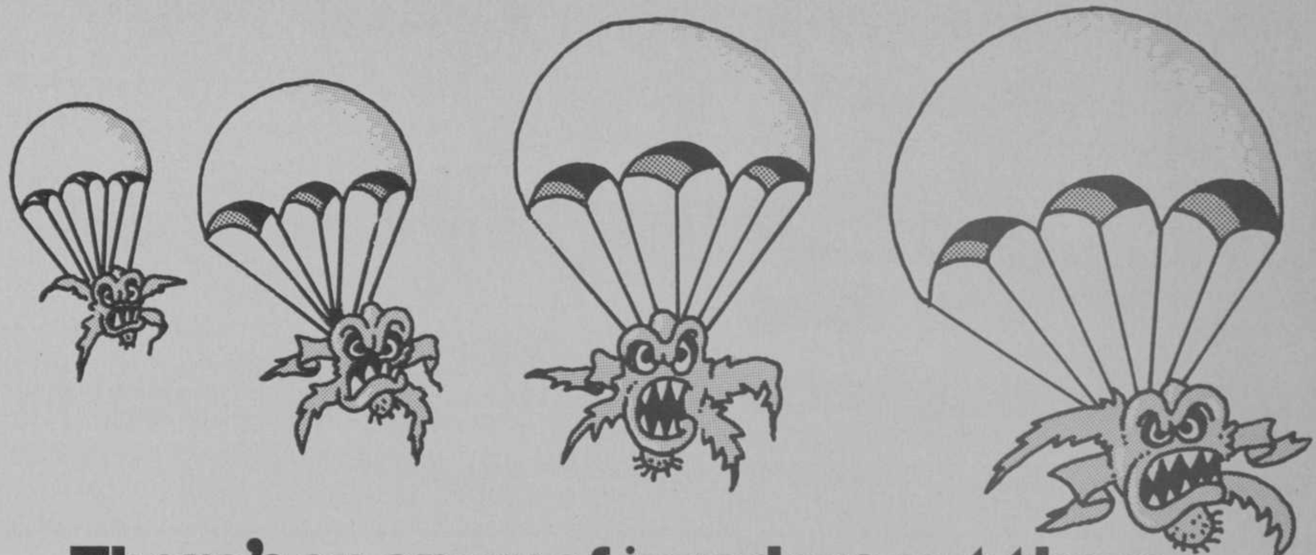

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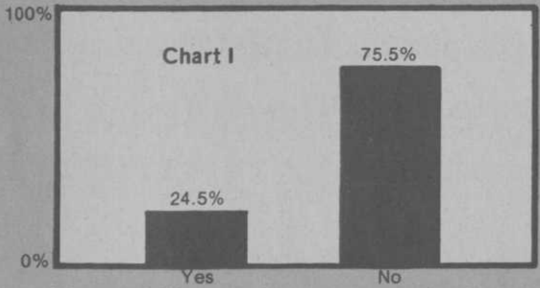
Privately-owned Golf Cars: Are They Allowed on the Course?

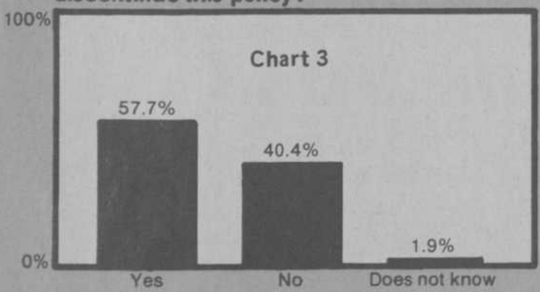
Although about 25 per cent of the clubs surveyed allow privately-owned cars on their courses, more than half of these plan to discontinue the policy

