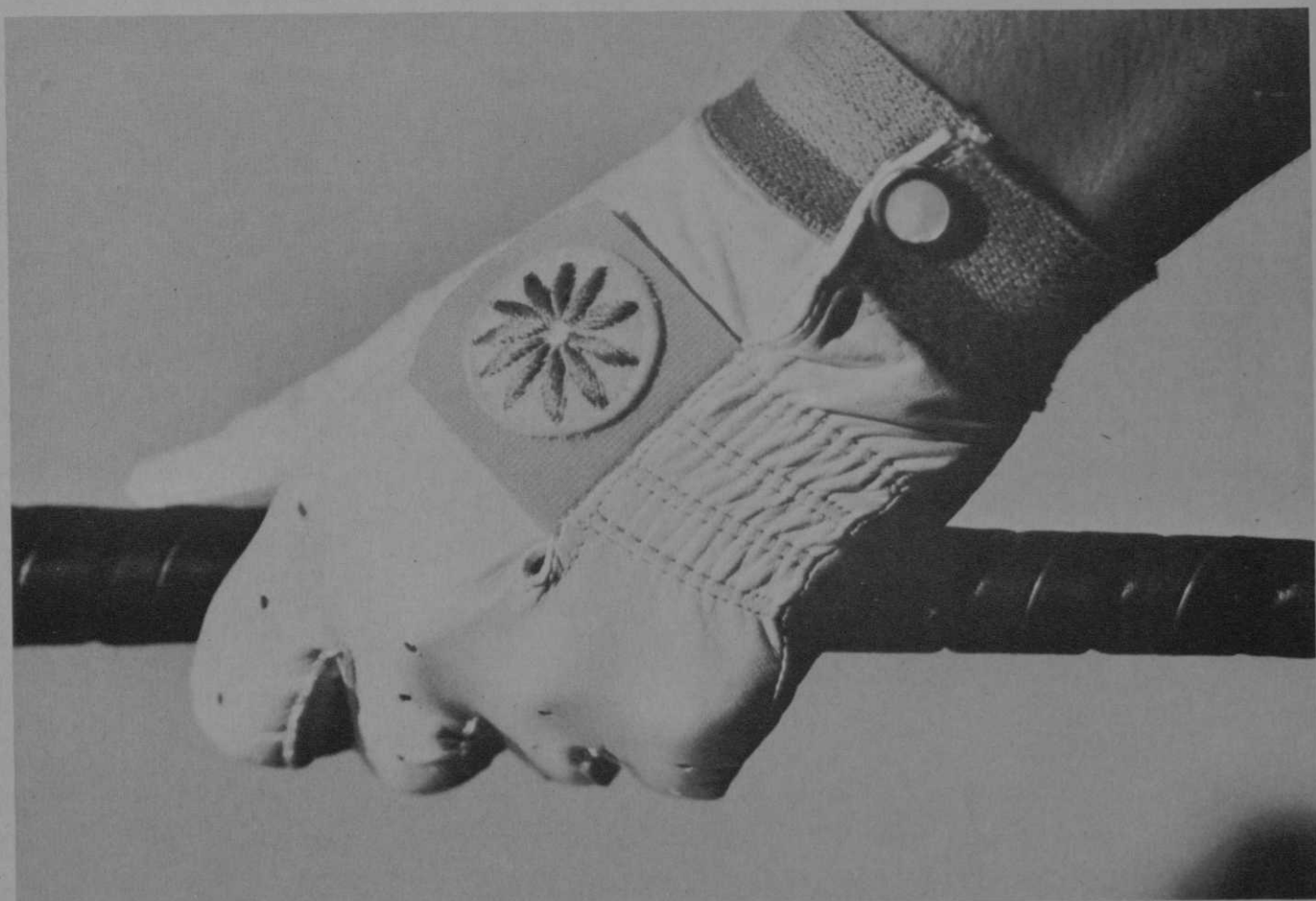


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Everyday, A Sale Day

"Support your pro" is more than a slogan at Mill River CC. Under a unique price plan devised by professional Ray Montgomery, sales are booming and members are saving.

By Vincent J. Pastena

Everyone likes a bargain—that is, everyone but the merchant. To him it means a smaller profit margin. But what about a merchant who gives his customers bargains on exactly the merchandise they want or need at any time? Probably you would think he were a new brand of masochist who enjoys the agonies of bankruptcy.

