

THE PRO SHOP SALE:

The sale, properly integrated into the professional's merchandising plan, can be a useful tool for increasing business

by DICK FARLEY

MAKE IT A PROFIT TOOL -NOT A NECESSITY

Not too many years ago, when a special sale was offered to the public, it usually meant that the retailer was in trouble. He had either purchased one type of item that did not sell (commonly known as a "dog") or he had misjudged his market and bought too many items.

At the same time, the retailer needed the cash tied up in the dead stock to buy fresh, sellable merchandise, to pay current bills or he may have wanted to clear out the old merchandise to make room on his shelves to display and sell the new items.

A sale became the obvious solution: Reduce the price on the current stock to tempt the price-conscious, bargain-hungry shopper.

The practice of moving dead merchandise via the sale has been so successful and has become so much a part of the American way of merchandising life, that the modern retailer has totally integrated it as a vital part of his over-all merchandising program; in fact, without the sale, the volume of retail business today would be nowhere near its record level.

Sales are planned and programmed

by modern retailers well in advance of the actual event.

The retail history of a particular operation is scrutinized, successes and failures pinpointed. It is then broken down into definite selling periods, with special emphasis on important occasions, such as Christmas, Mother's Day or Father's Day, when gift-giving is traditional.

All golf operations, year-around and seasonal, also have specific selling patterns, although they are not necessarily determined by special occasions. Each golf operation is unique and must be evaluated by management on its own merits: A program that works for one operation does not automatically spell success for another.

The modern professional-retailer not only plans his sales to handle the need to reduce his current inventory during times of the year, he buys also special items solely to sell during the sale, mixed into his regular stock. A very aggressive merchant might go one step further. He might

buy one special item to entice customers into his shop.

How does all of this work in practice? Let's look step-by-step at a northern golf operation. Here's how the professional might handle his annual end-of-summer clearance sale.

After analyzing the past year's business, the professional discovered that both men's and women's lightweight apparel, not sold by the end of August, could not be given away at any price, and might have to be carried over to the next year.

He's aware of the risk he runs if he stores the merchandise over the winter: The goods may be damaged by dampness or mildew, by rodents, moths or bugs; they won't look fresh next season after being stored for several months, and they will be out of date.

The last reason is vital. That fresh appearance that is so essential in creating customer interest,

continued



SALE *continued*

especially at the beginning of a new golf season, will be lost.

The professional decided he would clear his shelves of all lightweight apparel by the end of August. Having made this decision, he set the date the sale was to start and determined how long it would last.

The length of time a sale should run varies with the type of course with which the golf shop is affiliated. At a private club, this time must be short, because the professional's market is limited usually to from three to six hundred people. A week for an end of summer clearance sale is adequate.

If the sale ran over a week, the shop's normal selling periods would be cut into, resulting in reduced potential profit. Because of the one week limitation, promoting the sale becomes very important. The professional must rely heavily on direct mailing to members and posters in the golf shop and around the club.

At public and resort courses the sale can run longer—two to three weeks—because the clientele changes continually. This factor makes direct mail promotions ineffectual, however.

Most promotional material is limited to the environs of the club grounds. Signs and posters placed strategically in the pro shop, locker rooms and clubhouse create customer interest.

At public courses, the same strategy can be used, augmented by local newspaper ads and local radio spot announcements.

Generally, the most successful sales offer the best values: Give liberal markdowns on sale items, not token discounts of from 10 to 15 per cent. The whole object of the sale is to move the merchandise out. It's no good sitting in storage and you can't take it home for dinner.

It's possible to regain some of the profits that were lost through markdowns by purchasing merchandise especially for the sale. Here's how many good retail stores do it. They know that most manufacturers discontinue some lines and offer them at close-out prices after the line has been in production for a certain length of time. For example, XYZ Pants offers a line of double-

knit slacks to the pro shop. These slacks carry an initial suggested retail price of \$29.95 and are sold to the professional for \$15. The slack line is discontinued on June 30 and offered to the professional for \$11.25 net. If the professional bought a quantity equal to his original purchase, the average cost per pair would be \$13. This new quantity purchased could be placed in with the original stock and sold at the regular \$29.95 until the sale begins. This increases the margin of profit per pair sold for the entire year. Then when these slacks do go on sale in August, the professional can offer a much better markdown, and a better prospect of moving them out.

