

Survey shows more pros plan to get on Santa Claus bandwagon this year

Pro Xmas Sales Break All Records

A record-shattering \$2,500,000 in Christmas gift sales was rolled up by the more than 550 golf professionals who used "CHRISTMAS SHOPPING At Your Pro Shop" in 1963!

This, and other significant facts and pro shop gift buying trends revealed by the annual mid-July GOLFDOM survey of Christmas pro business, point to an even bigger gift sales record in 1963.

Comments volunteered by pros responding to the survey this year indicate that more pros than ever are going to jump on the Santa Claus bandwagon — and veteran Christmas pro merchandisers are determined to put even more time, effort and money into what they've discovered to be the most profitable two-month selling period of the year!

Over 200 pros returned their questionnaires within ten days after receiving them and their answers pin-point important highlights of pro Christmas merchandising. . .

To the first question: **When will you start your 1963 Xmas selling campaign?"** 191 pros answered as follows —

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| (2) August | (78) November 1 |
| (2) September | (30) November 15 |
| (45) October 1 | (18) December 1 |
| (15) October 15 | (1) December 15 |

Pros who have been on the Christmas gift sales firing line for two or more years indicate they've been pushing their starting date back farther each year (like the big stores). Most do not wait for Thanksgiving, traditional start of the Christmas shopping season. They want their customers to know the pro shop will be stocked and ready for Christmas business before local Christmas parades hit Main Street!

One pro says: "I feel we golf professionals are losing more and more Christmas business by starting too late. Last year I started in November — this year I'll start in October and I'm sure my Christmas sales will go up at least 30%!" This professional reported sales of nearly \$10,000 in 1962.

Question 2: What % of gifts were bought by MEN? By WOMEN?

Of the 197 pros answering this question, 43 said gift purchases in their shops were equally divided between men and women buyers; 103 said women bought more gifts than men and 51 said men bought more gifts than women. Average for all 197 answers showed that 47% of gift buying was by men, 53% by women. (Last year's survey indicated an average of 46% of gift buying by men, 54% by women!)

Question 3: Did you decorate your shop

for Xmas selling last year?

Of the 207 pros answering, 153 decorated their shops, 54 did not. Some pros have very definite feelings about the importance of shop decoration for holiday merchandising. One points out that it gives his end-of-season stock a 'new' look, while calling attention to newer inventory. More pros advocate changing the shop look from week to week, even slightly, as a 'stopper' for daily traffic. All agree that some Christmas atmosphere should be maintained to steer customers' thinking toward gifts rather than just personal purchases.

Question 4: Do you have photographs of shop decoration for use in GOLFDOM?

Ten said they took photographs, 12 said they did not but *would* have photographs in 1963. Quite a few said they wished they had — for their own use in planning and setting up future years' decorations—and for the club paper or magazine. One indicated that photographs would be useful as graphic evidence of a tax deductible expense connected with Christmas merchandising!

Question 5: Did you offer gift-wrapping service in 1962? Will you offer gift wrapping this year?

Of the 188 pros answering this, 166 offered gift-wrapping service in 1962 and 160 of these said they would do it again this year. Of those who did not gift-wrap last year, 10 said they would in 1963, 11 are not certain.

Several pros point out that their customers have been conditioned to expect gift-wrapping service by other exclusive shops they patronize and these pros feel they would lose some sales if customers found they had to do their own gift-wrapping. Other pros have steered away from the added cost and bother of gift-wrapping, and thus have no idea of how this would affect their gift sales.

Question 6: Did you use the special (imprinted with your name order-form envelopes) form last year?

(Offered for the first time in 1962, at 3¢ each, these personalized, 'self-mailer' order forms were enclosed in the Christmas pro catalogs when requested by pro-users.)

Of the 198 pros answering this, 146 used the order forms, 52 did not.

Question 7: Do you want to use similar order forms this year?

Of the 146 pros who used these forms in 1962, 116 will use them again this year; 17 are not sure. Of the non-users last year,

3 will use order forms this year, 16 are undecided.

Question 8: Approximately how much Christmas gift business did you do last year?

203 pros answered this question. 12% reported Xmas sales up to \$1,000; 58% ranged from \$1,000 to \$5,000 in sales; 24% fell into the \$5,000 to \$10,000 sales bracket and 6% racked up gift sales from \$10,000 to over \$25,000! Average sales per pro shop (for entire group of 203 reporting) were \$4,467.

Most important indicator shown by the current survey is the positive intention and planning of more pros in going after Christmas business this year. Those who used "CHRISTMAS SHOPPING" last year have positive proof of the important profit potential of Xmas pro shop business — regardless of what their sales were in 1962. They know the business is there.

Another interesting sidelight on the growing importance of the gift market to the pro is the growing percentage of semi-private and municipal golf course pro shop operators who are going after Christmas business with GOLFDOM's "CHRISTMAS SHOPPING" promotion. In 1961, 28% of all pros using the guides were semi-private or municipal shop merchants. Last year 31% of pros using the guides were semi-private or municipal!

