economizing money and time, had so much information applicable to course operations that this reporter would estimate this afternoon alone yielded enough ideas to more than compensate for the expense of sending superintendents to the convention.

A highlight of the conference was the tale told by slides and words of Fred Grau of the history, status and prospective development of course maintenance. The fantastic progress in course conditioning has been steady and generally lacking in "circus," so superintendents and golfers themselves don't realize what advances have been made. That's partially why superintendents haven't been able to follow the good advice given by John Husar, Chicago Tribune golf editor, about acquainting golfers with the immense improvement in golf due to superintendents' achievements.

Organization of ideas that superintendents and their chairmen get and channeling the notions into effective work on the course accounted for an intensely interesting and profitable series of lessons. Even the weather was weighed carefully on the budget scales in the manner in which golf course irrigation problems were viewed.

Discussions about GCSAA's certification program seem to be easing almost to where formally qualifying superintendents will be no more disturbing to competent men than applying for an automobile license. Veteran superintendents, who have been tested and promoted, and the agricultural school graduates in course management claim their work is more complex, more exacting and more urgent than the jobs of their associates in the golf clubs' table of organization, so it's more difficult to identify a capable man for course management than it is to examine and rate a club manager or pro.

Buying was reported as being better than during the previous two years. New equipment that saves labor on essential work, and equipment that gives touches of perfection to a course, watering equipment, a broad array of chemical controls and fertilizers, apparently okay from the ecological angle, had sales managers in a bright mood.

The improvement in the actual or tentative buying was noted by some course equipment and supply dealers who recalled that last year there were slow payments by some clubs of a Class A type of membership, socially and financially.

Proceedings of the conference are valuable reading for a green chairman of a private club or owner or man in over-all charge of a pay-play course. Cost is $3 to a GCSAA member; $10 to a non-member. Order from the Golf Course Superintendents Assn., 3158 Des Plaines Ave., Des Plains, Ill. 60018.

—**Herb Graffis**

Election results

President, Richard C. Blake, superintendent, Mt. Pleasant CC, Boylston, Mass.; vice president, Robert V. Mitchell, superintendent, Sunset CC, St. Louis, Mo.; directors, Charles G. Baskin, CC of Waterbury, Waterbury, Conn.; Richard W. Malpass, Riverside G & CC, Portland, Ore.; and Paul E. Mechling, Sylvania CC, Sylvania, Ohio.

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WHAT'S BEHIND NADER'S ATTACK ON GOLF?

The consumer's champion has attacked tax concessions aimed at encouraging country clubs to preserve open lands in heavily populated areas. Thus emerges a battle over ecology and discrimination which will affect golf clubs for years

By the Editors of GOLF Magazine

One of the most critical problems facing golf courses is the rising tax rates, based on reappraisals of the lands on which clubs stand. Clubs may accept and pay the increased rates, sell and move farther out into the countryside, or fight the issue. Clubs that choose to fight will no doubt base part of their plea for tax concessions on the argument that they provide valuable open space to the communities they serve. But clubs which use this argument had better be prepared to face the discrimination issue, which is going to be raised whenever the special property status of golf courses comes up. Recently such a charge was made by a member of Ralph Nader's staff (see GOLFDOM, February, page 13). GOLF Magazine answered the charge, with which GOLFDOM concurs. But golf course officials should also prepare to answer similar charges by reading articles such as this one (reprinted in edited form) and "Golf: America's Vanishing Green Belt" (GOLF, October, 1970, p. 35), "The Vanishing Urban Course" (GOLFDOM, September, 1970, p. 30) and "Golf and Ecology" (GOLFDOM, March, p. 55).

The sport of golf—hitherto apolitical and a recreational escape from society's troubles—is suddenly finding itself at the center of two of the hottest issues of our time: ecology and the discriminatory rights of private clubs.

