

Pro shop needs Woman's touch

Let a saleslady handle the apparel; it pays in moving merchandise for both sexes.

BY ERNIE SABAYRAC



“Never underestimate the power of a woman” may be a dusty line on Madison Avenue, but that power is only now becoming evident to the golf professional. He is discovering that, apparel-wise, women spend far more money than men—and there’s nothing like a dame to help them spend it.

Also, it is becoming apparent in the pro shops that the distaff side does much of the buying for the men—and the men who do their own buying prefer the services of a saleswoman.

My organization lays claim to being the first to market nationally-advertised apparel in the pro shops. We broke through in 1949. But it was not until 1956 that we offered our first complete line of women’s sport apparel, everything from millinery to footwear. This latter concentration reached its peak in the past year when our women’s business definitely exceeded our men’s business in all types of apparel, from head to toe.

We don’t say that we started women thinking of high fashion on the golf course. We simply sensed that our golf pro friends could profit by the trend and

we went along with it enthusiastically. It has paid off for our customers and us.

Women unquestionably have much more sportswear in their wardrobes than do men. For example, there are few lady golfers who don’t have at least five or six different head pieces to go with their many outfits. We believe that we were the first sales organization to capitalize on this fact; we even beat the regular retail outlets to the gun in featuring all color-coordinated apparel.

Our strength is that we can supply pro shops with several different fabrics and styles on the “to-go-with” basis, in shorts, skirts, blouses, sweaters, jackets and shoes. Now, many smart women won’t buy shorts until they find exactly what goes with the blouses they already own, or vice versa. The coordinates are right there in the pro shop bins for the style-conscious to inspect, try on and buy.

Possibly a smarter move than that was our encouragement of golf pros to hire sharp salesladies. Women like to talk intimately about what they buy and the best advisor is another woman.

We are firm believers in the theory

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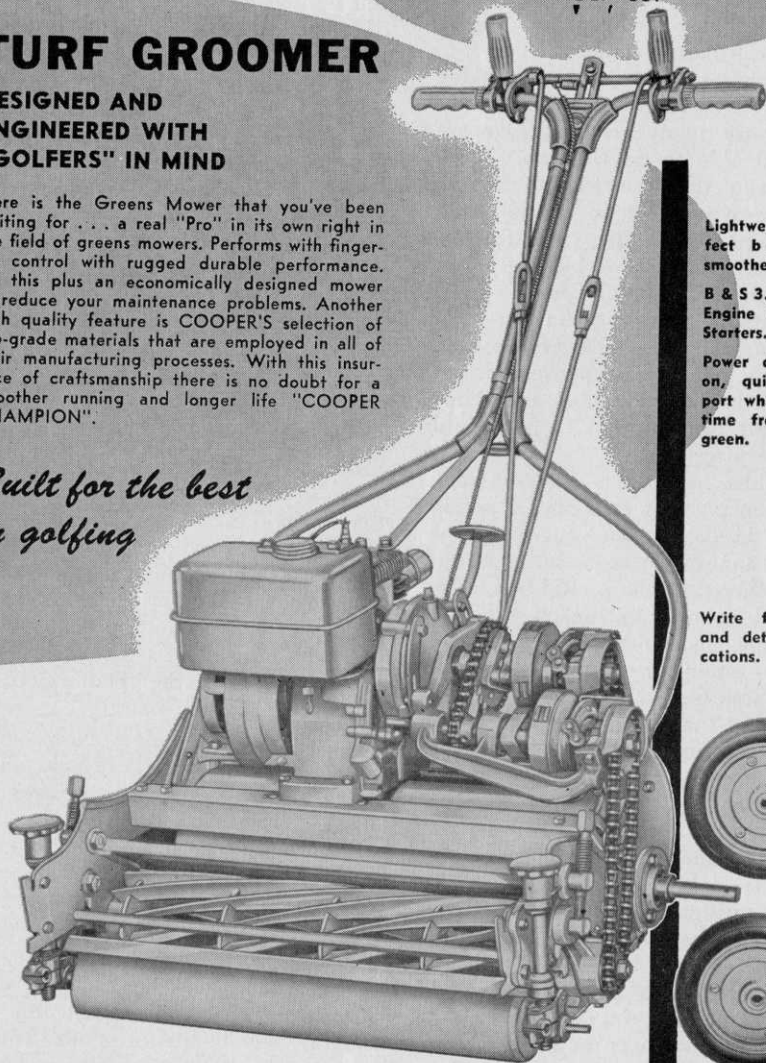
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WOMAN'S TOUCH

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that a golf professional should be a golf professional, which means that the greater part of his time should be spent on the lesson tee, on the first tee, or on matters most directly concerned with his club's golf program.

This need not lead to neglect of the tremendous potential in his shop's apparel business. He simply should do what any fine retail store will do and that is to engage the best possible help.

Many pros seem to think that capable female help is hard to find. This is not so. There are many women who are willing and able to do this job.