Most important of all — while approximately the same small number of pros wait until the last minute to order their "CHRISTMAS SHOPPING" guides and promotion packages, most pros are ordering earlier each year. Those who wait until the last minute are usually new users who hope to recoup on an indifferent year with bonus Christmas business. Once they try it their attitude changes. Unfortunately every year a certain number order much too late and have to be turned down because the supply is sold out. Very few of these pros are late the second time!

Early orders indicate that nearly 600 professionals will go after Christmas business with "CHRISTMAS SHOPPING" this year, pulling in nearly \$3,000,000 in gift sales. This still leaves about \$11,000,000 in potential Christmas gift business that other pros will not get if they don't go after it!

If YOU have never gone after Xmas sales in your pro shop the only question you have to answer is — do YOU want more business? Hundreds of pros will testify that the business is there — all you have to do is go after it!

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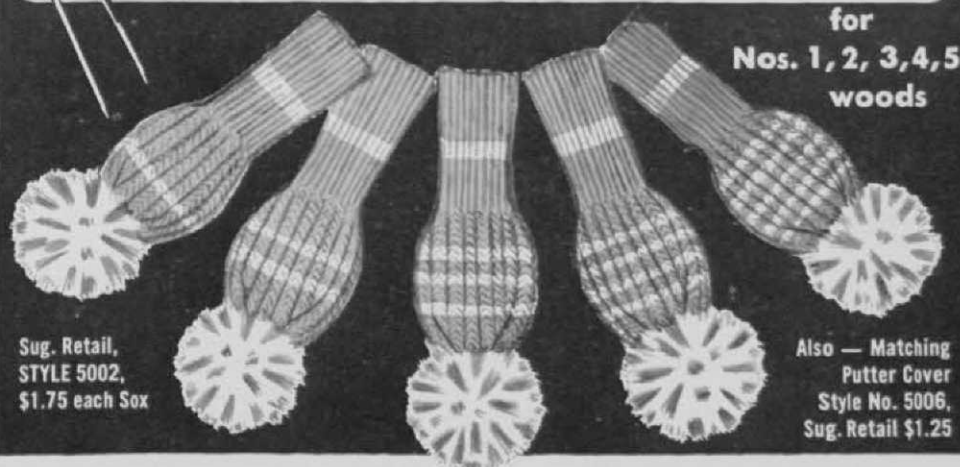


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WORKING FROM WITHIN A PRIORITY FRAMEWORK

The maintenance program should be worked out with more than weather in mind . . . At least five other factors have to be considered in setting it up

By **ROBERT M. WILLIAMS**

Supt., Bob O'Link GC,
Highland Park, Ill.

Weather as a factor in setting up and following through on the course maintenance program certainly can't be minimized, but considering other influences that are involved, its importance can be overemphasized.

There is one thing that can be said in favor of the weather: Supts. have been coping with its irregularities for so long that they are taken for granted and flexible work programs have been set up to offset many of the disruptions they may cause. What it amounts to is that the irregularities are pretty well taken in stride unless, of course, they are on the violent or prolonged side.

The same, though, can't be said for a number of things that enter into the maintenance picture — meaning the availability of labor and equipment, the time when work can be carried out, budget appropriations and members' attitudes. These are the great imponderables, so far as the average supt. is concerned.

A defense has been set up against the weather. When it's dry for instance, we irrigate; when it's hot and humid, we apply fungicides; if rain is predicted, we may aerate; there is a time for applying the different types of fertilizers and herbicides; when it is extremely hot we know that we must syringe the greens to cool them off.

Actually, the only baffling or uncertain thing about the weather, where most of

us are concerned, is not its present but its potential effect. If we seed or apply a dry fertilizer is our work going to be undone by the brisk winds that may follow within a day or so after we have completed either of these jobs? Are equally strong winds going to minimize the effect of irrigation, or even rain, through too rapid evaporation?

Here, of course, we have to depend on the accuracy of the five-day weather forecasts, or a special kind of instinct that some supts. seem to develop.

The matter of timing maintenance work, or simply getting it in when it doesn't interfere with play, has been attacked from a number of angles in the last two or three years. Night work has proved to be the answer at some clubs; early morning work has enabled others to barely keep ahead of the players who, incidentally, are getting up earlier and earlier to play golf. The traditional Monday course closing has helped the private clubs over the hump. But where night or early morning work isn't practicable and where courses aren't closed on Mondays, maintenance has to be of a hit-and-miss or squeeze-it-in nature. If this isn't enough, the many special events that are held at clubs may place even more restrictions on the supt.

One Day for Maintenance

On Mondays, we are fortunate enough to have the right of way over the golfers. Every club, even the heavily played semi-private or public ones, should set aside one day a week when the maintenance crew has some kind of a work priority. Otherwise, irreparable damage to turf or the golfing landscape itself may result and the cost of replacement in either case may be much higher than the fees realized on that particular day.

Much of our fertilizing is done on Mondays when there is little or no interference. The bulk of aerifying is handled in mid-



Cascades Country Club,
Homestead, Va.