Ray Montgomery, head professional at Mill River Club in Upper Brookville, New York, is doing exactly this, and he hardly is a candidate for the "couch" or anywhere near bankruptcy. The fact is Montgomery is an enterprising professional who, through his unorthodox sales plan, has more than doubled his dollar volume from

Along with the development of a unique pro shop plan, Ray Montgomery also exhibits his savvy in having a woman assistant—in this case, his wife, Trudi.



April through June over the same period last year. This hefty increase came about by selling merchandise to members at only 10 per cent above wholesale price, plus freight/handling charges and 5 per cent sales tax. Since freight costs vary, Montgomery suggests a flat 5 per cent be added to cover freight/handling charges. Although it sounds incredible, the plan itself is part of an earnest effort at the club to change "Support Your Golf Professional" from a mere slogan to an active program.

Unhappy with the state of his business, Montgomery decided to do something about the situation before he was faced with the choice of operating a deficit business or finding himself a new position.

"Twenty per cent of the members were buying 80 per cent of the merchandise. I discovered that many members were doing a lot of their buying at various discount places.

"This created inventory and buying problems. I could never estimate my sales in advance."

The pro shop plan, which is mandatory for all full members and voluntary for special classifications, came out of his "playing" with figures on paper. First Montgomery decided that he wanted to make a personal income of at least \$20,000. Secondly, he had to devise a way of bringing his income to this level and at the same time compete with the discount operations in order to get his members back into the pro shop.

He found that if he received from each male, full regular class "A"

MILL RIVER CLUB PRO SHOP PLAN RULES

1. Each male, full regular class "A" member will be billed \$50 per year at the rate of \$10 per month from May through September. Pool, tennis and weekday members are invited to join this plan. To do so, please contact the pro shop.
2. Merchandise may be purchased only for personal use or for the immediate family who enjoy club privileges. Merchandise may not be bought for resale by any member. Violations of this clause will be subject to disciplinary action by the board of governors.
3. Merchandise on special orders, special sizes and custom equipment will not be returnable, unless damaged or faulty. Merchandise ordered will have freight charge copied directly from the manufacturer's invoice. All shoes ordered will have an additional charge of \$1 (which is paid to the manufacturer).
4. The professional will be responsible for his stock and will assume any loss of merchandise left on hand.
5. Merchandise will be sold at 10 per cent above cost plus freight charges and 5 per cent sales tax.
6. 1970 tournament awards will be credited to a member's account and treated as payment for merchandise purchase in the shop (excepting lessons).
7. A guest may *not* purchase merchandise under this plan. He will pay full retail prices. However, we will extend the courtesy of a member purchasing three golf balls and one glove under the plan. The member may *not* purchase other merchandise or equipment for his guest.
8. Outstanding accounts from 1969 must be paid in full. Outstanding tournament credits from 1969 must be redeemed at full retail prices on merchandise purchased.
9. Defective merchandise will be returned to the supplier at no extra cost to a member. However, if a claim proves to be unjustified, the member will be charged for freight expenses.
10. Repair costs will be the same as 1969; freight charges will be added.
11. Complaints by members regarding the plan must be made to the chairman of the golf committee or the golf committee sub-chairman in charge of the plan.

These rules regarding the pro shop plan and any subsequent rules approved by the board of governors are considered to be the rules of the committee in accordance with the by-laws.

member a fee of \$50 per year outright, he would augment his income by approximately \$13,000. This would be a new policy, since previously the pro depended mainly on the pro shop operation for his income. In return, he would sell his merchandise to these members and their immediate families who belonged to the club at a 10 per cent markup, plus 5 per cent for freight/handling costs and 5 per cent sales tax. On the basis of \$100,000 in annual gross sales he would derive \$15,000 profit before deducting freight/handling expenses. In addition, Montgomery grosses about \$4,500 from the club's driving range operation and another \$17,500 from the bag storage operation. He also is reimbursed \$14,500 for a starter and caddie master who are on his staff. Montgomery receives no income from the golf car rental operation, and at best, makes about \$600 on lessons. A head assistant handles most of the lessons, and Montgomery guarantees him \$6,000 for six months' work. Therefore, excluding the negligible amount for lessons, Montgomery's total gross income would come to \$64,500.

