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and Mrs. Jack Schneidermann. . . Pop's pro at Mt. Pleasant CC, Leicester, Mass., and vp, Central Mass. P.G.A. . . On the long mileage end of recent happy events was the surprise party given by supts., club members and golfers of Cleveland area and distant points to Fred Burkhardt, honoring his 35th year as Westwood CC supt. . . Fred was a pioneer in organizing the Cleveland and national associations of greenkeepers and at 74 still is a very lively master of the fine art of course maintenance.

Resort golf business certainly not slumping if the Marty brothers' Northernnaire at Three Lakes, Wis., is any barometer. . . Place is one of the class spots of the country and unique among north central resorts. . . 9-hole course with pro team of George, Sr. and Jr., Kinsman kept busy. . . Bob Marty, co-owner of the Northernnaire is one of Wisconsin's liveliest golf enthusiasts.

John English, former golf writer of Boston Herald, before and after his service as Lt. Cmdr. in Pacific, has joined USGA staff as asst. to executive sec. Joe Dey. . . John's a very able young man and knows what the score is in golf. . . Al Linkogl, supt. Westwood CC (St. Louis dist.) has more orders than he can fill for fine leaf U3 Bermuda in his nursery.

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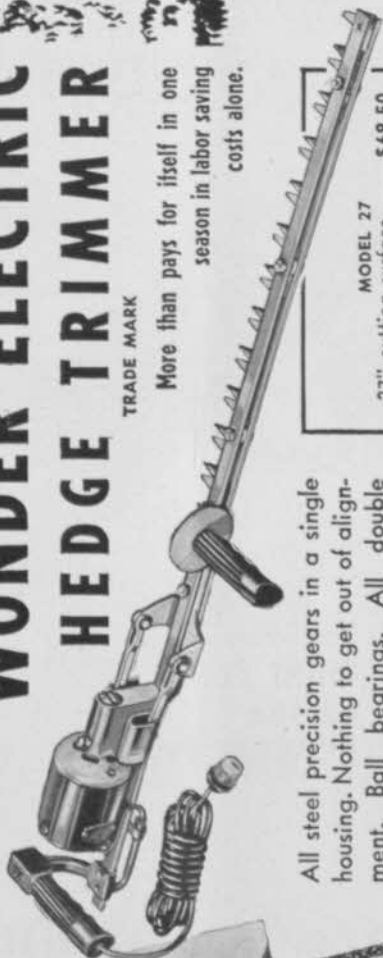
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JULY • 1949

# Showmanship Is High Note in Pro Shop Selling

By VIC BAKER

As Told to Bob Hall

If you're like the average buyer these days, and a clerk bustles up to you with: "May I help you?", you quickly lose interest in the item you were inspecting—and say: "No, I was just looking around."

You amble off to a golf game. Thankful maybe that you'd saved some money on a purchase, but still wondering if those new clubs might have helped your game, your enjoyment of the game, and the better relaxation of yourself in your recreation.

You wonder to yourself—"Why didn't I ask the clerk about those clubs?"

And the only answer can be—he scared me away.

Maybe that's why Vic Baker, professional and course manager at Lakewood CC, Long Beach, Calif., for many, many years, is finding renewed success in shop sales at a time when some pros are finding that the postwar sales honeymoon is over.

But, let Vic tell it:

"Please don't get me wrong about that 'may I help you' line. That's often good, and in most businesses it's the best. In golf, I find that you've got to take a different approach.

"For instance, suppose you come into your shop and find a man testing and feeling a set of irons.

"Naturally, you look upon him as a potential customer. But, don't act like a hungry animal and rush over with: 'Can I help you?' Study his build, his stance,



VIC BAKER

his style, even his clothes—they'll tell you what he might need in clubs, his golf ability and his means.

## Suggestion Helps Sales

"Then, approach the man with this kind of suggestion: 'That's a mighty fine club, and one of the best, but had you noticed this one? It might fit your swing a little better, and perhaps give you a little more distance because it's less (or more) whippy.'"

The man's not frightened away. He's interested in the suggestion. Maybe he did try the wrong club. He tries the one the pro suggested. If the pro is right—he has made a sale. If he's wrong, he at least has gotten closer to the man and can follow-thru from there.

