



In the wake of tight money and exploding land prices, GOLFDOM explores the feasibility of leasing highly desirable Federal land as a way to build golf courses or expand existing courses without the, often times, prohibitive expense of buying land

growth and steep mountains. What the service overlooked was that the many level and gently rolling valleys and drainages amount to thousands of acres of terrain compatible with golf course development, though insignificant by comparison to the unsuitable terrain.

#### FEDERAL LAND LEASE BENEFITS

The chief advantage of leasing over buying land for golf course development is self evident. The investor can channel the money that would otherwise have been consumed by the land purchase into building his golf facilities, improving existing structures, seeding, landscaping and generally developing his golf course.

A lesser known benefit is that leasing Federal land is usually half as costly as leasing private ground of similar value. (The specifics of the lease arrangement will be covered in detail later in this article.)

Not the least advantage of leasing public land is that land under the jurisdiction of the United States Forest Service is interlarded with timber, mountains, streams, wild flowers and wildlife; all of which would surround, intertwine and provide scenic overviews for golfers. These natural embellishments make

less the job of the developer to satiate the golfer's need for primal beauty.

Another important consideration favoring leasing over buying land is the relief it brings from paying property tax. Many courses have been plagued by recent property tax hikes based not on the value of the land used for its present purpose, but on its value if used in the most profitable way. Thus, a course could be forced to develop its land for housing or other more profitable purposes than the one for which the land was originally purchased, simply by virtue of the property tax structure. Leasing Federal land for the golf course mitigates this profit drain.

#### THE LAW AND FEDERAL LAND LEASING

Meeting the Federal requirements for leasing public land (as the Government refers to land under purview of Federal agencies), is not necessarily a cakewalk. The Government has strewn in the path of the private investor a variety of hurdles that must be overcome to comply with the rules on leasing public lands. The mother of these rules is the National Environmental Policy Act, which governs the leas-

ing of Federal grounds under the jurisdiction of the United States Forest Service.

Other Federal agencies, such as the Bureau of Land Management, rely on other acts for their authority in land management. (Leasing land from this agency is a remote possibility.) But for purposes of this article any reference to Federal land will mean land managed by the United States Forest Service.