Politicians finally are awakening to the fact that many of America's privately-owned golf clubs are sitting on a sizable chunk of the nation's most valuable open space—green belt in and around expanding cities and suburbs. They and the tax assessors are being made aware of the long range value of such green belt which government is too bankrupt to buy

(Continued)

". . . there are signs he is spreading his reformist concern too thin, allowing one cause to trip over another."

up as a natural resource, but which it may help to tax out of existence.

What to do? The obvious answers are protective zoning, easements and tax concessions aimed at encouraging country clubs not to sell off golf course land for concrete-covering commercial developments, housing and highways. Until now, however, politicians have been positively embarrassed to talk about golf. Congressmen are loath even to talk about their own country clubs. Traditional American populist sentiment is against favoring private interests with tax concessions; worst of all it would be favoring private clubs which may discriminate in membership against minority groups.

So there it is: a quandary. Is it a greater political danger to work for the preservation of open green space even if it means fiscal favoritism to private clubs? Or is it safer to bury the issue even at the risk of seeing golf clubs sell and move farther away to land bearing lower assessed values? What in fact is the intelligent use of land in our time? These are classical and serious questions for the 1970s. So what could be more appropriate than that the people's champion of the seventies, Ralph Nader, should now find himself entwined, if not torn, between two poles in the debate. Unfortunately, there are signs he is spreading his genuine reformist concern too thin, allowing one cause to trip over another. His recent attack on golf clubs is a case in point. A Harvard College student, Michael E. Kinsley, has put out a study for Nader which insinuates that Montgomery County, Md., one of the nation's richest, is a tax haven for clubs that have highly antisocial aims.

The report charges that a special tax law passed by the Maryland legislature in 1966 is allowing country clubs throughout the state, but primarily in Montgomery County, to pay taxes far below what they would be shelling out if they were not golf clubs. The state claims that clubs have been given these special tax breaks to keep them from leaving the area and selling their land to real estate developers who will cover it over with high density projects so popular in the rapidly-growing Washington, D.C., area—apartments, town houses and shopping centers. This is a point that the Kinsley report for Nader glosses over. Kinsley prefers to beam his criticism at Montgomery clubs because of their "exclusivity." He gives virtually no consideration to the value of Maryland's tax laws for preserving suburban green belt, albeit golf courses. As a result, Kinsley ironically ignores Nader's long-standing support for projects aimed at protecting ecological balance.

The report asks how "black and Jewish residents of Montgomery County" must feel about paying taxes to subsidize large tracts of land for country clubs, especially the Chevy Chase Club. Thus the report for Nader seems deliberately to use club discrimination the make the point that low tax rates charged Montgomery County golf clubs—amounting to a yearly savings to the clubs of $165,000, according to the report—should be eliminated. At best, this is a questionable point. Clubs are vulnerable on the matter of discrimination. But the Supreme Court has accorded them a place in our society.

Oddly, the report points out that Woodmont CC is getting the greatest tax break per member, $45. Any golfer in the Washington area who knows the club scene will tell you that Woodmont is almost, if not totally, Jewish.

The Nader report also singles out Chevy Chase, an acknowledged haven for WASPS, to prove that the reduced taxes are offensive to minorities. Yet, as the Washington Evening Star editorialized: "The discrimination charge . . . is a seperate question that seems to have little logical linkage to tax rates. The exclusiveness of those clubs is mainly economic."

If Woodmont or Chevy Chase or Columbia or most of the other clubs in the county were forced out of the suburbs by higher taxes on their property, and there are now rumors that a few clubs may be forced to leave despite the tax break, the already high density of the population would increase. At today's prices for land in the Washington area, few real estate people would disagree with the statement that these clubs would not be replaced by parks and recreational areas—not even by single family homes—but by major developments.