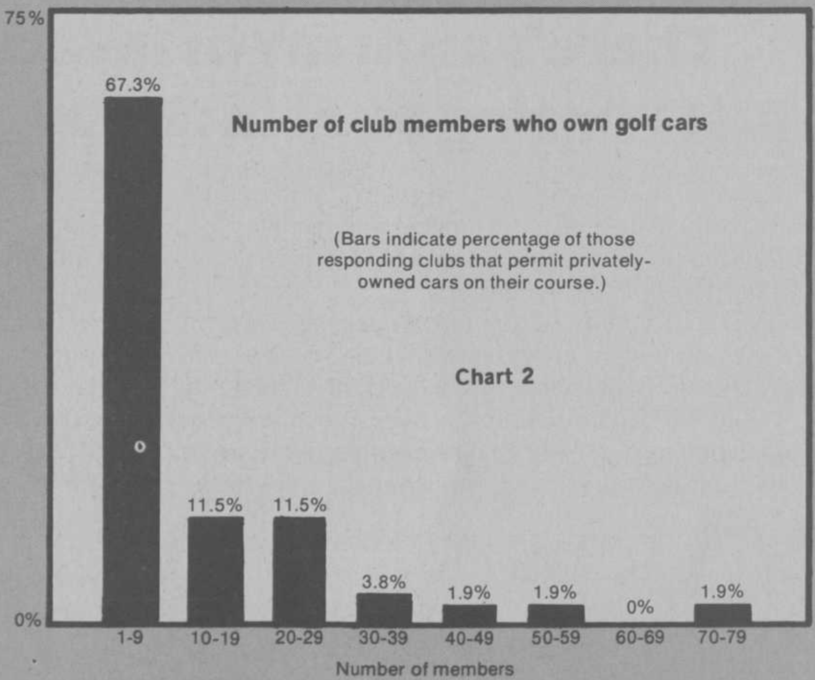
By the Editors

Does your club permit its members to use their personally-owned golf cars on the course?



If personally-owned cars are permitted on the course, does your club plan to discontinue this policy?





Should members be permitted to operate their personally-owned golf cars at the club? This issue is being discussed among administrative circles at many country clubs, particularly these days when clubs must tap every possible source of revenue to defray rising taxes and operating costs. With golf car rentals playing a larger role in the profit picture of clubs, many administrators apparently look upon continuance of a policy permitting personally-owned cars as a hindrance to further growth of rental revenues.

As reported in GOLFDOM's Third Annual Marketing and Research Report/1970 (February, 1971), gross revenue at United States golf courses from golf car rentals jumped 31.4 per cent from $143 million in 1969 to $187.9 million in 1970—a year that was not so kind to other sources of revenue. And although clubs were cutting back on many expenditures in 1970, they considered golf cars too important an area to bear scrimping. As a result, the average size of golf car fleets jumped from 27 cars in 1969 to 29 cars in 1970.

Now clubs want to make certain that their investments pay off, and GOLFDOM in the past year has received several requests for statistics on the number of clubs that permit members to operate their own cars on the course. Many of the administrators explain that they are considering discontinuing the policy, but realize that the sensitive area of member relations must also be taken into consideration. If statistics show that prohibiting the use of personally-owned cars has become a prevalent policy, these administrators feel their cases then would have some reasonable basis.

In response to these inquiries, GOLFDOM did a formal survey of a geographically well-distributed sampling of country clubs to determine their policies on golf cars, the results of which are revealed in the graphs accompanying this article.

According to the survey, the trend is rapidly moving away from personally-owned golf cars. In addition to the overwhelming majority of respondents who indicated that they prohibit member-owned cars on the course, almost 58 per cent of those that still permit them have plans to discontinue the policy. □

MILL RIVER REVISITED

Ray Montgomery's unique pricing plan has withstood the test of time. Not only is it a complete success, but the idea has spread to other clubs

By Vincent J. Pastena

Wife Trudi plays a major part in the shop's promotion and merchandising.

Ingenious plans and great brainstorms often have a way of fizzling out or simply dying in practice. When GOLFDOM first reported on head professional Ray Montgomery's merchandising plan at Mill River Club, Upper Brookville, N.Y. (October/November, 1970, p. 52), we thought the idea could be a shot of adrenalin to sluggish sales at many pro shops. GOLFDOM felt the plan offered a winning combination that would appeal to any golfer regardless of his economic status—quality merchandise at bargain prices along with the convenience of the pro shop. However, as with any innovation, many industry people were skeptical for several different reasons, a few of which will be enumerated later.