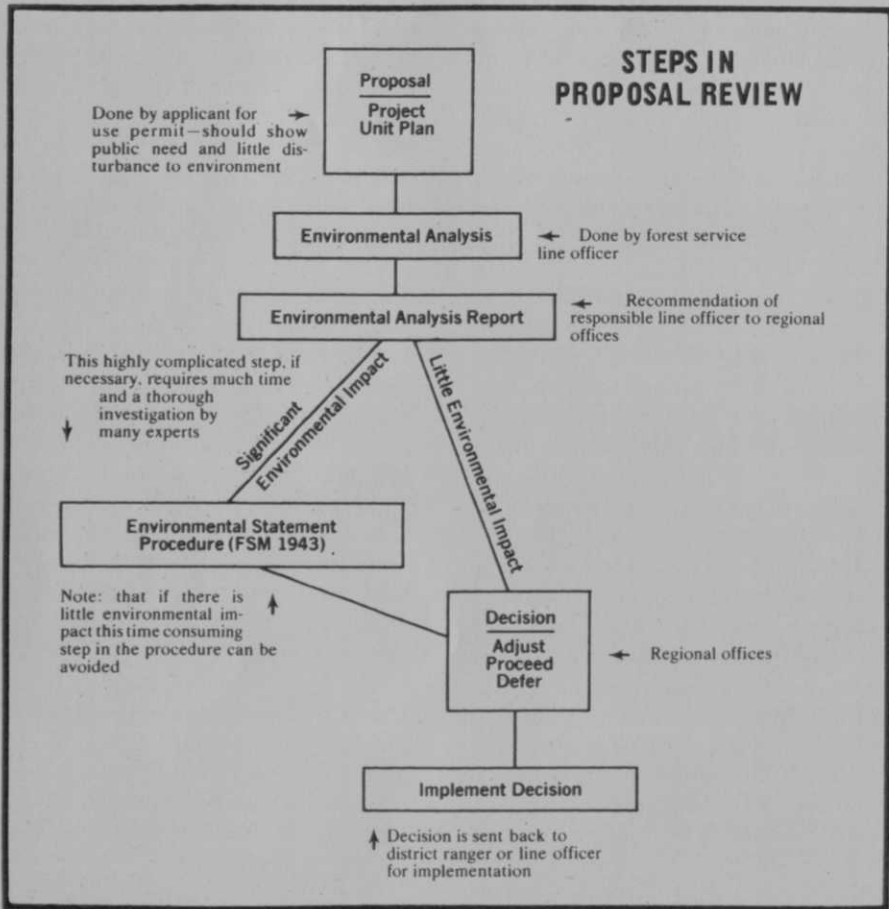
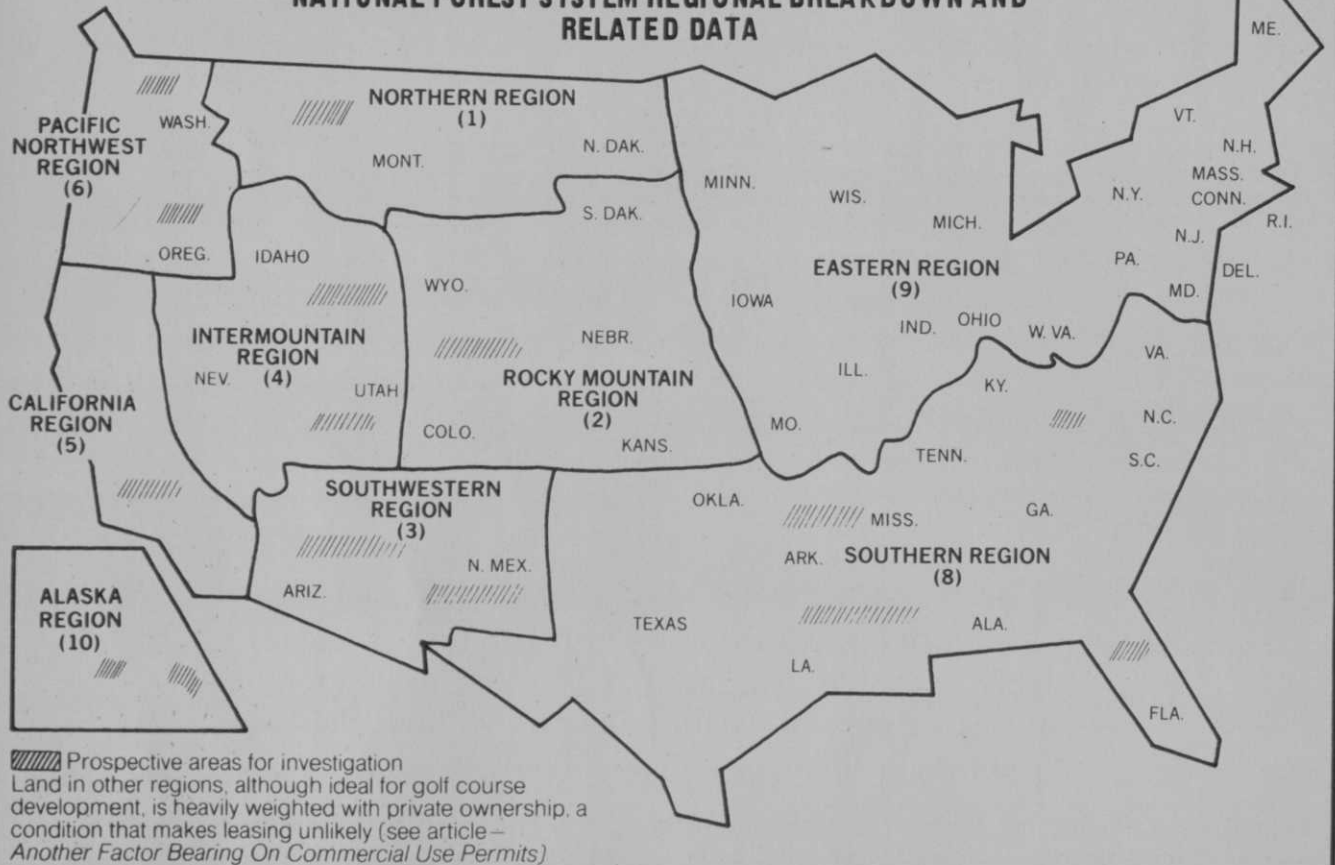
The National Environmental Policy Act has three basic requirements: That the purpose for which the use permit is applied (in leasing public lands the Government refers to the use permit rather than to the lease) be in the long term public interest and need and proves to be of the highest public purpose; that this interest or need cannot be better served by development on private land, and that the proposed use is consistent with over-all Forest Service and environmental objectives.