And what of the black, searching desperately for ways to escape from center city ghettos? Few black people live in Montgomery County now, unless they are fairly wealthy. They are not the ones bearing the brunt of subsidizing some of the most prestigious golf clubs in the country, played by Presidents, Congressmen, Supreme Court justices, statesmen, diplomats and fat-cat lobbyists. It is unlikely

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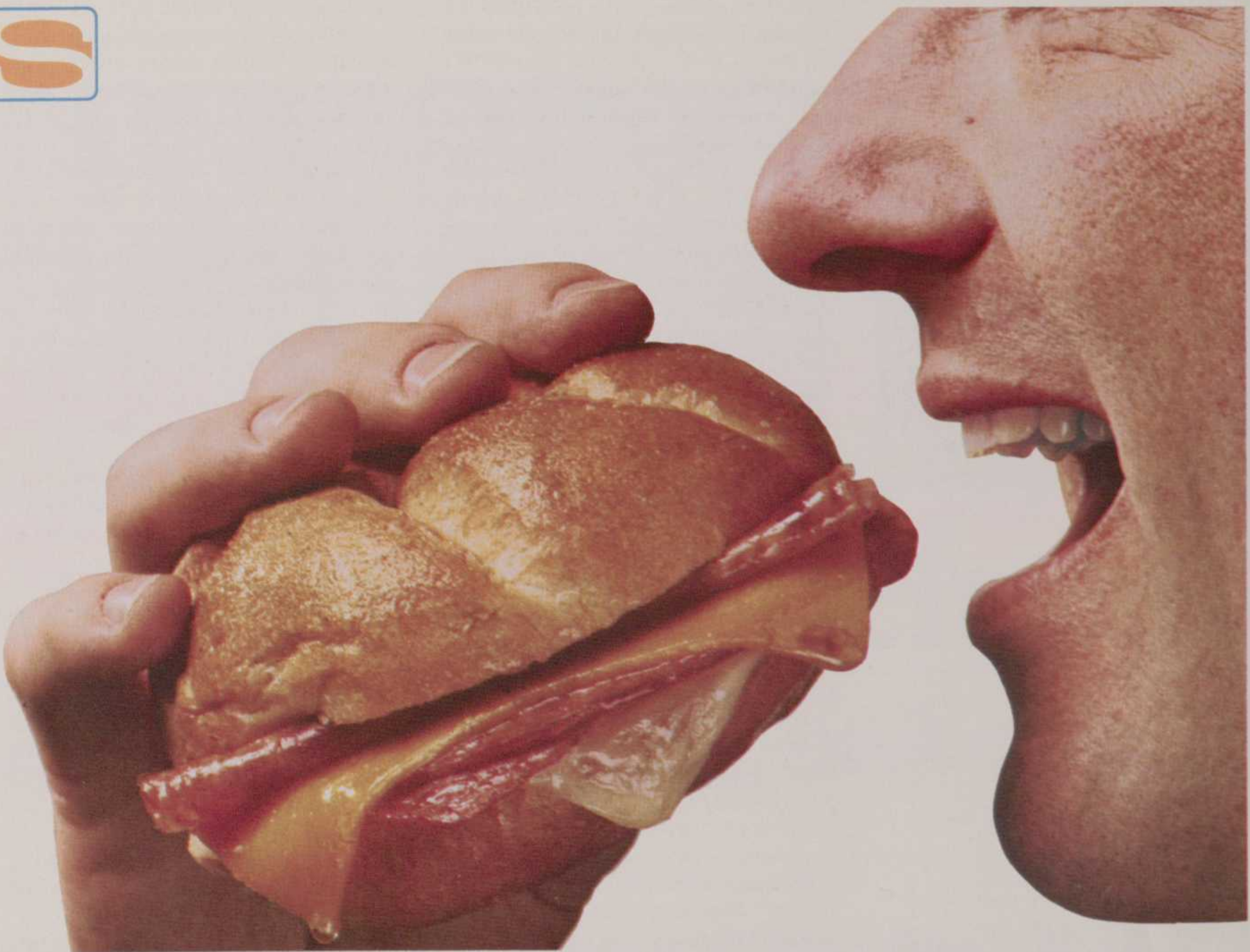

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"... the Nader group chose Maryland because it was the most open in showing how it was treating club taxes ..."

that forcing these clubs to find cheaper land would open the way for more blacks to enter the area. The astronomical prices for houses, condominium apartments and the like, rule out that possibility.

