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Golfers love to argue about golf . . . but they usually wind up with "Let's ask the man who knows—our Pro!"

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# Know Pro Shop Merchandise

By **JOEL BENNETT**

Asst. to Frank Walsh, pro, Red Run GC, Royal Oak, Mich.

What makes selling of pro-grade clubs a job that requires well-informed men in the pro shop is the superficial resemblance of clubs that vary widely in price. Usually the retail buyer of golf clubs can't tell the difference between a \$4 club and a club that retails for \$9 and far too often the assistant in the shop or the pro himself isn't too clear about the reasons that legitimately account for the difference.

The pro doesn't see the factory cost sheets or operations which in some instances make an expensive club a real economy. The pro shop salesman knows that the set of woods or irons he sells a player normally will be used by the player for 6 years or more. Even if the player plays only 25 rounds a year that means he will be using those clubs for a minimum of 150 rounds. So the difference in cost between a cheap and a first class set of golf clubs, per round, is about the cost of a bottle of beer at the club.

In the old days when clubs were bench-made the member could see the care used in the selection of shafts, heads and grips, the craftsmanship used in the making of the clubs, and the expert consideration of the needs of the player for whom the club was designed and made. Then there was not the need to give today's required explanation of the price difference between clubs.

The pros and their assistants then either knew all there was to be known about clubs and the material that went into clubs or they couldn't hold jobs at even second-rate clubs. Factory production of clubs has changed that. The younger professional or assistant today rarely is compelled to know as much about clubs as the earlier pro generation had to know. He may think that a casual knowledge of clubs will get him by as long as he knows from his own playing experience a fair amount about the merits of equipment design and construction. But unless he has a very sound and thorough knowledge in this phase of his job—far beyond the knowledge and ability to make minor repairs—he can't do the selling job and the member service job that should be done at a first class club.

## Know the New Features

This year particularly the man in a golf club pro shop should be very well acquainted with all the many new items of design, construction and materials in evi-

dence in all popular lines of golf clubs, whether or not all the lines are stocked in his shop.

This year, more than ever before, there have been refinements introduced into designs with the purpose of helping the high-handicap player as well as the expert get greater certainty of results. Do you know all these features and the reasoning behind them? You should to qualify yourself as an authority on golf playing equipment.

It is not the easiest thing in the world for an assistant to get this sort of information. The demand for clubs is so heavy that the salesmen don't often have time to explain in detail all the new features to the assistants.

In talking with pros and assistants in Florida the past winter I have been reminded that there is a lot of room for pros improving the knowledge of their assistants and their assistants' capacity for member service by carefully going over the new equipment with their assistants. At Red Run GC Frank Walsh goes over, with his staff, details of new items that are put into the shop inventory whether the new stuff is clubs, balls, bags, shoes or any of the apparel items and accessories that now are quite a factor in pro shop sales volume.

That sort of "briefing" on the merchandise enables the assistants to give the members the same standard of expert service that Frank gives them when he can personally attend to them. It's a logical part of assistants' preparation for the work that is entrusted to them but it's surprising how often it is overlooked by some pros who never would think of allowing an assistant to give a lesson unless he had a very clear understanding of the methods of the head professional.

The information required probably could be best obtained by the pro or assistant spending some time in the club and ball factories seeing what is being done and having the design and material and construction processes explained to them. But that is impossible. Even if the pros and assistants could afford the time and money to go through the plants their presence would handicap the plant workmen. However I do think that in some cases it would give the pros and assistants plenty of a basis for making sales talks on the class

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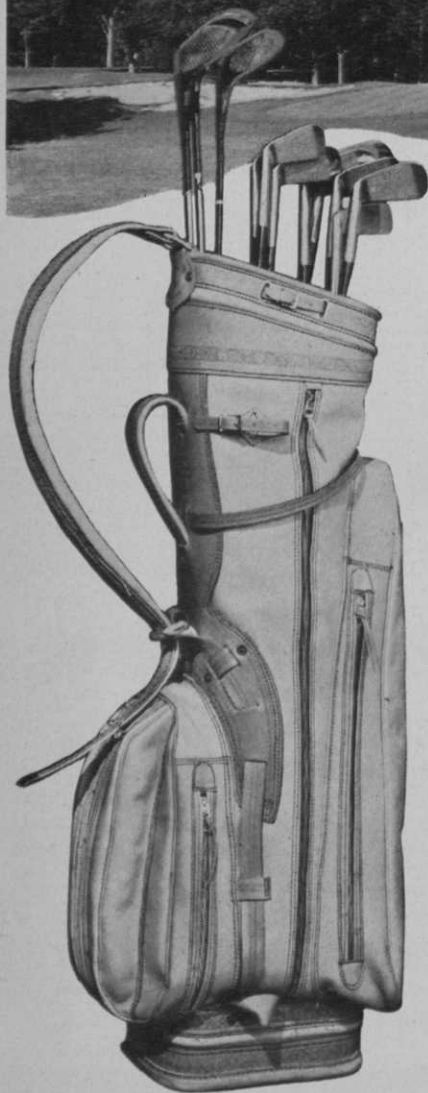
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of workmanship put into the better grade of clubs.