The Forest Service stresses that a sound land use planning program be an integral part of satisfying the above act and that a thorough justification by the proponent would also be necessary in the Forest Service's review of the proposal.

The major considerations the in-

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## NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM REGIONAL BREAKDOWN AND RELATED DATA



### LAND *continued*

investor should bear in mind concerning complying with the act are: that the golf facility he wishes to build would not significantly change or damage the environment and that the community profess a strong interest in golf. It would behoove the proponent or investor to use community opinion and cooperation to strengthen his plea for the permit. He should also make every effort in his initial proposal to indicate his ability to follow through successfully if the permit is granted. Of course he will need to demonstrate good credit and a competent developmental record.

### VICISSITUDES AND CONSTANTS

The basic rules governing the granting of use permits on public lands are, of course, uniform from forest region to forest region country-wide, but the interpretation of these rules varies greatly from region to region. This is because of the differing types of environment among various parts of the country. In one area a golf course development would do im-

measurable environmental damage (i.e.—An area where a golf course would render unusable, a valley heavily trafficked by elk and deer that need it for winter range.) whereas in another, it would enhance the area; in one region public interest in golf may be so strong that any other recreational use of the land available for use permit would not be considered, while in another, many types of recreation would vie for use of public ground, in which case the Forest Service would determine which would best serve the needs of the community; in one region the administration will favorably view golf as a viable type of forest recreation, whereas another forest supervisor will pronounce golf inconsistent with forest-oriented recreation. This is not to imply that administrative partisanship is the determining factor in the granting of use permits, but often it proves to be the catalyst that tips the scales one way or the other, when the facts, favorable and unfavorable to a type of proposed use, are on balance. It is only natural that the administrative attitude would differ from region to region as does the terrain.

Notwithstanding the variations evident in Forest Service application of the law to the facts of each proposal in each area, a fair general statement of their policy as it applies to commercial public-service facilities on the national forests (golf courses operated for profit by private parties would come under this category) would be as follows: Resorts, hotels, cabin camps, ski lifts, stores, gas stations and similar developments offering accommodations and services needed by the public are permitted on national forest lands under special use permits.

The Forest Service permits the construction of commercial public-service facilities by private capital on suitable tracts of national forest land when there is a public need for such accommodations, facilities and services, and when such use is consistent with the over-all plans of national forest administration. Developments offering moderately-priced accommodations or services, which are within reach of a majority of recreationalists, have priority.

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## "THE USE OF SCENIC LANDS PROVOKES AS MANY DIVERSE AND CONFLICTING OPINIONS AS A FRENCH ELECTION"

by CHET HUNTLEY

The former television news commentator writes from personal experience on the Forest Service view of use permits for golf course development in Montana

BIG SKY, MONT.—Criticizing and castigating the United States Forest Service is one of the most popular pursuits in this nation, because it is the principal administrative agency for the millions of acres of publicly-owned scenic America. The use of scenic lands provokes as many diverse and conflicting opinions as a French election, and the question is more recently confused by the appearance of the "instant ecologists" on their ego trips, who can usually draw a crowd by assailing the U.S. Forest Service and its policies.

At Big Sky we had some rewarding experiences negotiating with the Forest Service in behalf of the use permit for our golf course. Seven acres of Forest Service land lay there obstinately between tee and green of the 15th hole and it refused to move, nor was there any way to bend the 15th fairway around the intruding seven acres. The problem was explained to the Forest Service and a use permit was negotiated. Later, the seven acres in question were part of a land exchange between the Forest Service and the Burlington Northern Railroad, and Big Sky purchased the seven acres

from the new owners.

There are, of course, those who disapprove of this type of permit. By the very nature of its responsibility, the United States Forest Service is certain to draw the ire of most and the applause of few. It is charged with the awesome task of administering these vast acreages for the benefit of *all*. That being the case, the Forest Service is frequently attacked on the grounds that it seems to have no settled policy . . . that its rules and practices in Montana are totally different than those in West Virginia or Upper Michigan. The land-use requirements in Montana are not the same as those in another part of the country, and so the Forest Service has practiced its "multiple use" concept. It is, indeed, a policy that invites the charge that the agency tries to be all things to all interests and, thereby, pleases none.

But the United States Forest Service has managed to accommodate an incredible range of interests: the lumbering industry, the mining industry, towns and cities and farmers in need of water sources, the advocates of more and more wilderness and primitive areas, the fishermen, the hunters, the wild life conservationists, the camper, the backpacker, the mountain climber, the skier, the kayak enthusiast, the float-trip crowd . . . name it.