The same procedure can be applied to golf equipment—clubs and bags—in much the same way as for wearing apparel. Golf equipment also is placed on close-out by the manufacturer at various times during the year. More often, however, it is available in the late spring or summer. Let the various sales representatives know that you are interested in this merchandise so they will put you on their list and advise you when it's available.

Another method of buying for the sale is simply to make an outright purchase of a summer item at a very low close-out price. It can be delivered to your shop just in time for the sale. The close-out price should not be less than 30 per cent off the regular wholesale price. Assuming that the item purchased originally sold for \$20 and cost the professional \$10, a 30 per cent close-out discount price would cost the professional \$7. He could offer it to his customers for \$12 (40 per cent off the regular \$20 retail price) and still make \$5 on every item sold.

Another type of item that can be purchased for the sale is known in the trade as a loss leader. This is an item that is specifically purchased to get people to come into the store so that they will be exposed to other sale items. It usually is a low cost item and is sold at little or no profit. It should have the broadest appeal to the greatest number of people—golf balls are an excellent example. A limit is placed on the number of units one customer may purchase at a time.

Another stimulant that can be used during a sale is to offer a bonus gift with the purchase of an item. Bonus items can be small golfing accessories, such as divot fixers, ball markers, a pair of golf socks, golf balls or a golf glove. Often the professional already has a large supply of items that did not sell well during the year. These would be ideal bonus offerings and would, simultaneously, clear out unusable but space taking items.

The best example of a bonus is a gift certificate redeemable in golf lessons with the purchase of a set of woods or irons. The value of the certificate, of course, would vary with the purchase price of the equipment. The certificate could take the form of dollars or could be for a specified number of lessons. A person buying a complete set of woods and irons naturally would receive more lessons than one who bought only a set of woods. The beautiful part of this program is that you are giving only time, no hard cash, which can be programmed when you have it to spare.

As a side bonus, this lesson approach will increase the number of regular golf lessons purchased during the year by your bonus recipients.

Above all, don't keep the sale to yourself. Display sale items prominently in the shop. Catch the customer's eye and make him aware of your super buys. Do anything short of tripping him, to get his attention. And, of course, your sales personnel should talk it up with everyone. Spend some time with them going over the sale items and explaining the excellent values that you are offering so they will catch your enthusiasm and pass it along to the customer.

To repeat. The three areas of a successful sale are 1) proper buying in your initial purchases and in purchases made to support the sale; 2) adequate markdowns, so that the sale is appealing to your customers, and 3) promotional methods to bring people into the shop.

Take a tip from the local retailers, especially the large chain stores, which are so successful in this field, and transform your sales into useful merchandising tools. □

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Photographed at the Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course adjacent to the Sahara Tahoe Hotel

SANDBAGGING THE SANDBAGGERS

NEW YORK—The United States Golf Assn. has revised its handicap system for 1973. Adopting an innovation called "stroke control," the change undoubtedly will lower the handicaps of nearly every golfer in America. The move has been interpreted by some observers as an attempt to "lower the boom on falsely handicapped golfers," who are sometimes known as "sandbaggers."

"We're just doing it because a survey showed most of our members want it," said Frank Hannigan, assistant director of the USGA. "We're bowing to the will of our constituents."

Specifically, stroke control is a rule designed to eliminate from handicap computations excessive strokes taken by a golfer on any given hole which have no relation to—or give any indication of—his average or normal playing ability. It places a ceiling on the number of strokes a player may record on his scorecard on a hole—but only for handicapping purposes.

For example: Golfers who plus or scratch players may record no

score higher than a bogey (one over par) on any given hole.

Golfers with handicaps of one to 18 may record no score higher than a double bogey (two over par) on any given hole, the number of double bogeys being limited according to handicap. (A two-handicap player, for instance, scoring three double bogeys in a round, must convert one of the double bogeys into a bogey for the purpose of handicapping.)