Where can they be found? Simply contact one of your friends in the retail store business with ladies' departments and tell him that you're looking for a lady who prefers part-time work to the regular hours of a store operation.

These women need most of the time before noon to get their households set up, the children off to school, etc. They are then free from around 11 a.m. until late in the afternoon.

Most clubs have their greatest play from women possibly two days a week. These are the days when you want your female assistant on the scene in the morning. The other days she should be on the job around noon, from which time on most of the male members show up. Monday is usually the off day, with half-days on Saturday and Sunday. Many women—more than you think—are available for this type of job.

Most golf pro shops, governed by local conditions, will pay women a minimum salary, but they also offer the incentive of commission payments on the merchandise sold which does not include pick-up items such as balls, gloves, etc. Five to 7½ per cent is the usual commission rate. This is in line with what a good specialty shop pays a saleslady.

It might amaze you to know how many women customers do all the sports apparel buying for their husbands. Pull them in with a fine line of ladies' sportswear and they'll become interested in "What's for hubby?" That, of course, means you should also be able to have

your saleslady show the best in the house for the spouse.

With a gal selling in the shop, a pro can boost his golf club and bag sales by spending more time on the practice tee, to drop the practice balls down for the prospective buyer of clubs. We feel that the easiest way to sell golf equipment is to bring several different clubs with varying shafts, swing weights, etc., to the practice tee and let the member sell himself on what's best for him. You can do this when you have someone minding the store.

Another pro shop innovation for which we take a bow is the encouragement of sale periods. Even a "prestige" store cannot do business without special sales, clearance or otherwise. Pros who consider this undignified are three-putting themselves out of turnover money.

The apparel business, whether it be in a retail store or a pro shop, calls for the display of everything new, style- and fabric-wise. You simply cannot sit with last year's merchandise and expect it to move this year.

Many pros do not understand the purpose and timing of sales. The purpose is to *raise cash for new-merchandise purchase*, for fall or spring. But there are also many pros who say they have members who will not buy except at a special sale. They are lucky to have this type of customer, permitting the clearance of static stock. Most sales start with a 25% discount off the retail price, which still leaves a profit margin.

A sale attracts new customers and makes better customers of your old ones. High fashion is the buying incentive, so if an infrequent customer buys a well-known brand item on sale and is impressed by its service to her, she is likely to turn up for a new item the next time rather than wait a comparatively long while before it is put on sale.

The timing of sales is simple enough. You are sold a fall-weight line and a summer-weight line of goods. Your summer-weight stock remainders should go on sale by August 1st and continue at reduced prices through the Labor Day weekend. During this period you can also move goods left over from the pre-

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LE FIELL

Burden of proof ruling hits golf course

Supreme Court of New Mexico reverses lower body, remands case of injured player for new trial.

BY WILLIAM JABINE

An interesting decision regarding the duty which the owner or operator of a golf course owes to the persons who play thereon was handed down recently by the Supreme Court of New Mexico.

A golfer who was playing on a golf course operated by the New Mexico School of Mines was injured when he slipped and fell. Ice under the grass on the slope of one of the greens was the cause of his fall, and he brought a negligence action against the school.

The trial court directed a verdict for the defendant school at the close of the plaintiff's case and the plaintiff appealed to the Supreme Court of New Mexico.

The facts are stated by the Supreme

Court as follows: "On February 1, 1961, plaintiff together with one Reverend E. Y. Folk went to the golf course operated by defendant, where they paid the required green fee to the pro on duty. Plaintiff had played the course 35 to 50 times over the previous six years. After plaintiff's second shot, the ball came to rest at the foot of a steep grassy incline leading to the first green. Before making his approach shot to the green, plaintiff climbed the hill so that he could see where the cup was located (the location of cups on the green are changed periodically). Having determined where the cup was, plaintiff turned to go back to his ball at the bottom of the hill. After