At Big Sky, a very small portion of one of our lifts is on Forest Service land. In treating and negotiating with the agency's representatives in this district, we have found them to be fair, reasonable, efficient and helpful. The lift towers

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# The new challenger



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*Ben Hogan*



STATUS REPORT:

# Pro Shop BUSINESS 1973

## WEST

by DON CURLEE

SAN FRANCISCO—It was a case of "East meets West" for golf merchandisers in the West this year after a prolonged rainy and cool season showed professionals what it's like to be practically shut down for months at a time.

Even so, play and purchasing resumed in April, and May and June set records for some pro shops. In spite of the January to March forced layoff, most professionals here expect 1973 to equal or surpass 1972 in volume.

Not surprisingly, the item most in demand by consumers has been clubs, mostly the result of interest in investment cast irons, heel-toe balance, graphite shafts and some new manufacturers in the equipment field that are giving the club market an interesting twist.

Ball sales are better than expected in almost every shop that was contacted. There is strong demand for balls with the Surlyn cover and those with new dimple patterns or other distinctive features and improvements.

Beyond that, shoes are the best selling items, and perhaps the only other piece of merchandise professionals are excited about. The heaviest shoe business is being done in the \$25 to \$35 range, even for professionals at well-established private clubs.

Enthusiasm is waning rapidly for soft goods, especially for women. As one public course professional in Fresno put it, "The women at my course are making their own

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## CENTRAL

by JOE DOAN

CHICAGO—Some men curse the darkness; others light a candle, which describes the extremes in the states of mind of two area professionals, surveyed in mid-June concerning business conditions at their shops for the first 10 weeks of 1973. As for 18 others, who were queried, their replies ran from "lousy" to "not too bad considering the weather." A kind of loose summing up of the reports from the 20 professionals shows that from Highland Park to Kankakee and Aurora-Joliet to the Lake, business was off by approximately 10 per cent. Not from 1972, which was equally bad, but from the pro's anticipated or hoped-for volume.

The weather was roundly re-

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## EAST

by STEPHEN W. BYERS

NEW YORK—If you rushed into an Eastern pro shop between nines to buy protection against a capricious sky, you'd probably be advised to settle your ardor for the second nine and watch those arbitrary black clouds from the safety of the bar, unless being wet to the skin improves your game. But try to bridle your pique at the helpless shrug of the club professional; there was no way he could predict the relentless wet deluge that has, thus far, sabotaged the '73 Eastern golf season, leaving in its path empty shelves where rain gear used to be and a 50 per cent sales drop under '72 reflected by the surplus merchandise jamming the rest of the shop.

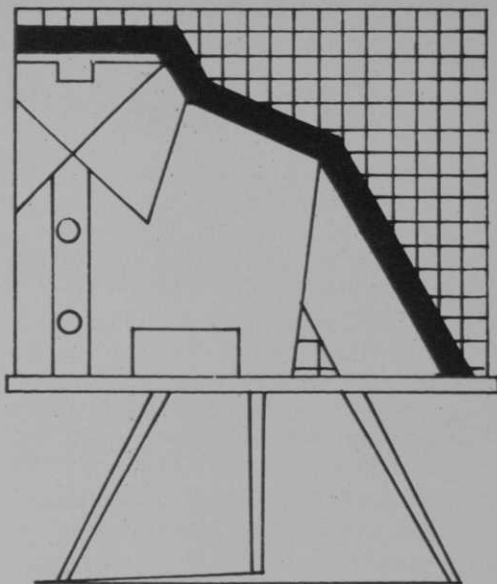
Professionals have expressed little optimism that even clear skies accompanied by a buying surge could rescue the 1973 selling season from a "record low" statistical epilogue.

This season has been variously described by professionals as "the most consistently nasty golfing weather I can recall and I've been in the business 19 years," and this more despondent pro's observation, "A season like this in '74 will find me in another business."

The Mill River Plan (Ray Montgomery), the Multiple Sales Plan (Craig Shankland) and divers other sales techniques helped a few indomitable pros to mellow their description of the '73 selling season from "disastrous" to "inauspicious." These few undaunted

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# WEST

golf clothes from doubleknit fabrics. It has become a matter of pride among them—who can come up with the best color coordination and styles. You can't compete with that by selling off the rack."

He admitted that private course members in his area probably are more inclined to buy apparel lines.