Golfers with handicaps higher than 18 may turn in triple bogeys (three over par), but no more than two triple bogeys a round.

"I'm not saying this will cure anything," Hannigan said, "but it won't make anything worse."

Proponents of the new rule point out that most handicaps are match play and that very high holes sometimes throw out of whack the real difference between two golfers. Also, it is rumored that a breed of golfer exists who deliberately inflates his handicap with high holes.

"In extreme cases," said Hannigan, "some people might inten-

tionally put high holes in every round except those in which he really wants to play hard."

The subject of golf handicapping in the United States admittedly is an esoteric subject, understood completely by about as many people as understand *élan vital* completely. "But you ought to hear them argue about it," Hannigan said. "Everyone has his own theories."

The USGA traditionally has rejected proposals for the stroke control rule, arguing that its handicapping system had its own built-in checks and balances. Apparently enough of the organization's 4,000 members thought otherwise and persuaded the USGA's handicap committee to overwhelmingly endorse the stroke control rule this year.

The edict is certain to create considerable interest, if not controversy, among higher handicapped golfers.

"We don't know who wouldn't use the new rule," Hannigan said. "Everybody who plays golf is involved in it." □

REPRINTED FROM GOLF MAGAZINE, MAY, 1973

FEDERAL MONIES ON TAP TO QUALIFIED COURSES

WASHINGTON, D.C.—At a time when President Nixon is bearing down hard on Federal spending programs, golf courses may get an unexpected bonanza.

It turns out that there is \$50 million of new money in the Federal budget for the coming year, starting July 1, that could be used to build public golf courses.

Tack on to that sum \$128 million left over from presently available Federal funds.

But before localities get too excited about going into the golf business, they should be aware of one hitch: This money "can" go for golf courses, but it doesn't "have" to.

Actually, the funds are held by the Interior Department's Bureau of Outdoor Recreation and they are earmarked for any local projects that will promote recrea-

tion—parks, municipal lakes, tennis courts, general recreational areas or one or more of many other things, including golf courses.

"The trick," says one Federal official, "is for a locality that wants a golf course to know who the proper authority to work through is and also to draw up a convincing argument for the course's construction."

In general, these are the guides for obtaining golf course construction funds.

The local authority, whether it is a municipal agency, township, city, county or whatever, must draw up a plan for the course and its estimated costs. This proposal, in turn, must be submitted to the state agency handling such proposals. Federal funds can only be granted for course construction if the state

agency has first approved the project and then submitted it to the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation for approval.

If the request is successful, the Federal government will match the funds 50-50 put up by state and local authorities for the course.

Should the budget request go through Congress, and it is likely that it will, there will be three years in which to qualify for a portion of the \$50 million that will become available later this year.

This three-year cut-off period also applies to the present \$128 million in the Federal coffers. Although the time limitation is running out on some of this money, Federal officials say there is still time to get a hunk of it. But the word from Washington is "hurry up your plans." □

WHAT'S PLAGUING THE PROS?

Ten years ago, the answers to our title question would have been a set of problems as traditional as the golfer's slice—bad weather, slow deliveries, too much paperwork and lack of space. But ask what is troubling professionals today, as GOLFDOM did in a nationwide survey, and a new and more difficult group of problems emerges in addition to the longstanding ones. The new problems, encompassing the areas of costs, labor, management and competition, are symptomatic of an over-all situation that has developed in the club industry. Willingly or not, golf clubs have come out of the isolation of the past and have entered the "outside world," with all the accompanying concerns and problems faced by other industries.

No longer does the pro shop sit nestled in a protective atmosphere, facing relatively small problems emanating from the immediate environs of the club. The pro shop held a distinct position separate from the cares of other small businesses. Today, it is doubtful that there are many professionals left who view their counterparts at neighboring golf facilities as their competition. Those respondents to GOLFDOM's survey who viewed competition as their chief problem over the past year without exception mentioned discount stores, giant sporting goods chains, department stores—a list of competitors any small retailer would cite.