To date, almost a year and a half has passed since the plan's inception at Mill River in April, 1970, and according to all reports from Montgomery, time has proven us correct in our first estimation of the plan. Montgomery's gross sales for the period mid-March through April last year totaled a healthy $21,000, due to the introduction of his pricing plan early in April. However, now with the plan fully under way and well established at the club, his gross sales for the same period this year leaped to $31,000, and Montgomery estimated at the time of the interview that this would increase to at least $50,000 by the end of June.

Gross 1970 sales were $156,000 as compared to $80,000 to $90,000 the previous year when the plan was not in effect. The increase becomes even more impressive when considering that national gross pro shop sales declined 18.1 per cent in 1970, according to GOLFDOM's Third Annual Marketing and Research Report/1970. Montgomery admits that it would be overly optimistic to assume that $156,000 will be a typical annual figure. He feels it reflects to some degree the first-year novelty of a new plan, and that annual sales will actually level off somewhere between $100,000 and $150,000.

Montgomery's holiday business also improved considerably, with gross sales from the end of November to Christmas 1970 totaling about $10,000. In past years, the best that could be expected was $2,000 or $3,000, Montgomery says.

Mechanics of the plan

For those who are still unfamiliar with the plan, every class "A" member at Mill River pays an annual fee of $50, which is turned over to Montgomery. In return, he agrees to sell to the member and his immediate family all soft goods and equipment at 10 per cent above wholesale, plus 5 per cent freight/handling costs, plus sales tax. Under the plan, an item tagged at $100, for example, would be billed to the member at $72.45. The plan is mandatory for all full members and voluntary for special classifications. Price reductions cannot go beyond the membership to outsiders. Guests of members must pay the regular retail price. Violations, such as members purchasing equipment or apparel for friends, are referred to the club's rules committee for action in accordance with the club's bylaws. This ruling is relaxed during the holiday gift-buying season, and no one has abused the privilege, according to Montgomery.

Plan arouses skepticism

Among the doubts voiced by some industry people when the plan first received attention was the possibility that suppliers might decline orders from Montgomery. However, Montgomery says, "Not one manufacturer to date has refused to sell to me and they all seem to be aware of the plan."

Others doubted that buying for outsiders could be controlled, but Montgomery reports no violations of the rules since the plan's inception. Asked how he might handle the situation if he suspected someone were buying, say, golf balls for outsiders at plan prices, Montgomery said he would try the subtle, innocent approach: "Mr.—, since you are buying so many golf balls wouldn't you like to have them personalized with your name?"

On the frequently-raised question of how he could conduct clearance sales when his plan prices already provide a small profit margin, Montgomery says that, with the plan, merchandise moves much faster, and he is not left with an appreciable amount of stock. He also buys his basic items with an eye toward being able to carry them over into the next season if necessary. Last year Montgomery had $600 (wholesale) worth of merchandise left that he felt could not be incorporated into this year's new stock, and this he sold in bulk to a golf professional outside his area, who has a smaller pro shop operation.

Members accept plan

Indicative of the members' opinion of the plan after "living" with it for a while, they unanimously voted in January to continue the plan at Mill River. Some members initially had felt that the institution of such a plan was "beneath the dignity of a club and its pro," Montgomery says. Apparently pro and member satisfaction has dispelled any misgivings. Since the plan has been in effect, Montgomery has received no complaints about his pricing of merchandise. He takes a totally open approach to his pricing and will readily show an invoice to any member. In addition, it was agreed that a club committee would check his books periodically. The plan also has had an effect on Montgomery's merchandising practices. With the shop on a sound financial footing, Montgomery has been able to indulge in some experimentation, which has turned out to be lucrative for him. He now stocks small amounts of specialty items on a one-of-a-kind basis—après-golf outifts, pant suits, blazers, sport coats and a few evening gowns. A member can even purchase dress shirts, ties, and underwear. He also offers a limited, but handsome, selection of tennis apparel.

The plan has been a shot in the arm to Montgomery's sales, but there are other practices which make a contribution—for one, a woman on the staff, Montgomery's wife, Trudi. She has been successful in selling to women. And many of the male members have come to depend on her when gift shopping for their wives, because she makes it her business to know the women's tastes. In fact, for holidays such as Mother's Day the shop is closed to women for a specified time so the men can do their shopping. Trudi's gift wrapping is another service that members enjoy. To guide buying for the shop, she sends out cards to the women asking their sizes and such questions as, "Do you prefer skirts, slacks, culottes, etc?"

