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Are Kids Answer to Today's Grief, Tomorrow's Hope in Golf?

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ACTIVITY OF pros in winter golf teaching at schools and the way the high school and college kids are going for these golf lessons is beginning to take on a hefty significance to all who are interested in the growth of golf. Not the least of those interested are the manufacturers of clubs and balls who have been considering for the past few years the urgent necessity of market development and protection but who have been unable to agree on any plan. One reason the manufacturers haven't been able to give much serious, special thought to the youngster's market lately is because the club factory bosses all have their schooners of woe overflowing with undigested surpluses of golf clubs.

How to get rid of the surplus clubs frozen in inventories from 1931 and 1932 is going to be one terrible problem unless something is added to the cut-price appeal that played a lone and unsuccessful hand last year. Right now players can get some of the best clubs ever made of the orthodox 1931 and 1932 heads at prices that are murderous to the manufacturer, who has to turn this merchandise into cash because he is getting no dough from the banks these days. Added to the usual reasons for enforced liquidation is a volume of merchandise returned by pros last years too late to be resold. This practice will continue to backfire on all the

pros until the boys learn that an order is an order.

But there is no use holding a post-mortem on the frozen inventories. What has to be done is to move them and the suggestion of liquidation pool arrangement between leading manufacturers in the field has been advanced.

Youngsters Are Big Outlet

The basic idea of this liquidation is to employ pro cooperation in selling the 5,300,000 high school and college students clubs at liquidation prices, thus combining conversion of this merchandise into cash and the vital job of cultivating the junior market. Foresighted emphasis on this junior market has proved to be a great thing for tennis. Baseball with its American Legion junior championships is doing a valiant job of keeping going with the kids. Golf has depended on the caddy factor and on pro instruction at schools to do a thoroughly unorganized job of market development and preservation.

The first hunch on a pooling arrangement came from a New York advertising man, H. Von H. Proskey, who suggested a pooling arrangement for new merchandise last fall during a discussion with a GOLFDOM representative. Such an arrangement on new stuff wouldn't work, in our opinion, because of the influx of new ideas in club design that now govern iron club merchandising especially. There is

the briskest sort of competition among the leading manufacturers; competition that has permitted some costly evils to dig into the business. For that reason the pros never need to spend precious hours worrying about co-operative buying—the manufacturers' big trouble has been brought about by giving too much away.

Now, with the bitter lessons of the last two years of lone-wolfing, there is every evidence that the manufacturers are working together because of the compulsion of nature's first law—self-preservation—and because of a sincere determination to benefit the game and the pros who have been responsible for the game's advance.

With the students' market crying for attention that has been given it only by the pros and by enlightened, foresighted educators who want to see the students well grounded in a game that will be a pleasure to them all through life, the manufacturers keenly appreciate that this market offers them a dual opportunity. The sale of frozen merchandise is the most urgent necessity, but right after it comes the need for getting the youngsters won for golf.

Parents Will Buy for Kids

You might say that the major market is among the adults who have obsolete clubs that might be traded in and passed along to the youngsters because the youngsters haven't the money to go for new clubs. Well, the advertising psychologists have doped out this parental yen as one of the strongest of sales-impelling forces. Pros who have plenty of close-up on the kid market will tell you that a parent will buy a new set of moderate priced clubs much quicker for his offspring than he will for himself.

The golf-playing parent, when he wants new clubs these days, wants some of the 1933 models and that isn't going to solve the problem of liquidating the surplus stocks of obsolete models. The surplus stocks have to go to the youngsters and if anyone can figure out another answer after last year's experience of trying to peddle on cut-prices, they are entitled to the plush-faced putter.

One place where some of the older heads may be kidding themselves sadly is about the capacity of the kid market to absorb the surplus. Take almost any youngster these days and you will see

that when he wants anything real strongly he will get the money to pay for it; frequently earning it by ingenious methods that would solve the nation's unemployment problem. It's not the same set-up that used to prevail when the older generation was working its way from plow-boy to president at 50 cents a week. The average year's caddie bill of \$30,000,000 ought to be the tip-off to that.

Twenty Sales at One School

Today the thing that should smart up the manufacturing end of the field to the fact that this student market is worth some concentrated, studied effort, is the experience of the pros. I know one good, steady pro, who is no brilliant business genius but just a straight down-the-middle guy, who is teaching a class of 150 pupils at a midwestern high school during the winter. Already he has 20 sets of fairly expensive clubs sold to these kids and the minute such a liquidating pool as is suggested acquaints this fellow with the fact that he can get some mighty good 6-club sets of obsolete irons to retail for around \$20 that pro will knock off kid business to the extent that will make the manufacturers bust out in the first good hearty laugh they have had since they were compelled to go into throat-slitting price concessions and consignment deals in order to liquidate.

With our usual charming confession of humility GOLFDOM does not presume to try to run any one else's business, least of all our advertisers'. We have, oh, so many problems in trying to run our own affairs of GOLFDOM and *Golfing*. But it does seem that we could, in due shyness, suggest that this matter of liquidation and protection through a manufacturers' pool working in conjunction with the PGA, calls for some earnest consideration.

Pros with whom we have discussed the matter are for it because it is giving them a chance to get public recognition for the work they are doing with the kids. They'll make some money out of the deal too.

This matter of instruction that makes sales is tersely brought to a focus in a recent comment made by Bob MacDonald. Bob says that when you tell a kid that in five years he might become a champion golfer or a great lawyer or doctor, the five years is nothing to the kid. When you tell the same thing to an adult, he figures; "Five years? It isn't worth it."