In addition to sales competition, professionals also find it difficult to siphon off even a small part

GOLFDOM's survey shows that professionals are experiencing problems, which, although new to them, have been troubling other industries for years

by VINCENT J. PASTENA

of the available labor force. "Can't get enough good, reliable help, particularly for peak season," is a common complaint voiced by responding professionals. Tied to this problem are labor costs and what a professional can afford to pay. "Even the minimum wage is killing me," comments one hard-pressed professional. Therefore, many young people are succumbing to the lure of businesses that offer more lucrative compensation. Fewer young men have the opportunity to even view the business of the golf professional. In the days when every course had a platoon of caddies, some of the young men, attracted to the pro shop activity, would be anxious for a job. However, this source of help has all but vanished.

As responses indicated, local and national economic conditions also are upsetting the pro shop, which once had been fairly well insulated against such con-

cerns by its affluent clientele and a lineup of equally well-heeled people waiting to gain membership.

Some of the professionals in their complaints mention rising taxes, overhead costs and wholesale prices in the face of a diminishing market, which would dwindle further if retail prices were increased commensurately. Not only is downtown competition cutting into their market, according to the professionals, but many clubs are "hurting" for new members, and it is obvious what this means to pro shop traffic. As one professional put it, "I've sold 92 per cent of the existing membership clubs, bags and other major equipment items in the past four years. Who do I sell to now?"

Meanwhile, other professionals are feeling the affects on their lesson business.

Because many clubs and courses are in tight straits themselves, many professionals noted that officials these days are eyeing more often the financial arrangements between club and professional in certain income areas. As a result, some professionals are getting a smaller piece of the golf car revenue, or no share at all, and other professionals said that their clubs are moving in for a bigger cut of the driving range business. Although he did not specify, one professional said he felt threatened in some revenue areas, which traditionally have been his alone.

Professionals also are bumping into another national problem—theft. And it is not restricted to any particular type of facility,

continued on page 38

It took 7 years of work to improve the old Titleist.



Someday, one of our researchers may find a way to make a golf ball go farther or fly straighter than the new Titleist. But our computer is not optimistic.

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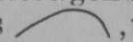
What we didn't change.

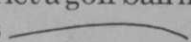
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A flight pattern that gives you extra distance.

If you let a golf ball fly like this , the ball goes wherever the wind takes it. You lose distance and accuracy.

On the other hand, if you let a golf ball fly like this , it's hard to control. Again, you lose distance and accuracy.

Official combined count, first month of 1973 pro tour.		
New Titleist	Second Ball	Third Ball
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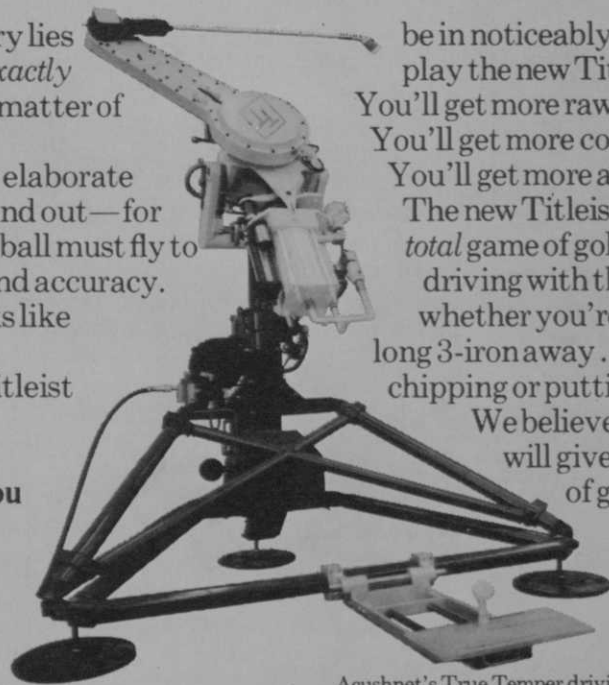
The computer suggested we reduce the number of dimples to 324, then arrange them in 20 equilateral triangles.