On the promotion side, Trudi sends out fliers announcing new items of apparel as they come in. These usually contain Trudi's illustrations of the fashions. And to kick off the season right, the Montgomerys give a fashion show each spring for the members.

Idea spreads

Over the past year, Montgomery has received inquiries about the plan from other golf professionals, manufacturers and even members of other clubs. In Jaunary he spoke at a Professional Golfers' Assn. educational forum. The most frequently asked question was, how did you persuade the officials and members of the club to institute the plan? Montgomery says that he used a man-to-man approach. For a year he talked on an individual basis with those members who he thought would oppose the plan. He then used the same approach with individual members of the club's board of governors. In this way he got the support of those who might have been the toughest to convince if he simply presented his proposal before a large group.

Under the plan, Montgomery can now offer his members an expanded selection of merchandise.

In its June, 1971, issue, GOLFDOM reported that golf professional-manager Jim Bailey adapted the Mill River formula to his operation at Hyland Hills GC, Westminster, Colo., a municipal course. His plan is of particular interest, because many critics felt that such a pricing program could not work at a municipal course operation.

Montgomery reports that two professionals in his area also have instituted plans at their clubs. He took a personal hand in helping professional Frank Zeray develop a plan for Muttontown G & CC in East Norwich, N.Y. Zeray believes he is one of the few professionals with an operation very similiar to Montgomery's. Therefore, he was able to virtually "copy" the plan in total. He has 250 members involved in the program, which started in March. Like Montgomery, Zeray thoroughly researched the plan before presenting it to the golf committee and board of directors by interviewing members to get their reactions. He terms the plan "extremely exciting" because it has given his members an understanding of merchandising. It also has given the members a greater selection because Zeray now is able to bring new lines into his shop. He charges each member $10 a month for five months. In April his gross sales were $11,000, far surpassing any month's sales since he started at Muttontown. He feels the greatest effect of the plan has been the "support your pro" attitude that has developed. He now has a closer relationship with all the members. However, Zeray warns that all clubs cannot copy the plan completely. It must be adapted and modified to meet their individual needs.

Another professional in the area, Pat Cici, has an adaptation of the plan under way at Cedar Brook GC in Old Brookville, N.Y. To indicate his success with the plan, Cici reports these gross sales figures: $12,000 in April, 1971, versus $7,900 in April, 1970; $18,000 in May, 1971, versus $10,500 in May, 1970.

Both Zeray and Cici note one situation that has developed from the plan— increased paperwork. There are more orders to place, checks to be made out and other papers to handle as a result of increased business. But they didn't seem to be complaining when they mentioned it. □

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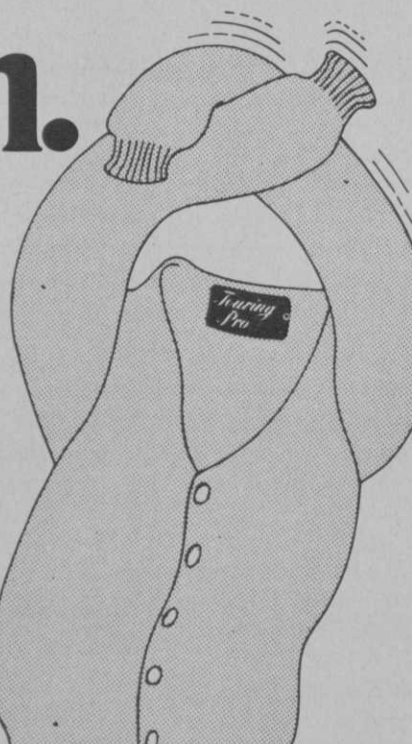

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A LETTER TO GOLFDOM: THE STATE OF THE PRO SHOP MARKET

AN ACUSHNET EXECUTIVE CANDIDLY DISCUSSES THE PRO SHOP IN RELATION TO ITS "DOWNTOWN" COMPETITION

Knowing GOLFDOM'S avid interest in the quality and future of the game of golf as well as your commitment and support of the golf course pro shop, I read with interest Herb Graffis' April column, "Keeping the Fiscal Score." I would, as graciously as possible, like to take exception to portions of it. Some of the article's conclusions are at a variance with market trends seen by us at Acushnet.