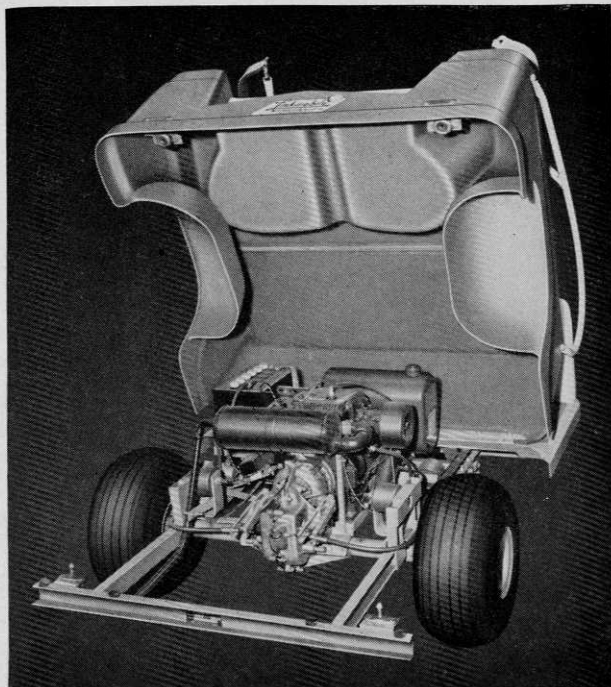
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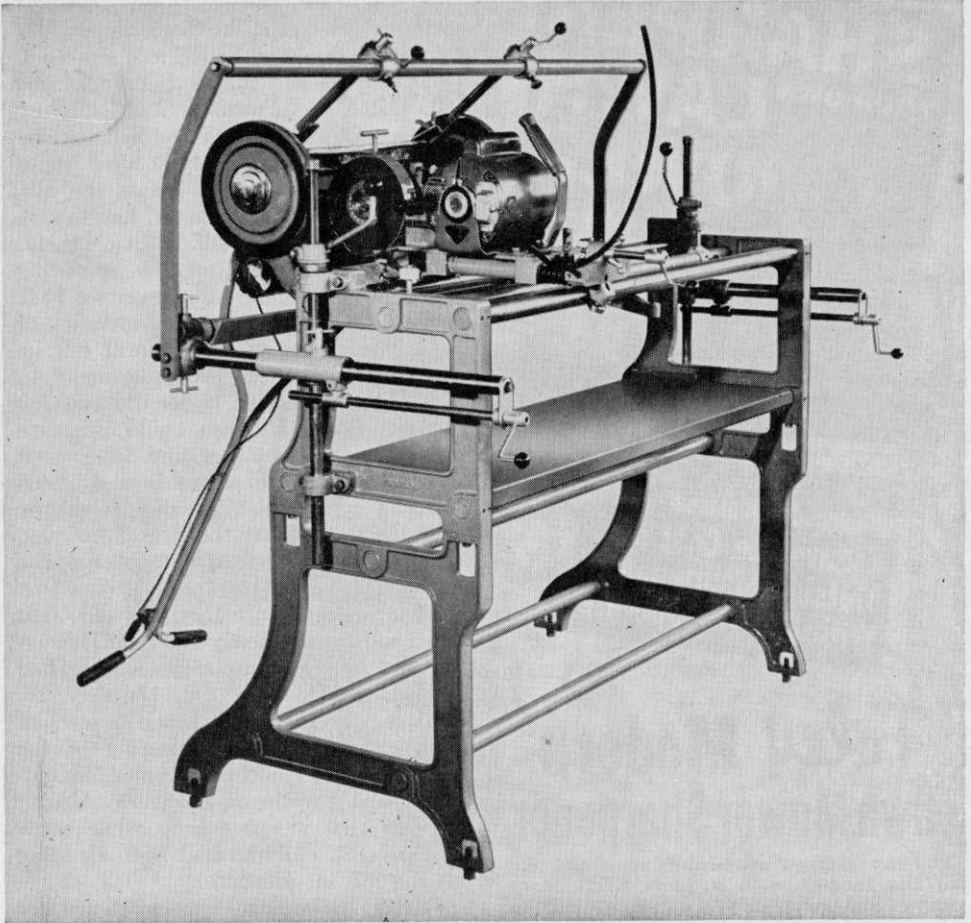
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PROOF

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taking a few steps, his feet slipped out from under him and he fell to the ground. He rolled or slid to the bottom of the hill, losing consciousness and suffering serious injuries. Plaintiff testified that he was wearing 'ripple' rubber-soled shoes and that he did not see ice on the hill, nor did he know what caused him to slip.

"Reverend Folk testified that he did not see plaintiff fall, but saw him lying at the bottom of the hill. Reverend Folk further testified that upon examination of the general area where plaintiff fell he could see one-half to three-quarters of an inch of ice imbedded under the grass on the hill slope. He also could hear ice crunching under his feet, and there was a path like where a deer had been dragged showing where plaintiff slid down the hill. He stated that the grass was wet, and there was water at the bottom of the hill where plaintiff was lying.

"The evidence further showed that there had been a heavy snow on December 8, 1960, whereupon the course had been closed to play until January 26, 1961. In the meantime much effort had been exerted to speed clearing of the course so play could be resumed, including spraying water on the snow. Also, it appears that at some time while snow was present, children had been sledding on the hill in question.

"After the course was reopened on January 26, it snowed again and the course was closed on January 27. On January 28, it was again opened and eight people played. Fifty-three people played on January 29, seven on January 30, nine on January 31 and ten on February 1, the date of plaintiff's injury. No one other than the plaintiff had slipped and fallen so far as the pro was aware."

After this chronicle of the facts, the Court quoted from two of its previous opinions concerning the duty of store owners to patrons of their establishments. These two cases held that a store owner is not the insurer or guarantor of the safety of patrons or business invitees.

The Court then continued: "Although we are here considering the duty of the operator of a golf course to its patrons, and not of a merchant to his customers,

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