Especially now with most factories having to train a lot of new workers there are noticeable variations in the type of workmanship that can be determined by close and expert inspection of the finished clubs. The more expensive the club logically the better the available craftsmanship that goes into its manufacture.

### Need More Facts From Makers

There is considerable of a field for the manufacturers to increase their service in supplying details of raw materials, design, manufacturing steps and inspection so the pro and his assistant would have full data available. A great many of most clubs' members have manufacturing businesses of their own. They are interested in the whys and wherefores of the mechanical details of golf clubs and balls. But not much of this sort of information is given to the pro and even less to the assistants. Generalities are expected to cover the territory.

For instance, on the new laminated wood heads, the pro and his assistant are told that the heads are glued together under heavy pressure and are impervious to moisture, and that's about all. The qualities of the wood used, some details of the various pressure processes and why the manufacturer uses the one he has chosen, the exactness—if superior—in applying the sole plate and shaft, the increased strength and durability of the laminated club (if it does have those qualities), the job that can be done in precision finishing, the character of the varnishes, the tests of how the ball reacts to the clubhead material, and many other points should be available knowledge for the pro or assistant who is willing to study to know the merchandise that he sells.

There are many things about the design, material, heat-treating, boring and finishing of the new iron clubs that the pro and assistant should know but he will have to do some work to learn these things. The why of changes in shafts and wherein one type of shaft varies from another in cost and performance also should be knowledge for selling use by the men in the pro shops. The sort of leather used in the grips—or other grip material—and how it's treated and how the grip is built up and made firm are other items that the salesman in the pro shop should know. And just what manufacturing processes and inspections are made to see that properly constructed and balanced clubs result should be known to the man who's doing the selling in the pro shop.

### Using Authoritative Information

Certainly the pro or his assistant won't have to go into a long and detailed explanation of the elements in a superior club and justifying its price every time some member shows an interest in buying a club. But with a fund of authoritative information on hand the pro or his assistant can drop bits of it now and then to tactfully work into the members' minds the idea that a golf club is something more than just a head, a shaft and a grip.

There is protection for the pro in this sort of knowledge. It is a sure thing that there is going to be a lot of retail competition for the pros and any advantage the pro can get by knowing more about all golf merchandise than the "downtown" retailer's salesman know, is needed to keep the pro shop at the head of the golf merchandising procession.

Furthermore this complete and authoritative knowledge of the shop's merchandise is something that's due your members. The function of the pro shop at a club is not only that of convenience, it is supposed to provide an expert service that is one of the assets of belonging to a good club.

Every pro and competent assistant has winced at seeing clubs that are poorly fitted to players because the player thought he could get a set cheaper than it would cost him at a pro shop. Fat men playing too upright clubs, shafts too short or too long, clubs too light or too heavy, long thin men playing clubs not right for them; all cost the players fun and money. These rather obvious matters are the result of the pro not having done a strong and complete job of making himself known as an authority who knows all about golf clubs and how to assure the player getting the best clubs for his particular game and at a cost within reason.

Time after time a pro or an assistant has been shocked by a member to whom he's been giving lessons showing up at the club with a set purchased elsewhere. The member, obviously, considered the pro or assistant a satisfactory authority in teaching the game but hadn't thought of the man also being an authority on playing equipment.

Know your merchandise as a thoroughly informed authority and let the members know that you know it. Then you'll have them not only firmly in the habit of buying from you but talking so much about what you told them about clubs, balls and other shop items they'll bring customers from the outside to you.

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# Club Public Relations Program

By EUGENE A. CONKLIN

The Jefferson County GC, Watertown, N.Y., has a planned public relations and publicity program which can be adapted with infinite variations by other golf clubs.

As a starter, the Jefferson County club has a planned method of working hand in hand with local fraternal and social groups of the community such as the Elks, Kiwanis, Rotarians, Eagles. One of the members of the club's board of directors makes it a point to give a short lecture before dinner meetings of each such association, such lectures being of the "human interest" variety, explaining the many items behind the smooth and efficient running of a golf club and replete with incidents which have occurred on the course from time to time. Every such group is interested in securing at no cost an after-dinner speaker of this nature and it keeps interest in the club at a high pitch during the entire calendar year.

Secondly, at the clubhouse are several unique bulletin boards. On one board are displayed notices of forthcoming social events (banquets, smokers, weiner-roasts) sponsored by various fraternal and social groups and the club itself. Each such group appoints a representative to insert such notices on the bulletin board. In this fashion friendly relations with virtually every social organization in the community

are being given continuous promotion.

On another bulletin board are inserted photographs of "key" businessmen and businesswomen of the community who are golfers as well as business executives. On the "executives board" are placed pictures of execs and their wives, children and other family members. Any businessman or businesswoman may supply photographs for such an insertion. This is not construed as out-and-out publicity. The club believes that businessfolk are interested in each other and are genuinely desirous of knowing other business people.