Montgomery estimates his total operating costs, excluding merchandise, to be \$42,000. This includes salaries for his staff of eight during peak season, plus \$7,000 for his wife, Trudi, who works in the shop. Therefore, deducting this amount from the gross, Montgomery would derive a personal income before taxes of about \$22,500 under the plan. A brief breakdown works this way:

\$14,500 salary reimbursements
13,000 plan payments
15,000 gross profit
17,500 bag storage
4,500 driving range
<hr/>
\$64,500 total gross income
-42,000 total operating costs
<hr/>
\$22,500 before income taxes.

Once Montgomery had a solid plan to propose, he campaigned to convince the members. Over several months, he spoke individually with many members and several times with the board of governors.

Finally, the plan was voted upon, passed, made part of the club rules and put into effect April 1st this year. From April 1st to the end of June some \$45,000 worth of merchandise was sold at the new markup, compared to about \$19,000 for the same period last year at the typical 40 per cent markup. The plan, therefore is surpassing all expectations, and Montgomery is certain he'll far exceed the \$100,000 gross volume upon which he based the plan. The disaff side of the membership, which

(Continued on page 54)

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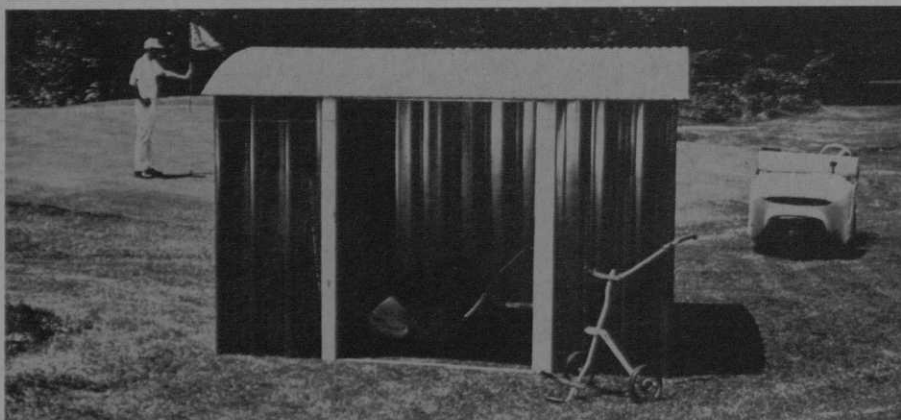
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A Sale Day

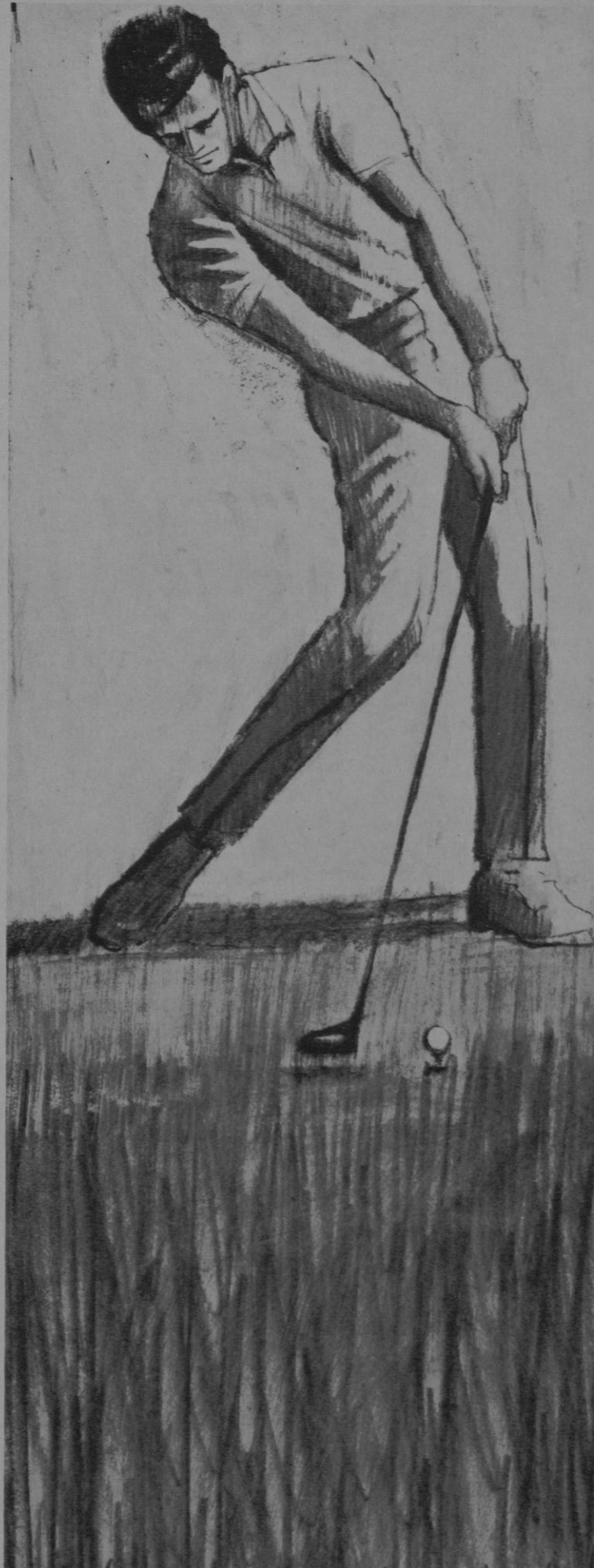
(Continued from page 53)