As Vic says: "You're not only a salesman in golf today. You've got to be a showman, too. And you've got to think of the guy who is your prospective customer. You're a showman with a flourish, a psychologist and an expert consultant, as well. If more pros combined the three, I think they'd make more sales."

Whether the man who stops at the counter is the chip-on-the-shoulder kind, or the pleasure-to-wait-on sort, or the timid-rabbit type who shies away, it's a wise salesman who shows a willing-to-help attitude, and it's even a wiser one who steps back and figures out the right approach.

As one of Vic Baker's memos to us, as his "bible" of salesmanship, says:

"Even if your first words are double-talk, if you utter them promptly and courteously with a smile, and keep your prospect interested, the effect will be unbeatable.

"It's all in this, that the fanciest sales techniques in creation aren't half as important as a friendly and sympathetic—



**ONE ENTERS VIC'S SHOP**—This is the sight which greets a golfer when he steps into the Lakewood Country Club pro shop to purchase his green-fee ticket: A long showcase, top and front of which is in thick plate glass. On the right, a rack of odd clubs ranging from wedges to plenty of putters. The showcase, where one signs the register, has a dozen of every popular brand of ball peeking up at one when he signs his name. Under the ball rack are trophies, shoes and sox, and other odds and ends. The showcase on the left contains tape, gauze and other emergency aids such as sunburn lotion, and even safety pins, needles and thread. The two lower shelves are nicely stocked with sweaters, shirts and caps. On top the left hand case are used balls gathered from the lakes on the course, and selling to the golfer at good bargains of 50c or three for a dollar. The case against the ball wall between the two cash registers contains a full line of sox and small gifts, such as wallets, key rings and the like. The floor from the door to the showcase is matted with a heavy rubber to enable golfers in spikes to walk without risk. "Little Jimmy" Thompson is behind the counter.

and even a good professional—interest in the customer's wants and problems.

"In the case of the chip-on-the-shoulder customer, it helps if you can adopt a detached, impersonal attitude. Don't take his remarks personally. View him as an interesting problem—a puzzle for you to solve.

"In this one, you've got to be sharp, and you may have to take some guff. If you solve the problem, you get a sale. Try out several sets of clubs — or whatever he wants. Bring out all the shoes in the place if necessary. Show him you're willing to cooperate, but don't give him the idea you're after a sale. He wants to see the merchandise. You are showing it to him.

"Sales strategy is invaluable in this case. Fortunately, there are not too many of this kind.

#### **Attitude First — Then Approach**

"After the right attitude has been reached, comes the right approach.

"In the chip-on-the-shoulder type you've got to mold that attitude. The other two classes of buyers have the attitude. So, it's the approach that's important.

"Just make some casual comment about a sweater that he's looking at, like: 'That's a non-shrinkable, all-wool sweater. Do you have any like it?' Or: 'That pattern sure matches your tie'."

Instead of scaring the customer away, you get him into a conversation and give your salesmanship a chance to go to work.

This is especially invaluable with the "just looker", whom we've mentioned before. He scares away easy if he feels that someone's going to "high pressure" him. The right approach captures his interest before he has had a chance to realize that he really wasn't out to buy a sweater.

He may wind up doing so. His interest in looking at it in the first place showed a desire perhaps—and the right pro can do the rest.

#### **Shop Stock Extensive**

One of the first commandments of selling is to keep the range of selection as wide as possible.

Perhaps that's one reason why Vic Baker has had so much success at Lakewood. He maintains on display in perhaps one of



the finest pro shops in the country the widest array of equipment.

He has more than 50 golf bags, from canvas to the biggest of expensive leather.

He has in his shop nearly 100 complete sets of irons, and about 50 sets of woods.

He has golf balls of all popular makes, priced from three for a dollar to the regulation priced top standard ball.

He has a full line of golf hats, sweaters, shoes, jackets for both men and women.

And, it's generally known around Lake-wood way, that if you don't see what you want—and you'll see plenty if you'll look at the pictures which accompany this article—then just ask.

Baker generally has more stored in his basement.

Like, during the war years when every pro in the country, even those on the tour, were begging for golf balls. Baker had more than \$7500 worth of them stored in his cellar.

What's more, if he doesn't have what you want, he'll get it for you within 24 hours.

Now, back to the "merchandising approach".

