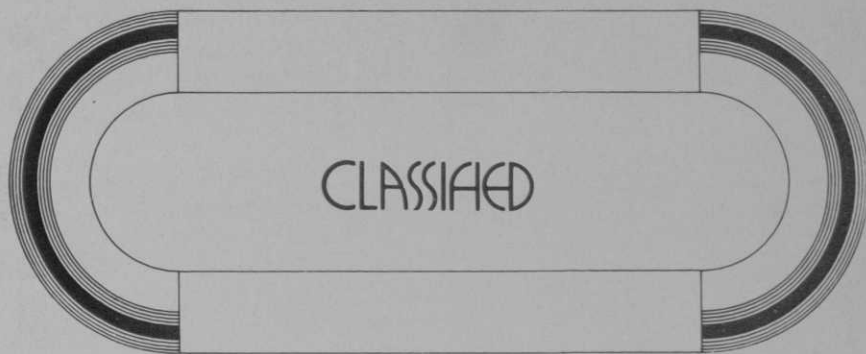
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