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August, 1963



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Rehoboth Beach C. C., Rehoboth Beach, Del.

May when the plant roots benefit most. Night watering usually starts in mid-June. We try to time our fertilizing so that the greatest benefit to the turf is shown on the days when big events are played. Application may be made a week or only a few days before these tournaments are staged so as to bring the course into full bloom on the appointed days. Of course, we keep an eye on the weather in deciding just when the fertilizer should be applied. We concede there is an ulterior motive in trying to bring the course into its full beauty for the big events. That is, after all, the time to show the members what they are paying for.

Budget May Fluctuate

The budget is another item that can fluctuate from year to year, depending on the whims of the members or officials and to a lesser degree on the economic outlook. It has been my observation, though, that the supt. who gives a business-like accounting of expenditures for the season, and is able to justify the additions that may be requested in a new budget, is going to fare reasonably well in the financial department. Poor record-keeping on the part of the supt. probably has led to more appropriation slashes than any other factor.

Labor has been steadily reduced on golf courses in the last 30 or 40 years because more and more machinery has been introduced. Supts. generally have no quarrel with this, but in some cases club officials don't grasp the idea that the machines they buy aren't automated. The purchase of a new tractor doesn't automatically justify reducing the labor force by one man.

Use Fewer Workers

We have flattened out our annual employment curve by keeping our personnel requirements at four men in the winter and twelve at our summer peak. Only a few years ago it took from 15 to 20 men to maintain a course in the heart of the season. There is no denying that labor continues to take the biggest slice out of the maintenance appropriation and that tight control of the number of men hired has to be exercised. This can be effected only by having more work to be done than possibly can be done with the staff allotted. In short, you never quite catch up with all the work there is to do on a course.

There is no way of minimizing the disrupting effect absenteeism has on a main-



Bob Williams

... have emergency plan ready.

tenance program. We are set up with just enough men to go around on the day's routine jobs, and if someone turns up sick for a day or two, the routine is thrown badly out of line. Two cases of absenteeism on the same day is a minor catastrophe. About the only thing that can be done in a case like this is to try to foresee the effects of absenteeism on the part of one, two or even three men, set up alternate (or disaster) programs that cover all the major work bases, and then hope that you can get through the day. Usually, when an alternate plan is put into effect, the supt. has to handle one of the operational tasks.

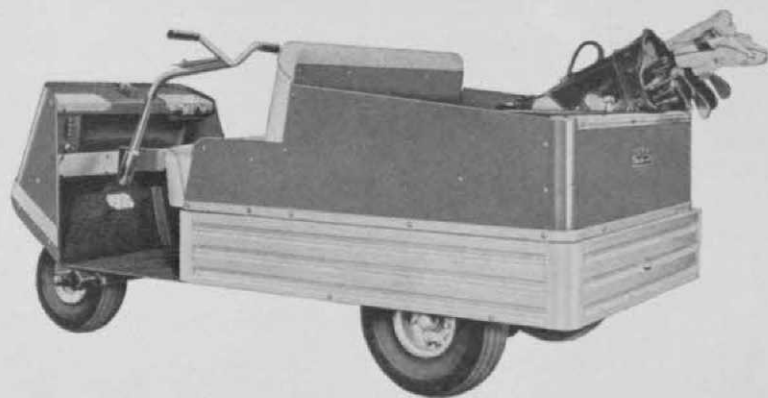
Machinery Breakdowns

When a supt. is trying to foresee what will happen when his employees are absent, he should go a step farther and
(Continued on page 69)

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Maintaining, Merchandising the Electric Golf Car

The pro or person who runs the car concession can make it more profitable by learning to become a service expert

By HARLEY G. COSTER

H. Coster Electric Car Sales & Service,
Indianapolis, Indiana

A sufficient number of well maintained golf cars make the game more pleasurable for those who wish to ride, and are a necessity for an expanding group of people who cannot otherwise play golf.

Merchandising in any business is the key to increased sales. How many times a day are you asked to purchase merchandise? Even the waitress who suggests dessert is merchandising. Why shouldn't the pro merchandise golf cars by constantly suggesting their use?

Every morning all cars should be on display in front of the pro shop, and ready for rental and not tucked away in a shed where the golfer feels it's an imposition for someone to bring a vehicle to him. Mass display of any product is an incentive for buying or using it.

Before the pro leases or buys cars he

should make arrangements to spend the necessary time to become an expert in their care. It takes about a day to do this and he will find great satisfaction in being able to service or supervise the servicing of the vehicles.

About 80 per cent of the cost of a service call to any club by a dealer involves travel time and mileage. If car maintenance is understood, down-time can be eliminated and profits increased. Cars should go to the dealer's shop for repairs only when absolutely necessary.

The running gear of most cars rarely causes problems. It is extremely important to inflate the new low pressure tires exactly as specified. Wheel lugs should be periodically tightened and brakes checked and adjusted when necessary. Once each year wheel bearings should be packed and medium weight oil added to the differential if needed.

Present day motors require little care as most are lifetime greased and sealed. On older motors equipped with fittings,