Don't let the customer get too specific about what he wants. If the sweater is for himself, take a look at the way he dresses. If he's conservative, bring out modified styles. If he's collegiate, keep that in mind when choosing the right item. If the sweater, golf clubs, golf bag or what not are to be a gift, find out the age and general type of the recipient.

But above all, be interested in the customer. Be helpful and cooperative.

#### Sizing Up Price Appeal

Now, with regard to prices. Let your first selection be slightly above that which your customer seems to want. Maybe a little on the expensive side. It's easier to work down, once you've gotten him interested with the right approach, than it is to work up the ladder.

Furthermore, don't ask what price he wants to pay. If you are a good salesman, you should be able to read from his appearance about the range.



ONE LOOKS AROUND—From the showcase, where one signs the register and awaits his change, the golfer turns to this view at Vic Baker's pro shop. The shelves lining the entire west and north walls contain a full line of hats and caps for both men and women, shoes for men and women; spiked, lugged and for dress. The cabinets below the shelves serve as storage for sweaters, jackets, raincoats and more shoes. The small cabinet in the foreground displays a full line of golf gloves of all sizes and colors. To vary the scene Baker has several full sets of irons and a couple of dummies modeling jackets, sweaters and hats. Comfortable lounge chairs and a foot rest are available both for those who wish to relax, and for the salesman should one care to try on shoes. Both walls are dotted, but not overdone, with framed pictures of golfing notables.

# IN THE MASTERS IN THE P.G.A. IN THE

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the performance of every Top Notch ball backs up every Wilson advertising statement about it—is creating an ever-increasing Top Notch demand in pro shops the nation over. Feature... sell... TOP NOTCH—America's No. 1 tournament winning, pro only ball!



After you've talked over the problems of the item the man seems to want, you begin your merchandising. It isn't necessary in most cases to drag out everything you have. Try two or three numbers at a time.

Let him look at them, tell you why he doesn't like them.

Then you return them and bring out two or three more which come closer to his preferences.

This not only keeps your stock neat, but keeps your purchaser from being overwhelmed, confused and stifled by masses of merchandise piled before him. He'll require less time to make a final choice if there are only two sweaters, golf clubs, golf bags or shoes before him instead of six.

Now here's where some showmanship can enter the picture.

Suppose you brought out two golf bags of identical price and quality. Or maybe, two sweaters or jackets. One you carelessly throw on the counter. The other you hold in your hand, carefully and reverently, as if it were priceless.

Which would the customer be inclined to value more?

You're quite right. The second sweater! Golf bag! Set of clubs!

The way you handled the article is a powerful tool in giving the customer the subconscious impression that he's getting better merchandise for his money.

When you've narrowed down the field to a few favorites, get the customer to try one of them out.

If it's a putter, tell him to putt for a while. A sweater, try it on. A golf bag; put his clubs in for measurement and fit.

It makes a sale easier, too, if you are waiting on two at once to have one of the customers busy trying on or testing, while you're wrapping up the item of the other. And in some cases, if the pro is fortunate to have two at once, it helps the customer make up his mind faster.

Once he gets the feel of the club, or has the garment on and sees himself in it—that's where several good full length mirrors help in Vic's shop—he's got the feeling that it half-way belongs to him.

### Don't Make "No" Easy

But, you don't say: "Would you like to try it on?"

Nope, that's like asking him in the beginning if you could help him. You leave yourself wide open for a "no".

Instead, you say: "Try this on by the mirror there, and you'll see how nicely it fits."

It's the "YOU" sentences that help. You'll get a lot of wear out of this"; or "That's just fitted to You"; or, "You certainly look well in this color"; or, "You certainly have powerful wrists and shoul-

*(Continued on page 66)*



**HEADING FOR THE TEE**—After registering and obtaining green-fee ticket, the golfer turns to the left for the first tee at Lakewood CC, and here's his scene. The register and golf racks are on the right foreground, incidently. But, in line of vision are virtually every major line of golf clubs, from woods, shown on the left foreground, to the irons lined up on the right and background wall. Along the wall, Vic has his clubs stacked in full sets in golf bags from the canvas light ones to the more durable leather, and colorful fabric ones just coming into the scene. A candy and gum machine are convenient for the golfer as he leaves the shop for the first tee, and the score card is also at his left hand as he pulls the screen door.