had been a "tough sell," is now buying twice as much as before. And the men, who always bought more than the women, have become even better customers. Montgomery, whose shop closes only in February, also expects a strong holiday season business this year of \$15,000 to \$20,000 in sales, as well as success with winter vacation apparel, which goes on display in October.

Montgomery says he believes that most of his suppliers know about the pro shop plan and none expressed any objections. Actually, the member and his immediate family do not really begin to reap any savings until they have spent about \$250 in the pro shop. As for problems of price reductions going beyond the membership to outsiders, the rules guiding the plan (see sidebar) are specific about such violations. The rules have extra "punch" because violations would be subject to action by the club's rules committee in accordance with the by-laws. In addition, no display is made of the plan prices. All items are tagged with a price, reflecting the usual 40 per cent markup. However, an item that is tagged at \$100, plus \$5 tax, would be billed to a member at \$72.45—\$60 wholesale price, plus \$6 for the 10 per cent markup, \$3 for the 5 per cent freight/handling charge and \$3.45 sales tax on the \$69 price. This constitutes a difference of \$32.55.

Club manager Bob Stanley says that if the club had not instituted Montgomery's plan, they would probably have had to establish a salary for the pro. "This way everyone is benefiting."

Montgomery points out a less tangible, but important, result of the plan. There is an improved harmony between the membership and the pro since the plan went into effect. Previously, those members who did not go out of their way to support the pro shop appeared to be embarrassed when confronted by the pro or by those members who actively supported him. Montgomery says the whole climate of the club has improved. □



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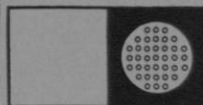
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Along with the cost of remodeling, members and officials fear the inconvenience and loss of business during construction. The author suggests an approach to renovation that will ease the bite on funds and keep operations on a near normal level

Does Your Course Need

Many golf courses built more than 20 or 30 years ago were not designed for today's high compression golf balls and long-range clubs. Thus, they have become little more than pushovers, yielding an abundance of cheap birdies and sure-fire pars. Under such conditions, golf loses its romance—its sense of conquest. And when this happens, a dedicated group of club members usually will begin agitating for changes. Once members take a long hard look at their venerable course, they will probably uncover a host of weaknesses which could easily be eliminated with the proper remodeling program.

Some of the common flaws found in most courses are poor condition and design of greens and tees, misplaced bunkers and water hazards, bad routing of holes, unfair shot values, blind greens and either a shortage or over-abundance of doglegs, water holes and sandtraps.

The golf course superintendent will also have his list of complaints. These are usually maintenance problems, such as standing water, hard-to-mow areas and poor condition of the soil, to name a few.

The students of the game will recognize more subtle flaws, such as green sizes which have no relationship to the length of the approach shots, bunkers and traps which are unrelated

to the play of the holes and a monotonous layout that offers little variety in shot-making.