What it all boils down to is an attempt, and it seems a realistic one, by the Maryland legislature to preserve some open space for trees, grass and some wildlife.

Maryland's present Lieutenant Governor, Blair Lee III, is responsible for the tax law governing golf clubs. He is quite candid in admitting he sponsored the legislation because it would preserve green space in the suburbs. He said in response to the Nader report, his one and only job of lobbying from 1962 to 1966 when he was not in public office, was the green space bill.

Maryland's Governor Marvin Mandel answered the report's charges in a three-page letter pointing out that the report overstated the amount of money Montgomery County clubs save. Mandel, Maryland's first Jewish governor, advised Nader that he felt the report's use of words such as "racist" and "elitist" indicated to the governor that the report was more interested in the exclusive admission policies of Montgomery clubs than in tax equity.

Kinsley admits that preferential assessment of club land is not unique to Maryland. But he adds that Maryland was selected for criticism because the effect of its tax subsidy is "easy to determine because the Maryland law states that both the preferential assessment and the figure the property would be assessed at without the special law must be kept on the books."

So it seems that the Nader group chose Maryland because it was the most open in showing how it was treating club taxes—not because it was necessarily the most active in supporting "discriminatory" clubs.

The fact is that a Maryland club can only keep its preferential tax payment so long as it does not move from its existing location. If a Maryland club does move, it must pay the state the full taxes it would have paid going back 10 years prior to the year it moved. That is why both the tax the club is paying and what it would pay without a break are both listed, making it easy for zealous investigators to draw comparisons. The threat of having to pay back every cent of the tax break over such a long period, obviously, is a strong deterrent to moving unless it's profitable.

Maryland has made a major effort toward retaining some balance in its suburban planning and has caught nothing but hell from the Nader report. If there is an ecological crisis in the areas surrounding American cities, and many experts think there is, the fact that some of the open land is in the hands of clubs is not necessarily the worst of all possible worlds.

Much more needs to be done to protect these lands, and perhaps there are better ways. At least Maryland has made a stab at it. Congress has before it a piece of legislation called the National Land Use Policy Bill, presumably designed to cope with such problems. All it provides for is some Federal money and the threat of getting people to write guidelines for land use. "It's the kind of bill," says one congressional aide, "that everybody loves. It sounds great, won't cost much and will take years before anybody has to think about it again. Of course, it won't accomplish much either, except take the headache away from Congress."

Obviously, Congressmen have not got much of an idea of what this problem is all about. This is apparent from the comments GOLF received to the issues raised by the Nader report.

And what of the future? Comes this warning from Ian McHarg, landscape architect, urban planning expert and author of a very important book, "Design with Nature."

"Is this the countryside, the green belt—or rather the greed belt—where the farmer sells land rather than crops, where the developer takes the public resource of the city's hinterland and subdivides to create a profit and a public cost?"

This point should not be missed by Senator Edmund Muskie and his Inter-governmental Relations subcommittee who plan to hold a series of hearings later this year on property taxes across the United States. It should also not be missed by Nader and his growing band of aides in their search for a better society. Dragging blacks, Jews and other issues that enflame passions and dull reason into solving major problems of urban and suburban areas—and doing so without giving any evidence that sensitive minority views on the issue at stake were even sought—does the cause of racial harmony, better ecology and other goals of human betterment not the least bit of good. Mr. Nader, for once you're wrong! □