First, I would like to sincerely compliment GOLFDOM on a most thorough and informative piece of market research. The facts and figures contained in the "3rd Annual Marketing and Research Report" (February issue) are of immense value to those of us in sales and marketing whose primary responsibility is to define clearly current problems, spot and assess trends and changes in the marketplace and, hopefully, devise solutions which are appropriate to the outlets in the market serviced. We found GOLFDOM's recent survey a veritable goldmine of information and it stimulated our investigation of the business volumes and trends of the pro shop's competition: the stores.

Although I would not dispute Graffis' comments about to the health of the pro shop market, I do feel that just as professionals do not exist in a competitive vacuum, the sales statistics they generate must have a comparative base. Within the golf marketplace there are numerous outlets for golf equipment. When discussing the status of one outlet, its relation to the other outlets must be kept in mind. Acushnet has always felt that the pro shop spurred the game's growth in the past, that golf does and should revolve around it now and, most important, it will be the most significant contributing factor to the game's future. In a word, the shop is the cornerstone of golf. From the cold viewpoint of statistics, however, there is evidence of an erosion of the pro shop's dominance of the golf equipment market.

Chart A	
Pro shop	$201.8 million or 36.7%
Stores	$348.0 million or 63.3%
Total market	$549.8 million

As partial and general exhibits I would submit the following: According to statistics from the National Golf Foundation, the number of golf courses, 1970 versus 1969, increased 2.6 per cent, the number of players increased 2.1 per cent and the number of rounds played went up 3.5 per cent. Although certainly not in "booming" proportions one can say that the golf market in 1970 was characterized by growth, albeit modest. GOLFDOM, however, reports in the research study that merchandise sales through and by pro shops decreased 18.1 per cent in 1970. Admitting the limitations of a one-year comparison, I still feel it is safe to assume that in a market characterized by growth, the pro shop saw its dollar-base drastically weakened. The gross pro shop sales figure by itself is impressive: $201.8 million. A great deal of money. The shop, however, exists and competes in a total marketplace, and a different perspective arises in comparing the shop's position to the whole.

In 1970, as reported by the National Sporting Goods Assn., the gross sales of golf equipment (clubs, bags, balls, pull carts, and so on) by dealers and stores was $348 million or an increase of 11.6 per cent versus 1969. On the short-term comparison the positive trend more favors outlets other than the pro shop (plus 11.6 per cent versus minus 18.1 per cent). A rough estimation of the total market in 1970 appears in Chart A.

Graffis' column indicated that the stores did not "enjoy a banner year" in 1970. I'm not sure they would agree. If the pro shop, equipped with the ultimate in expertise, quality, value, service and convenience, is able only to share in the total market at a 36.7 per cent rate, then perhaps we should re-analyze our assessment of the shop's strength. You may accuse me of thinking in too narrow a range. Again using the excellent GOLFDOM study compared with NSGA figures:

(Continued)

Gross sales	Stores	Pro shops
1970	$348.0 million	$201.8 million
1968	$274.2 million	$198.0 million
Growth	$73.8 million or 26.9%	$3.8 million or 1.9%

Market
continued from page 47

Relative to comparative shares of total market over the same period:

	Stores	Pro shops
1968	$274.2 million or 58.1% versus 63.3% in 1970	$198.0 million or 41.9% versus 36.7% in 1970
Total market	$472.2 million	

In terms of market share, then, the pro shop is slipping. It is losing business to downtown stores. Additionally, the NSGA has projected an increase in 1971 store sales of golf equipment of 10.2 per cent or $383.5 million in volume. A recent issue of Sporting Goods Dealer estimated dealer sales of golfing products in the vicinity of 20 per cent to 25 per cent increase for 1971. Can and are pro shop forecasts equal?

I feel it is an appropriate time for the pro shop to re-examine itself and see exactly what its strength is, because it may be time to get back to the "basics." Pro shop business grew and now exists on the backbone of its hard good products. The historical (and future) essence of the pro shop's business lies in clubs, bags and balls. These products built the shop as a significant outlet and will account for its continued growth and power. When golfers refer to the expertise of the professional they refer not only to his playing ability but to his knowledge of the "necessity equipment"—clubs, bags and balls.