He plans to use his location to better advantage in regard to soft goods. His area, he said, is about a year behind the metropolitan areas of San Francisco and Los Angeles in styles, so he plans to stock up for next year on styles that are good this year in the urban areas.

Although the apparel outlook is dim for most professionals, one private club professional in Oakland said that the only growth he can foresee for his shop is in soft goods, and he lumps golf gloves with apparel in this category. He says that his members are somewhat confused about the wide range of club features, some of which he feels the golf industry branded as old fashioned not long ago—torque and the convex sole wedge, for example.

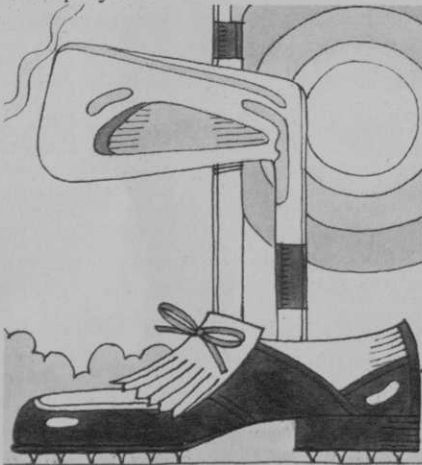
Another professional at a public course in Oakland, who runs several other sales outlets, said that demand for graphite-shafted clubs has been far ahead of supply during

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# CENTRAL

viled, as it is so often in the spring, but all was not despair. Following seven fully or partly washed-out weekends in April to May, two, and at most places, three, fine golf playing days were ushered in for the Memorial Day holiday and business immediately started humming. For the next two weeks the hum continued, carrying through a day when the temperature hit a record 94 degrees and two others when it reached 90. The heat wasn't dissuading anyone from playing golf; now that the rain was over and gone and the sun had broken through, there was great enthusiasm for making up the spring's lost rounds. From June 1 through the 17th most courses were swamped with players.



"If the weather holds through the summer," three out of five professionals say, "we'll make up what we lost in April and May." There is not unanimity of opinion on this, however. One out of three shop operators resolutely maintains that sales lost in the spring are never recouped.

But to get back to the allusion about darkness and lighting a candle, and first accentuating the positive:

Early in May, Bill Heald of Riverside GC, just southwest of Chicago's city limits, was sitting around watching the rain beat down on the putting clock in front of the shop. He was feeling somewhat inclined to self-commiseration due to the rather sad state of business. Club sales, though, weren't bad, and the male members were doing

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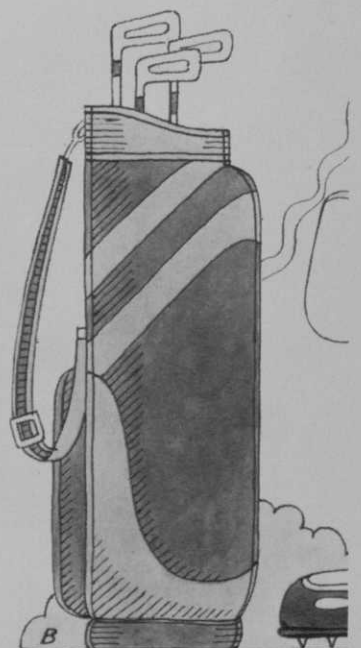
# EAST

were joined by some club pros in Florida, who enjoyed a fruitful peak season in a mild, dry '73 winter. For them, the predictable intermittent daily showers of summer occur in the off season and do little harm to total annual sales.

Craig Shankland, head professional at Middle Bay CC, admits that even his Multiple Sales Plan has only partially mollified what has been the worst selling season in his years at Middle Bay. Over-all, Shankland has struggled to maintain a fair measure of the axiom in pro shop merchandising—the 40 per cent markup.

Until this season his Multiple Sales Plan, a program that offers progressive discounts for members who buy items in multiples (i.e., 10 per cent off for a single item purchase, 20 per cent off for two items and 30 per cent off for three), had exploded his pro shop sales but, as Shankland's pro shop coordinator, Bruce Neinstad, says, "With weather like we've been getting it would be hard to draw a crowd if you were giving merchandise away." Aside from bad weather, one pro cited as the reason for his slow '73 season, that much of his membership maintains winter residences in the South and stayed there later this season, some as late as the end of April.

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the past two to three months. He feels that the investment cast irons have stimulated his sales substantially, and in spite of the layoff during the bad weather, he expects his gross to be up by 20 per cent over 1972.

Nevertheless, he felt the sag when the rains kept players away for weeks at a time. "They lose the golf bug after a while, and it's hard to get started again," he said.