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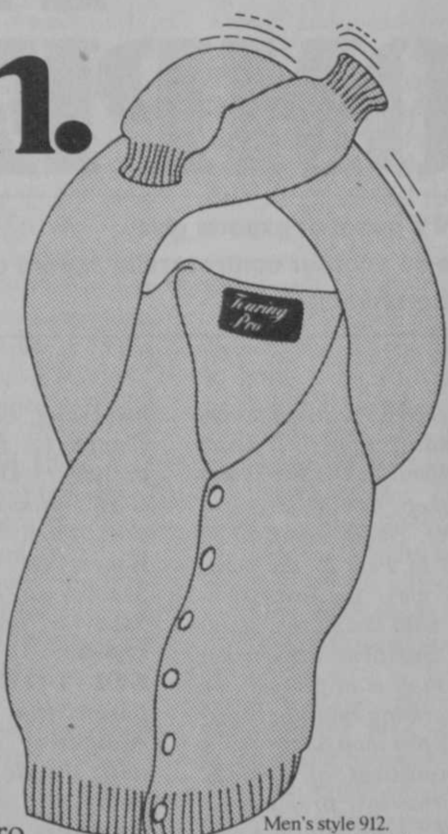

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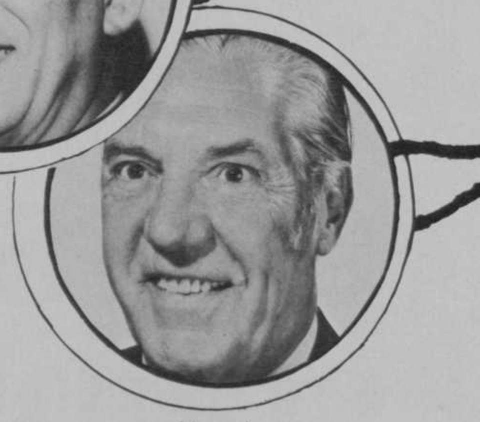
Robert D. Rickey



Howard Nannen

WHO IS THE COMPETITION?

GOLFDOM's panel of experts give their views on another controversial aspect of pro shop merchandising

GOLFDOM asked 12 representatives from the golf industry for their views on current problems in the five major areas of pro shop merchandising—buying, ordering, credit, competition and promotion. In Part 2, the panel discusses better ways the professional can compete with downtown stores and raises the questions of whether or not the pro shop is in competition with stores, markups and the overpriced image the pro shop has.

The panel consisted of Don E. Fischesser, formerly professional, Connorsville CC, Ind., now the Professional Golfers' Assn.'s special assistant for sectional affairs; Don Kay, professional, Heritage Village CC., Conn.; Warren Orlick, professional, Tam O'Shanter GC, Mich., and president of the PGA; Bob Thatcher, professional, Aronimink GC, Pa.; Jack Lust, vice president sales, DiFini Originals, Ltd.; Wally Phillips, national sales manager, Etonic Div., Charles Eaton Company; Richard Tarlow, treasurer, Brockton Footwear; L. Dean Cassell, vice president marketing, Golf Div., Acushnet Sales Company; Paul MacDonald, vice president, Dunlop Tire & Rubber Corp.; Howard Nannen, vice president sales, Spalding Sales Corp.; Robert D. Rickey, vice president, MacGregor/Brunswick, and Ernie Sabayrac, president, Ernie Sabayrac Company.

GOLFDOM: It has long been apparent that professionals are not competing with each other, but with the downtown stores in apparel and equipment. What can suppliers do to help the professional better compete with these stores?

Sabayrac: The manufacturers rightly believe that the best way to sell golf equipment is on the practice green. The person who best fits the club to the golfer is the man who diagnoses the player's problem, writes the prescription and helps correct the flaw—the golf professional. Let's face it, the golfer looks for equipment that will help his game; purchasing this equipment from the professional puts him in a position where he can be certain that this is, in fact, what he needs. When a golfer buys from the pro shop, he is buying both equipment and advice. The situation is similar in apparel sales. The downtown stores may carry the same brand names, but the pro shop at the club is more convenient. If the golfer can get the same top names in sports clothes at his club, why should he take the trouble to go downtown?

Phillips: Suppliers can help professionals bring distinctive styling, fashion and competition in price and quality into the shop to compete with these stores. Also, offering merchandising aids with recommended methods of utilizing facilities can help.

Thatcher: Suppliers can give professionals equal opportunity at price breaks on merchandise. Sales representatives should become closer to the professional and aid him in selling techniques. Advertising dollars should be spread out among shops and stores. The pro-only policy is our life saver.