The computer was right. The triangles give the new Titleist the most stable flight a golf ball has ever achieved.

Or to put it another way: The new Titleist goes where you hit it, no matter how you tee it up.

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Whatever shape your game is in now, it will



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You'll get more raw distance.

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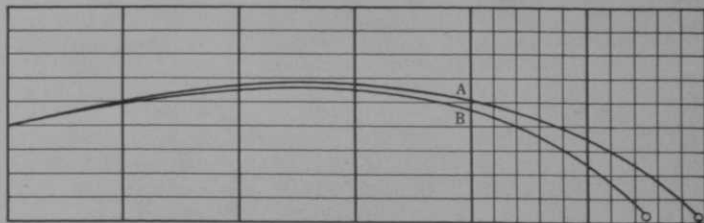
The new Titleist will give you a better *total* game of golf . . . whether you're

driving with the wind or against it . . .

whether you're squinting at the stick a long 3-iron away . . . whether you're chipping or putting.

We believe the new Titleist will give you the best game of golf that a golf ball can give you.

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PROFESSIONALS *from page 35*

because theft, burglary, breaking and entering were noted by professionals from private, semi-private, public and resort facilities. The frequency of theft has driven one professional's insurance costs sky high; another said his shop has become such a high risk that he's having trouble getting insurance.

With all these troubles, one wonders why the professional keeps plugging. First, of course, it should be remembered that the survey asked him to name his major problems in the past year, not the brighter notes. Secondly, the analysis of the survey represents a compilation of major problems. No one professional is suffering from all of them. In addition, as was pointed out, problems being experienced by professionals generally are not peculiar to them. Many problems are national, cutting through every industry.

Although some professionals expected "more of the same" when asked about problems anticipated in the coming year, others did volunteer positive comments: "Expect economic upturn," "see revived customer interest in major equipment" and "program to bring in new members expected to increase business." □

WHAT'S "BUGGING" PROFESSIONALS?

The following is a listing of the 10 problems most frequently noted by professionals surveyed.

- "Downtown" competition (department stores, discount stores and large sporting goods stores);
- Availability of competent, reliable pro shop help;
- Rising labor costs, taxes, wholesale prices and overhead;
- Theft, resulting in higher insurance costs;
- Slow deliveries from suppliers;
- Bad weather conditions, resulting in less play and pro shop traffic;
- Lack of new members to fill openings in clubs' rolls;
- Smaller share of income from certain revenue-producing areas—golf cars and driving range;
- Lack of pro shop space;
- Overdue payment on members' pro shop bills



ARIZONA TURFGRASS CONFERENCE, Plaza International Hotel, Tucson, Ariz., April 4-5.

ATLANTIC PROVINCES TURFGRASS CONFERENCE AND EXPOSITION, Halifax, N.S., Canada, April 9-10.

SOUTHEASTERN TURFGRASS CONFERENCE, Georgia Coastal Plain, Experiment Station, Tifton, Ga., April 9-11.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA TURF AND LANDSCAPE INSTITUTE, Quality Inn, Anaheim, Calif., April 18-19.

SPORTING GOODS MFG. ASSN. INDUSTRY ANNUAL MEETING, The Breakers, Palm Beach, Fla., April 29-May 2.

FLORIDA TURF-GRASS ANNUAL SHOW, Curtis Hixon Convention Hall, Tampa, Fla., April 29-May 2.

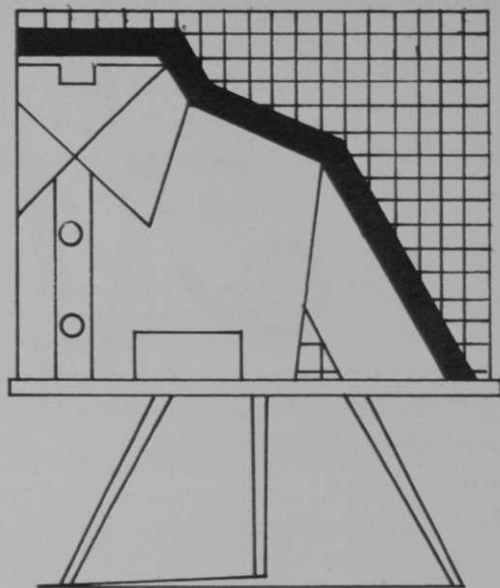
NATIONAL GOLF FOUNDATION ANNUAL MEETING, The Breakers, Palm Beach, Fla., April 30.

