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The
ASSISTANTS'
DEPARTMENT

This is the first appearance of a new department in GOLFDOM. This department, devoted to the problems and progress of assistants, is the result of innumerable talks and much correspondence with pros and assistants.

The constantly growing demands and responsibilities in pro department operations, increasing operating costs and the difficulty of organizing a training program for assistants seriously concern master pros and assistants who eventually will graduate into first class jobs of their own in the expanding golf field.

Queries asked of GOLFDOM will be handled in this department. The department will not run every issue but will appear frequently.

* * *

Q—The majority of young men who apply to me for a job as an assistant seem to want to play golf and not work at it. What have other pros found helpful in reminding assistants they can't expect to get paid for playing?

A—Max Elbin, pro at Burning Tree Club and Pres., Mid-Atlantic PGA, suggests that the head pro allot definite time for the practice or play of assistants so an assistant's attention to his own game will be a balanced part of the job.

If the assistant's playing or practicing time is on schedule—generally early in

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the morning—then the lad can spend the rest of the day in the shop, giving lessons, starting play or at other duties, to which the pro assigns him.

Max believes that some assistants have legitimate kicks about being kept around the shop all the time. He also believes that it is mutually profitable for the pro and assistant to be together every once in a while when the assistant is practicing and could profit from some expert supervision and help.

Elbin is of the opinion that the youngster wanting to play or practice instead of doing work that serves members, earns for the pro department and justifies pay, hasn't had a clear understanding of the job. He suggests that the hiring pro tell in detail what the job will be, something about the training program, and make it clear that the pro also is interested in the kid becoming a good player and a credit to the pro who hired him and helped him develop.

Q—I don't know much about fitting clubs. Where can I learn?

A—Older pros say that there are too many younger pros who don't know much about fitting clubs because nothing has replaced the training in club fitting that was received when bench clubmaking was general practice.

Some pros during Senior Week at PGA National Course at Dunedin, Fla., frankly admitted they hadn't paid too much attention to training assistants in club fitting, outside of switching some sales in their shops when assistants were making grave mistakes in selling clubs. They remarked that they lately have been devoting more time to discussing club fitting with their assistants.

There is very emphatic agreement among experienced pros that club fitting is of utmost importance in enlarging and protecting the pros' market status. Expert pros and salesmen say that lack of knowledge of club fitting handicaps young pros in ordering club stocks they should have in order to sell more clubs to members and help members' scoring.

Jack Isaacs, pro at Langley Air Force Base GC, who sells a great many clubs and puts strong accent on expert fitting, says that the lesson and practice tee is the place to learn and test the fitting of clubs.

Most of the Isaacs' club buyers are young fliers and their wives. Jack says that clubs fitted to golfers who are 20 or older usually stay fitted until design improve-



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ments make a new set advisable but men and women in their 40s or older should have clubs checked for fit every few years.

It's the physique and type of swing that determine the proper club specifications, of course, but just how is something that can't be learned from books. The classic examples of variations in club fitting are small Bobby Cruickhank's successful use of long-shafted clubs and Long Jim Barnes, with his bent-over address, using short-shafted clubs.

Tommy Armour devoted a chapter in his best-seller "How To Play Your Best Golf All the Time" to clubs. Armour wrote "Properly fitted clubs are the only part of improved golf that anyone can buy." He told of watching new pupils of his hit a few balls, then stopping them because their clubs, although expensive, just weren't the clubs for them.

Should Be Jailed

Armour has mentioned in his newspaper golf lessons one case of a foreign woman celebrity coming to Boca Raton for golf instruction, bringing clubs that were too heavy and stiff-shafted for the muscular Tommy. Tommy privately declares that too often he sees golfers whose clubs are so poorly fitted that the sellers of the implements, in the vehement Armour's own words, "should be jailed."

In considering a program for the proposed short course for PGA pros and assistants, Emil Beck and Irvin Schloss, co-chairmen of the committee conducting the educational sessions at Dunedin, plan to schedule club fitting discussions.

In the meanwhile about, the best thing the younger pro can do is talk over this problem with older pros at every opportunity.

Q—Where can I get good practical books

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on salesmanship, shop display and advertising for the pro shop?

A—Go to your public library and get the librarian to tell you about what's available.

If you're near any metropolitan city the book stores in that place usually have the latest business books.

If you know display men for large stores ask them to loan you books or trade paper that will supply information you want.

Q—My club wants so much of a pro staff that my own income as a pro is getting smaller by meeting a big payroll, yet no more work is getting done with more men in the pro department.

