

Ten Things

to Know About Golf Bags

Lightweight tour bags are gaining popularity; most golf bags are selling for between \$140-\$190; suggest a new bag to anyone using shop credit

By Scott Kramer



Bags can be a company's largest on-course billboard. Case in point: To promote its recent SLDR S silver-colored metalwoods launch, TaylorMade conducted a "Silver Out" to most of its Tour Staff Professionals at the Players Championship and the HP Byron Nelson Championship by having them carry silver staff bags.

And that, in turn, may steer golfers into your shop, curious about the bag or the club it was advertising. Unfortunately, all bags are not marketed that way. Which leaves things up to you on how to sell them.

To help you better engage customers in a dialogue about bags — and to help you sell more — try using these conversation starters and selling ideas:

1 New, lightweight tour bags are popular this year. Many are made of nylon and have the ability to hold lots of gear at a

fraction of the weight of their predecessors. They're a perfect type of bag for an on-course facility to personalize for a golfer, at an upcharge.

2 Of all the items players spend money on, they don't change bags unless they absolutely need to. That's according to PGA Professional Gary Glaser, general manager at The Crossings at Carlsbad, a municipal course in Carlsbad, California. Plus, he claims that local off-course shops carry four times as many bags and avid golfers know it. How does he sell bags, then? "I make sure that most, if not all, of my bags have our logo to separate them from off-course facilities, which gives us a much better shot at selling them," says Glaser.

3 Bryan Haas, PGA director of golf operations at Riverside (Iowa) Casino & Golf Resort, says he's noticed that golfers are buying multiple bags this year, for various reasons. "Cart

bags sell due to the larger size and lightweight options they have," says Haas. "And that same person is traveling and needs a smaller bag to meet the airlines guidelines of luggage weight."

4 Bag manufacturers report that the magic price point at which stand bags and carry bags seem to sell best is between \$140 and \$190. They also report that there's a lot of volume on promotions underneath that price range for minimalistic models, as well.

5 Consider stocking bags that fit on push carts. If yours is a walker-friendly course where people tend to use them, heed the advice of PGA Certified Professional Michael D'Agostino, who is the head professional at Penfield (New York) Country Club and stocks mostly cart bags: "We have many members who walk with push carts," he says. "Our main focus is bags that fit on push carts. They also work well on the riding cart." In other words, know your customers and their preferences. OGIO Global Vice President of Golf Tom Gocke says: "We have seen a continuing trend of golfers buying cart bags. We attribute this to the continued popularity of push carts. It used to be that all walkers purchased stand bags to carry. Now, they're split between carriers and push carters."

6 Bags are generally designed to last a minimum of one and a half years, depending on use. "Eventually, something will break," says one manufacturer. How to extend a bag's life while storing them at your facility? Don't leave them in the sun, as the materials can become brittle. Never throw them down on the

ground or slam them, as it bangs the bag joints and weakens them. And wipe down any bag after it has been in the rain. In the winter, store it in a cool, dry place. Leave the clubs in, but not the likes of three dozen balls in a pocket as they will sag the pocket and permanently stretch it.

7 Suggest a new bag to anyone using shop credit. This idea comes from Lawrence Auer, PGA head professional at Azalea City Golf Course in Mobile, Alabama. Why? Because "the guy who has everything can often use a new bag," says Auer. "Bags with color accents do the best." Perhaps that's because people like to switch things up on the course every now and then. And if someone doesn't have enough for new clubs and doesn't need new golf balls, a bag is a great alternative purchase.

8 Tour professionals don't commonly make special requests to manufacturers, but their caddies definitely do. Things they ask for: easier handles, lighter weight, and consistently and conveniently located pockets.

9 Callaway's Tour staffers commonly use seven different bags in a season. This includes their main bag, one special model for each of the four majors, one customized bag for The Greenbrier, and in May they all tote Odyssey-branded models.

10 Those large staff bags that tour professionals use are actually specially made by manufacturers to include base reinforcement. This enables professionals to sit down on them while waiting on tee boxes. ■

What's popular in golf bags

- Alphard Golf's **DUO CART DX** (\$330) is a combo push cart and golf bag. The compact unit has four large wheels for stability, lots of pockets, and easily folds down to fit in a car trunk – with clubs.
- Bag Boy's **Revolver LTD** (\$230) boasts a fresh 14-way rotating top with technology that gracefully locks clubs into place. It also features eight pockets.
- Callaway's **Fusion 14 Hybrid** stand bag (\$200) packs 10 pockets and a 10-inch, 14-way top. Its traction-oriented base provides plenty of contact with the turf for stability. It weighs less than five pounds.
- Weighing only five pounds, the Cleveland **CG Tour Stand Bag** (\$180) features an 8.5-inch, 6-way top, comfort mesh hip pad with Airflow Channels, and Comfort Suspension System shoulder straps.
- Club Glove's **The FCO III** (\$300) is where understated elegance meets durability and function. This traditional-styled premium bag is for the serious player who demands the best.
- Cobra's **BIO Stand Bag** (\$190) features a molded 8-way top with an integrated putter compartment. It has a two-tone mesh collar with a full-length club divider. A pedal-activated, branded stand mechanism includes an oversized foot stabilizer. Fully padded and contoured, there's a removable backpack harness and padded lumbar. Five small-item pockets, including one fleece-lined personal pocket, are included.
- Datrek's 4.7-pound **Lite Rider** cart bag (\$150) features a 14-way organizer top with individual, full-length dividers. Seven pockets means ample storage.
- Nike Golf's **Sport Lite** (\$155) weighs south of four pounds, making it the company's lightest carry bag ever. A proprietary revolving double strap system distributes bag weight evenly across the shoulders, while two full-length dividers maximize club visibility.
- Oakley's 2.85-pound **FactoryLite** carry bag (\$200) features lightweight Denier nylon skin, which is commonly used in tents. A clever "right-sized" pocket plus a smaller apparel pocket deceptively hold plenty, while minimal zipper tape and aluminum rivets help lighten the load.
- OGIO's lightweight **Silencer** stand bag (\$235) features a protective membrane top that separates 14 clubheads, plus flex grab teeth on the bottom to keep clubs in place. Durable handles and an equalizing shoulder strap come standard.
- Ping's four-pound **L8** stand model (\$140) sports a four-way top with two full-length dividers, as well as a wide 24-inch leg span for stability. Dual sliding straps are easy on the shoulders, while a customizable apparel pocket helps organize.
- Sun Mountain's 3.8-pound **Front 9** stand bag (\$170) can hold a full set of clubs, several balls and more. It features an 8.5-inch oval top with a flared opening, full-length club dividers, six pockets, and a dual strap.
- TaylorMade **PureLite Stand Bag** (\$179.99) is highlighted by its square, 5-way top design for easier club access in and out of the bag. Additional features: 7 pockets, anti-split stand, 4-point shoulder strap and only 5.5 pounds.
- Titleist's four-pound **Ultra Lightweight** stand bag (\$160) has all the features of a larger stand bag. Walkers at your facility will love the full apparel and ball pockets, double strap, beverage sleeve and a broad foot stand mechanism.
- Wilson Staff's 4.8-pound **neXus** bag (\$200) features an exo-frame, in which the heat-treated aluminum frame connects the spine, top, stand and base. Each part works interdependently to keep the base in full contact with the ground, even while the legs are extended.