The column and the market study cited a golf ball sales volume of $45.6 million in 1970 and again this is an impressive figure. It represents a small decrease, however, from the previous year and indicates that the shop's most dynamic turnover item, the golf ball, was relatively stagnant. Again, the business lost to other outlets impaired the shop's fastest turning product, and when turnover is slowed on the item that creates the most dollar intake, the income-base weakens.

How then to reverse the trends and purchasing habits of America's golfers? In this regard your article hit two of the nails right on the head. Two words: "quality" and "merchandising." Put these together and a businessman has an unbeatable formula. You very correctly cited the importance of turnover to the golf ball and the need to protect and stimulate it. Also mentioned was an example of a professional, who after realizing only 50 per cent purchasing loyalty on the part of his membership, began displaying cheaper balls and saw his quality ball volume drop. You are correct in saying that merchandising situations differ from one shop to the next, but I feel this professional understood the concepts (displays and a more complete range of balls), but misused the techniques.

First, he was right in making available to his players the lower-end balls; this is the store's starting point. They capture the consumer at the low-end and then trade him up. Pro shops should not let this consumer get away. The ultimate objective is to sell the consumer at all product and price levels. Additionally, the shop is one of the most phenomenally convenient outlets in the business world.

This convenience coupled with full product and price ranges eliminates any need for the golfer to take his business out of the shop. There is a basic problem, however. The professional is a very busy man and does not contact every member or player at his course or in his pro shop. This is why it is absolutely necessary to creatively and aggressively display the shop's turnover items, specifically the golf ball. A large impossible-to-miss display of golf balls becomes a thoroughly effective silent salesman for the professional when he is out on the lesson tee.

I am not against the attractive displaying of soft goods, but the golf ball creates the intake of dollars necessary so that the professional can afford the softwear inventory. The more the ball is prominently displayed, the quicker the ball stock turns over, the more dollars, and the faster the income-base expands.

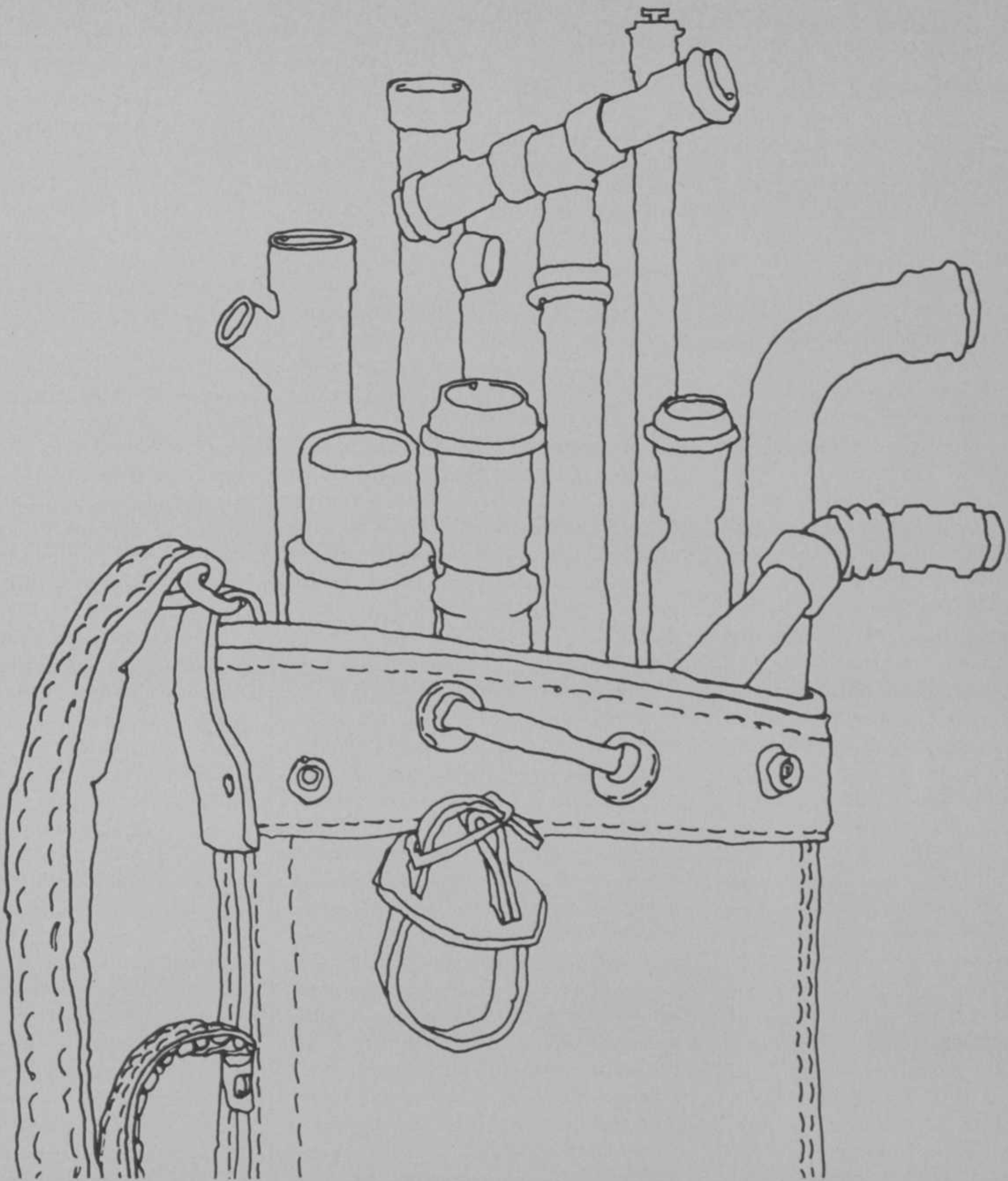
The professional mentioned in your article displayed the low-end, and revenue at the top end dropped. My contention is that he misplaced the emphasis: Yes, the low-end balls should be displayed, but the prime spot in the shop should have been reserved for the top grade. Basically, every golfer wants to play the best, has an impulse to buy the ultimate in quality and performance. Top-grade golf balls must come out of hiding. The massive displaying of the high-end of the line can work wonders. The professional may start the player out at the $.60 range, but the heavy visual emphasis on the top-grade balls will result in a faster rate of upgrading.