One private club professional (Menlo Park) found a surprising accessory item this year in belts, even though he carries a very limited inventory of soft goods and merchandise generally.

He echoed what some of the other professionals said when he specified the woods from a local Bay Area club manufacturer as his best seller during the past few months. This clubmaker has nudged into the market enthusiastically.

Similarly, "make up" bags by specialty manufacturers have been a strong item for one public course professional in San Jose. He orders golf bags from a Los Angeles manufacturer made to his order, eliminating some features his customers aren't interested in, incorporating a wider and often longer strap and selling them below the price of name bags. He estimates his total bag sales at about 150 a month.

Although most of the professionals seemed concerned about keeping in stock a sufficient supply of new clubs, one complained of competition by the downtown shops specializing in close-outs in the Martinez area. "We're getting away from the average run of merchandise," he said. "We're steering away from the manufacturer that promotes close-outs."

Another municipal course professional in San Mateo said the higher price of some of the investment cast irons are not holding back his players. He has enjoyed brisk shoe sales in the \$28 to \$30 bracket and expects over-all volume to be about the same as 1972 in spite of flooding, which made his course unplayable for nearly three months. "The shop was open," he said, "but nobody was around."

A professional at a municipal course in Berkeley is building business around low-priced merchandise—shoes at \$22.50 and a 20 per cent discount on all ball sales.

"Our predecessors here tried to sell \$40 to \$50 shoes, and it just didn't create any volume. We'll move up in price and quality when we find what is right for our clientele," he said, "but we're offering the best quality for the price that golfers can get anywhere."

He has found that slacks in the \$10 to \$12 range sell, so he stocks and displays them attractively in styles and patterns the competing department stores don't supply. He is one of the few professionals surveyed who is excited about apparel sales this year.

They all agree on one point—the poor quality of last winter's weather and on merchandising plans in case of a repeat performance—stock plenty of water skis. □

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**CENTRAL** from page 28

something about stocking up on the season's attire. But the women were only looking and not buying, as is their wont in rainy weather. Something was needed to stir them. A sale? No self respecting pro is going to run a sale on women's wear in May, Bill decided, even though he was itching to start liquidating it. But a sale in the early season is poor psychology.

Then inspiration struck Heald. He could run a sale without using that opprobrious word by an ingenious method of discounting merchandise. Here is what he did: He made up envelopes in which 10 per cent discounts were granted to about 85 or 90 per cent of his women customers. The remaining envelopes contained discounts ranging up to 25 per cent. The envelopes were sealed, then drawn by lot, but nobody was permitted to unseal an envelope until after a purchase was made.

The composite discount was about 12 or 13 per cent, considerably lower than the 20 or 25 Heald would have been expected to give if he had put on a bona fide sale. The gambling instincts of his female members were whetted, and sales for the short period in which the envelope scheme was in force

was brisk. It is an idea that perhaps can be copied by other professionals who are pressed to get some of their money out of their stock and, at the same time, don't want to give the franchise away.

But where Heald saw fit to light a candle, there is a cohort at a Northside club who can't get the gloom or darkness out of his system. He wonders if the pro shop business is ever going to come back to what it was a few years ago. "For the last two or three years we have kept telling ourselves that it has been the weather that has hurt us," says this man, "but maybe we're not facing up to the facts. Our troubles may go deeper than that."

All is not lost, though, in the shop of this pro who, incidentally, has a reputation of being an imaginative and successful merchandiser and has some good seasons behind him. Club sales have been high in 1973 at his club, largely because, as he states, manufacturers have shown imagination in retooling their products and even more imagination in advertising the changes they have introduced. His ball sales for the season will probably get back to normal, although off to a slow start, because of the weather.

GOLFDOM's survey was made by telephone. The mood of the 20 pros who were interviewed was somewhere in between restrained optimism and predictions that if the weather holds through July and August the pro will squeak through and have a fair season. When asked about the over-all sales picture, the first reaction of about three out of five pros was to pronounce it as not being good, but there were immediate qualifications. "It has picked up a lot since Memorial Day," was the way these were usually worded. "Everyone is bursting to get out and play. Traffic is way up in the last two weeks and that's what it takes to make sales. From here on, everything depends on the weather. There's a lot of money around, people seem to be more willing to spend than they have in two or three years, and if we can keep them coming to the club we'll struggle back to having a fair season in spite of the early setback."

There isn't much doubt that club sales in April and May were all that

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