Rickey: I strongly disagree with your

Jack Lust

Don Kay

L. Dean Cassell

Don Fischesser

statement that golf professionals are in competition with downtown stores. It certainly isn't true with hard goods in which entirely different and higher quality lines are offered exclusively to the professional. Although it is true that most professionals are probably feeling price resistance especially to big items, but unless he is at a public course that attracts a high percentage of beginner or casual golfers, he is not in direct competition with downtown stores. Referring specifically to golf clubs, only the golf pro is qualified to correctly fill every individual golfer's club needs.

Cassell: We must question whether or not stores have a significant portion of the golf market. Our research has unequivocally established that they do. We believe that retail stores do not really deserve the share of the golf market that they presently have. Two so-called reasons why some people feel there should be a large volume of golf merchandise sold through retail stores are: It is convenient and the retail store is where you get bargains and where beginners pick up clubs and balls. With proper merchandising and pricing policy by manufacturers, the great bulk of golfers, regardless of what price category they intend to purchase, should buy in pro shops. Only cheap, non-quality products should be purchased in discount stores. To help a professional, a manufacturer must invest in general advertising and educational programs to develop the golfing public's awareness that the pro shop offers exclusive high-quality products priced competitively, and that it is here that the only true value can be guaranteed.

The average pro shop does not have the financial resources of a store with its ability to stock exceptionally high inventory. So the manufacturer must price realistically. He must also present his best product developments and features for the pro shop. He must develop merchandising aids, displays, etc., so that the products are presented in an attractive fashion.

There is a vast untapped potential volume available in the golf market today. Complacency will allow it to remain untapped, and only coordination between the manufacturer and the professional will stem and reverse the trend. In tight times competitive factors are heightened and the business of golf is more competitive than ever in pursuit of the consumer dollar. The manufacturer and the professional share a common goal: to fully maximize the available potential.

Orlick: I do not agreee that professionals are in competition with the so-called downtown stores. There are so many services that the golf pro can offer that a store would find difficult to provide.

Kay: Because most superior equipment is sold only in pro shops, the professional doesn't actually compete with downtown stores. In soft goods, however, he does and it is up to the professional to keep his merchandise appealing and fashionable for the golfer and to keep his prices in line with his type of merchandise.

Fischesser: Although soft goods for women and men have become an important golf shop item, suppliers give the impression that golf shop business is merely gravy. Their prime consideration goes to the department store. The manufacturer allows the stores a 7 per cent or 8 per cent discount whereas the professional gets a discount of 2 per cent. In addition, soft goods deliveries to the pro shop are poor, especially on re-orders. Sometimes an item that is supposed to be in stock will take as much as four to six weeks to deliver. I have even seen cases where slacks ordered in January at the Merchandise Show for March delivery could not be furnished because the manufacturer was out of stock for the season. The season hadn't even started. An outstanding line of soft goods should be available to the professional through PGA programs.

Nannen: The suppliers are participating in the PGA Business Schools in sales and merchandising programs in which they should learn how to better help the professional compete with the downtown stores.

Tarlow: Suppliers can sell merchandise to the professional which is competitive in every respect with downtown stores. The professional can carry some of the top brand lines sold in leading downtown stores and sell them at the same price.

Lust: Manufacturers can advertise the pros' dedication to personalized service and educate them in the latest soft sell merchandising techniques and displays. They can also help pro-

(Continued)

fessionals improve business by encouraging them to promote the fashion angle, to hit their customers with the new look as early as downtown stores.

GOLFDOM: How can professionals change the idea on the part of many golfers that pro shop merchandise is over-priced?

Phillips: Taking advantage of suppliers' aids and reaching his members with accurate information on what he has to offer is probably the best method of letting his members know what values can be obtained in the pro shop.

Thatcher: The professional should provide service to such an extent that members will not want to shop elsewhere. Many members do not realize that golf shops carry an above average quality of merchandise whereas stores have a complete line of merchandise ranging from the least expensive to the most expensive. This gives the impression that pro shops are carrying too-expensive merchandise. Club officials should aid in this department wherever possible. Their support would help remove this idea from the membership.