Another point we have found to be true relative to the effective displaying of top-grade golf balls is that generally the merchandiser will sell in the quantities he displays in. If he displays three-ball packages, he sells three-ball packages. The majority of stores sell and display by the dozen and have a much higher incidence of sales by dozens. Selling one, two or three balls at a time is certainly a part of the pro shop's unique service and, although I do not advocate stopping selling in these small quantities, I do think the shops should attempt to increase the size of each purchase.

Some professionals have run a special "long-weekend sale" in conjunction with massive top-grade displays, and the volume generated is more than impressive.

As much as it is necessary to compare the relative positions of outlets to each other within a marketplace, I think it is equally important to examine the potential of the market and apply that against an analysis of the outlets. This leads into the very difficult task of defining available potential volume and in reference to golf course pro shops we are speaking of untapped potential. The second example in your article concerned a public course professional who is turning over extensive inventories via advertising, displays and sharp aggressive merchandising techniques. This is a businessman-professional who has assessed his potential and is taking dead aim on it. That he is at a public course is beside the point, because each type of course has its own potential and each must work to maximize it. The basic objective for the

(Continued on page 50)



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Market
continued from page 48

pro shop is to bring back the buying traffic flow to the shop where it belongs, to make available and sell to the potential.

We know that at the extreme low-end, including substantial quantities of imported Japanese balls, the stores have some bargain special advantages that pro shops cannot match. It is inaccurate, however, to assume that all the ball business is confined to low-end. Our recent market study of dealer sales indicated that over 40 per cent occurred in the $1 to $1.25 each price range. This is normally the professional's backyard. Although one can concede a small portion of the rock-bottom ball grade to the stores, in the majority of the ball ranges the stores and the pro shops are competing directly with one another.

