

Mechanically Inclined

MAINTAINING THE EQUIPMENT THAT MAINTAINS THE COURSE

There's been a lot of discussion over the job title of golf course superintendent, greenkeeper, turf manager or director of grounds. What best describes the role and responsibilities of the position? Well, it doesn't stop there. The professionals who keep the golf course equipment running so superintendents can apply all that agronomic wizardry are called mechanics, equipment technicians, equipment managers or shop managers. Whatever the title, you may be the head of the outfit but they are your right hand. There are several equipment technician associations around the state seeking to organize and professionalize the position. Check out the following articles for a look into the role of the equipment manager.

Joel Jackson

HAWK'S NEST

Neatness Counts... From Procedures to Record-Keeping

By Tom Trammel, CGCS

Hawk's Nest is an 18-hole, private golf course in Vero Beach with a maintenance staff of 23. Head mechanic Bruce Raitzel has one full-time assistant, Jacob Watson, and occasionally a part-timer as a second helper. Raitzel, a Lake City CC turf equipment management grad, is in his 13th year as head mechanic, starting his fifth year at Hawk's Nest. He is recognized as one of the leaders in his field.

Daily operations for the upcoming week are on a master schedule board located in the break room. Our goal is to stay as balanced as possible with

mechanic and crew schedules so that it keeps them all in a forward-moving focus.

The shop is swept daily and is kept neat; it's accessed only by the assistant and head mechanic. It is a separate building thus there is no need for staff members to enter. All shop tools are bought and owned by the club. A separate tool box of lesser-value, miscellaneous tools is kept for the rest of the staff.

All the carts and maintenance

equipment items have the operators' names printed on them, making each operator responsible to clean and check the oil on his assigned equipment. A board in the break room allows operators to write down any



Top quality and specialized tools are bought and owned by Hawk's Nest. Photo by Tom Trammel.

issues and problems with the equipment if the mechanics are not available in the shop or if a problem occurs falls over a weekend. For emergencies there is with a radio to call the mechanics if they are out in the field.

All equipment costs, expenses and servicing records are accounted for on Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. The head mechanic has a monthly maintenance and repair budget allotment and performs his own purchasing and invoicing through the golf course office manager.

The head mechanic is responsible for lubricating all pieces of equipment that are driven on the greens. Operators of rough-, slope- and fairway-mowing equipment lubricate their units daily. Time is allocated at the end of the day for each operator to do the servicing and detailed cleaning. The operators are required to report any equipment issues or safety problems to the head mechanic as soon after it occurs as possible.

The superintendent and head mechanic meet at least once a week formally to go over the existing and future status of mowing heights, cultural practices, ideas, needed services and operator performance. Greens mower reels are ground weekly, tee mowers biweekly, slope and rough mowers three times a year. Hydraulic hoses are typically changed out

Hawk's Nest head mechanic David Raitzel has been at Hawk's Nest for five years. David is a graduate of the Lake City Community College golf operations turf equipment management program. Photo by Tom Trammel.



The shop work areas are kept neat and clean. Access is limited to the mechanics. Photo by Tom Trammel.

annually and biodegradable fluid is used.

Innovations

Instead of throwing out a 250 gallon, mini-bulk fertilization tank after it was emptied out, Bruce turned it into a gravity-feed water wagon. This wagon is used wet our native cart paths, keeping the dust level down. It is also used for watering our newly planted trees and foliage and any hot spots throughout the golf course.

In the winter months, the shop is open for a monthly tour. The head mechanic gives a 45-minute behind-the-scenes tour; grinding of reels, backlapping, mower-height adjustment and the differences among slicing, aerifying, verticutting, grooming and more.

Equipment Inventory

2 fairway units, 2 rough units, 2 slope mowers, 8 walk greens mowers (new Toro Flex 21), 6 walk tee mowers, 12 utility carts, Terra Topper top-dresser for light applications, Meter-Matic for heavier applications.

RED STICK GC

It Starts With Skills and Ends With Professionalism

By Corby Coggins

What is the role of a golf course equipment manager? Depending on where this question is

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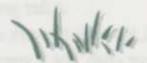
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