The future is now

January: LawnNiibbler acquires taste for turf

By FRED WRIGHT

GAINESVILLE, Fla. — A robot lawn mower called LawnNiibbler, created at the University of Florida, may soon be pruning the tees and greens of the neighborhood golf course.

Designed by the university's Machine Intelligence Laboratory, the prototype can cut grass intelligently — avoiding dogs, kids, trees and golfers. It uses a radio wire buried at the perimeter of its work area and a navigation beacon system using solar and infrared emitters and detectors that tell it where it is in its environment.

The LawnNiibbler has four wheels, a chain drive, electric motor and lead acid battery and it works on the principals of a tank: It can turn on a dime — or a divot.

"We've done no engineering to date in terms of endurance," explains Keith Doty, director of the lab that designed the original model two years ago, but he

Continued on page 26

Single-rider market heats up

April: Ortho-Kinetics jumps in with Fairway 8000

By JOHN FARRELL

WAUKESHA, Wis. — Fairway Golf Cars, a division of Ortho-Kinetics, Inc., is introducing the Fairway 8000 Single-Rider. In development for four years, the Single-Rider features a dual motor drive, a 48-volt power system with transaxle, maintenance-free AGM batteries, and a dynamic braking system which offers smooth deceleration as well as continuous recharging during braking action.

"Twenty years ago, getting on and off a course in four hours was a bad day," said John Perez, director of sales and marketing for Fairway, "now it's a miracle."

Ortho-Kinetics new Fairway single-rider.

June: Pride enters market in a big way

By MICHAEL LEVANS

EXETER, Pa. — Pride Golf, a new division of scooter and liftchair manufacturer Pride Healthcare, has entered the single-rider golf-car market with quite a bang.

It was recently announced that Pride Golf's car, the second single-ride to enter the golf market from the home medical equipment industry, will be the vehicle of choice for disabled golfer Casey Martin, should he earn a berth for a cart for Casey and if your's meet

Continued on page 26

Crisis in Canada puts clamps on course spending

By PETER BLAIS

TORONTO — The cry of the Loony — as Canadians call their one-dollar, bird-imprinted coin — has been a mournful sound for superintendents and suppliers of U.S.-manufactured course equipment as the plummeting Canadian dollar has made those items increasingly expensive for Canadian course managers.

By early August, the Canadian dollar had fallen to a record low, an equivalent of approximately 65 cents in U.S. currency. That represented a 15 percent decline from a year earlier and was forcing some superintendents to consider cutting back, or at the very least delaying purchases of U.S. and other foreign-made supplies.

"It's no wonder that people who make large purchases in the U.S. would be backing off or reducing them this year," said Vince Gillis, executive director of the Canadian Golf Superintendents Association (CGSA).

Added GCSA President Doug Meyer of Cedarbrook Golf & Country Club in St. Sophie, Quebec: "This will definitely affect our capital budgets when we are buying new equipment, as well as other course supplies such as chemicals, fertilizers, seed, parts and course supplies. The only products that will not be affected are those produced in Canada.

Continued on page 26