"How much golf ball business should I do in my shop?" is often asked and is hard to answer. What is the golf ball potential of a shop? The answer can be found in the number of rounds-of-play at the course. One thing is an absolute: A person can play golf in his bare feet, but he cannot play without a ball. We also know that the average golfer uses more than one ball a round. So a simple equation can be constructed: One round-of-play equals one ball purchased (minimum). A course with 30,000 rounds a season will have had at least 2,500 dozen balls purchased to play those rounds. Averaging the selling price of the shop's balls might result in an average selling price of $1 a ball. The potential, therefore, if the professional participated in 100 per cent of the base potential, would be $30,000 worth of golf ball sales! I have asked numerous professionals to use this formula against their ball sales. In almost every case they come out on the short end of the potential stick. As a matter of fact, they generally are in line with GOLFDOM's findings, *i.e.*, they sell 50 per cent or significantly less of their available players.

Therefore, compared by volume to its competition and by potential to its market, the room in which pro shop business can grow is large. This growth can best be enhanced by strong merchandising and displaying of the shop's fast turnover products, especially the golf ball.

It is time for the golf professional to take a deep breath, hitch up his pants and start to fight back. The battle ground is the shop with all its weapons—quality, value, convenience, service and the most knowledgeable man in golf—there is no reason why it should not take the high ground.

David R. Branon, Sales Manager
Golf Ball Div.
Acushnet Sales Company
New Bedford, Mass.

Editor's note: We do not, nor can we, quarrel with the figures which Mr. Brannon cites from the National Sporting Goods Assn. Only if we carried out a similar survey of the "downtown" stores might we justifiably do so. We also agree with Mr. Brannon that golf ball sales are indeed important to the financial health of a pro shop. However, he implies that professionals should deemphasize sales of three-packs of balls and put the emphasis on dozen boxes. We feel this conflicts with efforts to increase traffic in the pro shop. The golfer who purchases balls by three's has to visit the shop four times to make up that dozen. He still ultimately is purchasing a dozen, so golf ball sales are not affected, and the professional has four opportunities to sell him other merchandise as opposed to one such opportunity. But this is a small difference of opinion when compared to the major issue that requires great attention and concerted effort by everyone in the industry. We believe that presently 25 per cent of the golfers account for 75 per cent of pro shop sales, another 25 per cent account for the remaining 25 per cent of the sales, and 50 per cent of the golfers buy virtually nothing at their pro shops and shop at "downtown" stores. The job at hand—and on this we all agree—is to convert 75 per cent of the golfers into solid pro shop customers.

USGA to move from NYC

A stately mansion on 62 acres of land in northern New Jersey has been purchased by the United States Golf Assn. for its new home. It was built by John Russell Pope, the architect of the Library of Congress, and the Jefferson Memorial.

Beard
continued from page 22

periments reported by Beard and King that the rooting ability of transplanted sods per se is not affected significantly by whether it is grown on a mineral or an organic type soil. An organic soil is classified as one that contains more than 20 per cent organic matter whereas a mineral soil is one that contains less than 20 per cent organic matter.

Far more variability in the rooting ability of sods is attributed to the specific sod source and the associated cultural conditions under which it has been grown than to whether it is grown on organic or mineral soil. Cultural factors affecting the sod rooting ability include the cutting height, nitrogen fertility level, age of sod at harvest and environmental conditions during sod shipment.

The shear strength factor measured in these experiments is of particular concern on tees and greens that are likely to be sodded occasionally. If at all possible, the sod utilized on these sites should be of a soil texture similar to the underlying soil. This consideration does not affect the rooting ability of the sod but will affect the proneness to shearing caused by an interface of distinctly different soil particle sizes. If sod having the proper soil texture is not available locally, it is usually wise for the golf course superintendent to maintain a nursery area of turf for transplanting onto tees and greens should unexpected loss of turf occur. In the case of tees where the soil has not been modified, it is simply a matter of locating a convenient site on the golf course where the soil texture is comparable to that representative of the tees. In the case of greens where soil modification has been practiced, the nursery area selected should also have the soil modified to a texture comparable to that of the greens.

The affect of sod cutting thickness on relative rooting ability should also be noted. The initiation and development of new roots from the transplanted sod into the underlying soil occur from the meristematic nodes on rhizomes, stolons, and crown tissue rather than older roots. Harvesting sod at thinner thicknesses severs more of the structure associated with these meristematic areas and enhances new root initiation compared to cutting at greater thicknesses. □