The Jefferson County club is interested in the small fry of the community. By arrangement with the coaches of local junior high and high schools in the community school golf teams meet in weekly championship matches. As a corollary there are "Father and Son" and "Mother and Daughter" golf matches every other Saturday and Sunday in the morning during uncrowded months and from 6 through 8 P.M. during summer months. There is nothing especially unusual in all this but what is distinctly on the novel side is the fact that any youngster may become a junior or member of the club and may compete with other juniors in his or her age classification after school evenings, 2 nights weekly in special events the club

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Chick Harbert, surrounded by youthful autograph-seekers at Tam O'Shanter tournament, shows smart public relations in developing the kid golf fans. If the pros would get the bobby-soxers like Sinatra did, they'd have to hire caddies to carry their bankrolls.





provides for the younger generation. Photographs of young golfists are placed in the high school and junior high school papers which not unnaturally result in favorable public relations for the Jefferson County club.

The club has arranged with a local photographer to be at the course a portion of each afternoon to take photographs of golfers in action. Prints are presented to players with the compliments of the club and duplicates are retained for display in periodic photographic exhibits in the clubhouse. The photographer charges nothing for his services as obviously he makes many worthwhile business contacts for the future. Care is taken not to take photographs unless the players are in the "photographic mood" but the majority of players wish photos of themselves in action.

The Jefferson County club has worked out a display which is placed in the lobby of several local banks showing local businessmen and women in action on the course with tie-in posters reminding bank patrons that "golf makes health and health makes wealth." Banks willingly cooperate as such displays get extensive attention. The Watertown library and the art classes of the high schools have worked out an exhibit showing "Golfing through the ages" showing photographs and sketches of famous golfers of past and present, early golf games, the history of golfing from its inception and golf in other countries. Such exhibits interest library browsers and immeasurably aid the Jefferson County club in its membership recruiting.

Perhaps most unusual publicity effort is the weekly award for the best poem, cartoon, humorous anecdote, or witty saying involving golf or with a direct golfing slant. Anyone in the community, member at the links or no, may compete and the best efforts are viewable weekly at the clubhouse. Every golfer has a little of the creative artist in him somewhere and with that thought in mind such weekly contests are excellent public relations ammunition.

Finally the Jefferson County GC keeps a record of the birthdays of its members and the anniversaries of couples (both of whom are golfers). It sees to it that every link member signs the day and month of birth and anniversary date in the club register and a few days before such dates, a personalized greeting card arrives with the compliments of the JC organization, in addition to a congratulatory epistle.

The Jefferson County club has one more interesting public relations promotion worthy of chronicling. It has an exhibit of golf clubs and golf equipment used years ago by community members. Contents of this exhibit are changing from month to month. The purpose of this exhibit is to reveal the changing nature of golfing equipment down through the ages.

## "Are You A Gope?" Campaign Improves Golf Manners

Portland, Ore., which claims to have more golf courses per capita than any other city in the world, has been benefiting from a golf courtesy educational campaign conducted by Rudy Lachenmeir, sports editor of radio station KXL.

Rudy's campaign involves clever references on his sports broadcasts which have a strong appeal to sportsmen in the northwest, hunters and fishermen, as well as golfers. In that section of the country any outdoor sport appeals to most citizens and the golf etiquette campaign is not without interest to the rod and gun fans.

Rudy's offer to send inquirers his little booklet on golf courtesy, "Are You A Gope?" has brought more than 15,000 responses and has had a positive effect in making Portland golfers more considerate of each other and of the courses than is customary elsewhere. Rudy maintains that golfers' failure to observe golf courtesy is a matter of ignorance rather than of deliberate offense and for that reason has to receive tactful treatment. People are exceedingly touchy and resentful about being identified as ignorant but can be discreetly conned out of their own faults by having such faults attributed to others.

The "gope"—a term of Lachenmeir's own invention, is illustrated in the booklet by a block-headed figure who looks none too bright. Illustrations show the "gope" failing to replace divots, leaving his bag on the green, furiously pounding the green after missing a putt, walking through a trap and standing on the green marking his score while others are playing up. Al Stadium, treas., Oregon Public Links Assn., drew the illustrations of the "gope." Pres. Norm Tauscher of the OPLGA and other officers and members of the association collaborated in compiling the book. Cost of the book was shared by the following public courses: Broadmoor, City View, Colwood, Eastmoreland, Glendover, Lloyds, Rose City and West Hills.

The booklet defines a "gope" as "one who golfs like a dope" and details his derelictions. It accents the positive side by telling the performances of the courteous golfer and explains golf terms in a simplified way to make it plain to uninformed golfers just what is expected of them by golf rules and by other golfers.

The campaign is one that can be highly recommended to fee courses in other cities that can make a tie-up with a radio station or newspaper. Private courses in many cases could make good use of such a campaign as the standard of playing etiquette and consideration for condition and neatness of the course has slumped noticeably during the past 6 years.

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