A—You're not the only pro with this problem. A lot of clubs want more pro department personnel but don't want to pay for more help.

Perhaps your answer is a definite program of assistants' duties such as George Lake has made up on a schedule hung on a wall of his office in the shop at Recreation Park, Los Angeles.

Organization of the department's work and assignment of duties to each employee not only gives employees clear understanding of their individual and collective duties but gives officials plain evidence the job is organized and conducted in a business-like way.

* * *

If you've got some question concerning assistants' training and progress, send it to GOLFDOM, 407 S. Dearborn, Chicago 5, Ill., and we will try to get the right answer from other pros and assistants.

We want to thank the pros and assistants who have contributed to the questions and answers of initial installment of this new department.

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Supermarket Surveys Give Tips on Consumer Buying Habits

Many of the findings made by marketing experts who have extensively investigated supermarket buying habits of the American consumer can be used by the pro to increase sales in his shop.

An article in the December 1955 issue of *Esquire* magazine describing the investigations made by the market analysts, states that a huge portion of the supermarket volume comes as the result of impulse buying. Nearly 50 per cent of the shoppers walk out with at least one item they didn't intend to buy when they came into the store. Sales psychologists attribute this to the happy and well ingrained American habit of thinking, "Well, I can always use it." Surprisingly, men tend to outdo women when it comes to impulse buying.

Displays That Discourage

Beautiful displays, according to the investigators, discourage rather than encourage sales. Customers are unwilling to destroy the symmetry of a well contrived display design, preferring to put off buying rather than disturb it. The suggestion here is if you're particularly artistic in setting up a display, arrange it so that

your customers can break into it without feeling they have ruined a masterpiece.

There's even a feeling that "dump" displays move more merchandise than elaborate ones. The secret is to arrange the merchandise in them so that the labels are turned up. This, it is said, leads to reading of the fine print describing the products' ingredients and ultimate sales if the customer is sufficiently impressed.

Hand-Lettered Signs Best

Reaction to signs is approximately the same as to displays. A homely, hand-lettered sign, it is claimed, attracts more attention than one set in type or drawn by a professional sign painter. At one supermarket, sales are said to have increased when the sign painting chore was turned over to stock boys and the store junked its carefully lettered signs.

It has been fairly well established that an item priced at two for 29 cents often will outsell the same article at 14 cents apiece. The reasoning behind this is that many shoppers are somewhat inadequate when it comes to handling figures. For example, many people, according to surveys, have the irrational conviction that 19 cents amount to only one-half of 20

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cents. On top of this, there is thought to be some kind of magic in a price tag that carries a final figure, 9.

Tests show a higher priced article will outsell a lower priced one even if they are identical and placed side by side on a counter. For example, if you were to display two putters of identical brand and quality side by side, pricing one at \$5 and the other at \$3.95, odds are the higher priced club will sell first. What's more, market researchers say this will happen even if you, or an employee of your pro shop, stands behind the counter and explains there is absolutely no difference between the two putters.

Moving out of the supermarket, the market men have found that buyers largely seek their counterparts in the cigarettes and automobiles they purchase. Dynamic fellows, it is claimed, prefer stronger

brands of cigarettes and more powerful cars than Caspar Milquetoast types. Perhaps these are points the pro should keep in mind when he is fitting a member for a new set of clubs or selling him golf or wearing apparel.

The whole subject of buying psychology is one the pro can profitably indulge in.

College Tournaments

May will be a busy month for collegiate golfers. The Southern Conference tournament is scheduled for Danville, Va. on the 4th and 5th; the Atlantic Coast conference will hold its annual meet on the 11th and 12th while the Western Conference championship is carded for the 25th and 26th in Evanston, Ill. The NCAA tournament will be held on the Ohio State course, Columbus, June 24-30.

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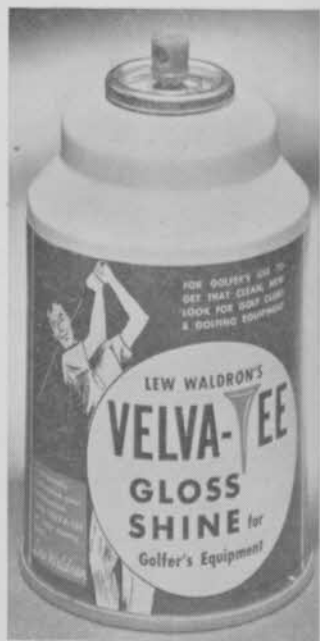
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