Rickey: In order to change the over-priced image his shop has, the professional must sell the advantages of buying in the shop. The professional must take time to be familiar with the major manufacturers' lines to best utilize his expertness in fitting clubs, because this expertise gives the pro shop the advantage over the downtown stores. He must without exception sell his customer the correct set of clubs, not just what he has in inventory.

Orlick: Unfortunately, some professionals do over-price, but they are so few that I don't think there is a problem and I am fairly certain the suppliers are not worried.

Nannen: But a good part of the club members can't feel that pro shop merchandise is over-priced because the pro would not be doing the volume of business he does. For those members who feel that the merchandise is over-priced, the pro should devise ways of getting the message to them that he has price lines to fit every pocketbook. This can be done by periodically running sales and using statement stuffers to call a sale to the attention of his members. Or he can periodically have a "Memo from the Pro Shop" which can be newsy and at the same time be a sales tool.

Cassell: There are, however, some practices which establish the over-priced idea in the minds of golfers. There is a definite need for price stability and consistent dollar trading of products so the consumers become familiar with pro shop pricing as it relates to quality and value. Although there certainly is nothing wrong with periodic sales, one continuous deal after another can erode the theme of shop-equals-value. Eventually the consumer questions all "original" prices at which the shop sells for the bulk of the season. The confidence of the consumer in the pro is impaired if the shop has distorted the value of the merchandise.

Lust: Most urban centers are discount oriented, and metropolitan pro shops who feature brand name price leaders can effectively combat the notion that pro shops are over-priced. Pre-ticketed, nationally-advertised brands have true value to the consumer; 50 per cent discount on brand X belongs in the bargain basement not in a pro shop.

Wally Phillips

MacDonald: I don't think it is as much of a problem now as it was several years back. The pro shop should be developed as a unique center for purchasing quality golf equipment. There the customer has a better opportunity to purchase equipment that is properly suited to his or her game. The pro shop is not in competition with the discount house.

GOLFDOM: Do suppliers feel some professionals have been marking up their merchandise too high recently?

Thatcher: Although some suppliers may feel that way, I don't think it's fair. Stores have always taken advantage of manufacturers' closeouts without passing the savings on to the customer. It is also wrong to blame professionals for too high a markup because today's younger, better educated professional knows better than to charge the maximum. He would be cutting off his nose for the sake of the immediate dollar. It is poor communication which creates the problem. Discount professionals don't aid the rest of us in properly maintaining a markup.

Tarlow: How can the golf professional expect the same high markup as a downtown department store or specialty shop? His operating expenses are not the same. The professional cannot buy merchandise at the same bottom price as the big stores, and although this may not be true of the same line of merchandise, it has to be true when you compare one line with another. It costs a manufacturer more money to sell to golf professionals than to big stores. Golf pros' orders are smaller, the credit problems are bigger and all other problems which cost money are bigger than they would be if a manufacturer sells to large stores. The manufacturer that specializes in golf shops must have a higher distribution cost than the manufacturer that specializes in selling to big stores. If the golf shop wants to compete with downtown stores, it must work on a smaller markup.

Kay: A markup is customary in the soft goods line in most large stores and even discount stores to keystone most of their soft goods. I see no reason why pro shops can't do this.

Cassell: This is a question with a built-in fine line, because at present

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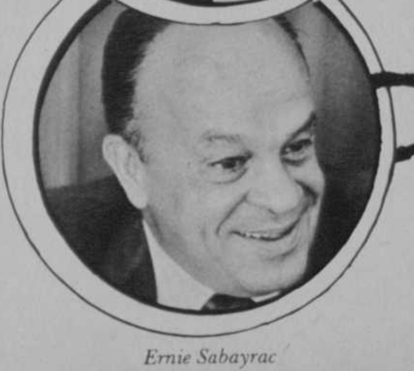
Richard Tarlow



Ernie Sabayrac