All professional golf course architects will admit that no one—no matter how great—has ever designed a course which couldn't be improved by revising at least some of the original design.

E. Lawrence Packard, president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, says that remodeling programs are usually well worth the money, not only in added enjoyment of the game, but many times in

lowered maintenance costs.

"A newly-modeled course is a great source of pride for club members and is often a valuable asset in attracting new members," Packard says.

Naturally, any good remodeling costs money, anywhere from a few thousand dollars for rebuilding one green, to a quarter million dollars for re-vamping an entire course. Packard admits that it often takes powers of persuasion, however, to convince some players that the additional dues or assessment needed for re-



The water hazard at Stevens Point CC, Stevens Point, Wis., was improved by gently grading the embankments to provide both easy maintenance and playable lies for golfers.



Useless swampland (above, left) was dug out and cleared with heavy machinery (left), then dredged (above) to form an attractive and functional water hazard at the Innisbrook CC, Tarpon Springs, Fla.

a Face-lift?

modeling will be well spent. The holdouts are often the oldest members, who realize their playing days are numbered, and the youngest members, who have stretched their budgets to join the club.

"Many times, it is wise to invite a professional golf course architect out to the club to help sell the idea," Packard says. "They've been through this many times and can usually allay the fears of the more reluctant members."

The typical fears include club members' uncertainty over how long the course will be under construction, and the club manager's apprehensions over possible loss of restaurant and bar business.

Packard claims remodeling work—even extensive projects—can be undertaken with a minimum of disruption of club life and little loss in revenues, if there is proper planning and work scheduling.

To any club considering renovation, Packard suggests four initial steps:

1. Retain a professional golf course architect: there are many good ones available. For a complete list, contact the American Society of Golf Course Architects, 221 N. LaSalle St., Chicago, Ill. 60601;
2. Get an aerial photograph or accurate topographic

map of either the whole course or the holes to be remodeled;

3. List objectives and establish priorities;
4. Determine the budget.

Most experienced golf course architects suggest that the work be done in two or three stages over a period of two or three years. Six or nine holes can be remodeled, while the rest of the course remains open for play. On less ambitious projects two or three holes can be remodeled with very little disruption of play, especially if the work timetable is well planned. But Packard does warn against extending major projects beyond three years. Members often become impatient and decide to cut the project short.

If a city construction project—such as a new sewer system—is scheduled to cut through a golf course, club members can sometimes use the opportunity to do some course remodeling. Play will be disrupted on some holes anyway, so the club might as well use the opportunity to add a water hole, relocate a green or add a dogleg.

In addition, if a club is planning to install a new watering system, it's a good idea to first do any needed remodeling before the plumbing work has been installed. Of course, in any major remodeling plan, it's ideal to have unused land ad-

joining the course, making it possible to design and build new holes without affecting play.

On major projects, architects will ordinarily present club members with several different plans. As a typical example, an Illinois club recently decided to remodel its golf course. The members reviewed three plans. The first proposed following the same general routing, basically changing only the trees and greens. The second plan—costing about 50 per cent more than the first—included extensive re-routing of holes and addition of doglegs. The third approach—about twice as much as the first—included extensive changes which would have provided members with a championship course. Although the third approach caught the fancy of the remodeling committee as well as many other members, the second plan was used because of budget restrictions.

The work timetable is an important consideration, since it is often possible to begin work on a limited number of greens, sandtraps and tees after Labor Day, and have the course back in shape the following spring. In the South, the work can be done early in the spring and seeding can be done in May when the bermudagrass begins to grow.

(Continued on page 80)

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Winter profits and the passage of time have mellowed some strongly negative opinions about snowmobiles. Some clubs have even made physical adjustments to accommodate snowmobile traffic. Others, however, remain unyielding



The SNOWMOBILE:

Finding a Course of Less Resistance

By Gerry Finn

THERE has been a change in the attitude of the golf course superintendent toward the snowmobile—that relatively new member of the mechanical age which in a short period of time has had a phenomenal growth in popularity.

At the height of the snowmobile's invasion of the golf course about 24 months ago, the superintendent gave the track-maker an unequivocal kick in the chasis. The reaction at that time was one of vehement condemnation. Nowadays the feeling has softened so that it could be described as just plain condemnation.

The typical response to the acceptance of the snowmobile is based on the individual situation. It might