FLORIDA NURSERYMEN AND GROWERS ASSN., The Breakers Hotel, Palm Beach, Fla., May 17-19.

INTERNATIONAL SHADE TREE CONFERENCE, Hotel Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah., June 17-20.

FOURTH ANNUAL GCSA/UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA TURFGRASS SHORT COURSE, Center for Continuing Education, University of Georgia, Athens, Ga., November 12-13.

45TH INTERNATIONAL TURFGRASS CONFERENCE AND SHOW, Anaheim Convention Center, Anaheim, Calif. February 17-22, 1974.



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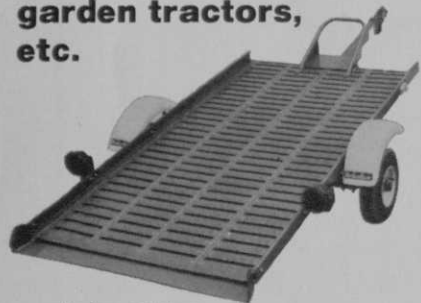
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To Professionals: *M* is for Mother & Merchandising

Circle May 13th on your calendar and get a promotion campaign under way that's going to make Mother's Day, 1973, the most profitable ever—both in sales and goodwill. Remember, everything in your program should accomplish two things: build customer enthusiasm and make shopping easy. Here's a list of tips and ideas that cost little and can bring in big returns:

Set aside part of one day for a special Mother's Day shopping spree and declare the pro shop "Off Limits to Mothers, Noon to 3 P.M." Publicize it well in advance.

Make certain your index information cards on women members are in order and up-to-date, with sizes, color and style preferences as well as any other data that will help her family when shopping. This is all part of making shopping easier for them.

Pre-gift-wrap gifts of some standard items—three-packs of balls, small accessories and novelty items, for example—that are ideal for the children and that Dad may want to throw in as an extra gift. It's convenient and stimulates impulse buying.

Keep an eye on what merchandise attracts the attention of each woman member when she attends your spring fashion show or browses through the shop from now until Mother's Day. The fathers and youngsters will appreciate this bit of "spying."

Bring your own knowledge of each woman's preference into play. Try to steer your customer to merchandise you know will appeal to his wife and away from items that won't. Do you know how many articles are returned to department stores after Christmas by wives who are more annoyed with the sales personnel than with their well-meaning husbands?

Co-operate with the club manager on creating small stand-up cards for the dining room tables that could read: "Remember Mother on May 13th with a gift from our pro shop and dinner at the club. Make your gift selection and dinner reservation soon."

Gift-wrapping service is a must and will be appreciated by your customer. Make certain that the wrappings are attractive and you have someone who can do a neat job.

Create an attractive pro shop Mother's Day display. From now until Mother's Day, the same basic display can be used, but keep it looking fresh by frequently changing the merchandise on exhibit.

If you don't already have it, see about getting a small display space in the clubhouse foyer and create a discrete, tasteful Mother's Day display with a couple of your finest items. It should be similar to the small showcase displays seen in the lobbies of the best hotels. This kind of display never "screams out." It should be a soft-sell—something pleasant to gaze at while standing or waiting in the foyer.

Use the men's locker room bulletin board and others at the club for Mother's Day reminders and announcements.

Apparel sales build up when you sell total outfits. If a man selects a blouse for his wife, show him the mix-and-match coordinates designed to be worn with it. The total outfits are so attractive, they make the single item look incomplete. These outfits, if displayed and merchandised correctly, are tough to refuse. Boutiques and department stores learned this trick some time ago.

These are just a few ideas, and if you give this important merchandising holiday a little thought, you can come up with many more. Let your imagination run!