A problem of crisis proportions is rapidly descending upon municipal, public and private golf course superintendents: the lack of trained mechanics to repair turf equipment in case of breakdown.

At many courses in the past, superintendents have doubled as mechanics. At many of the smaller courses they still do. However, the use of complex and sophisticated machinery, coupled with ever-increasing numbers of golfers and a longer playing season, are placing a burden on the superintendent's ability to maintain adequate playing conditions. The burden on superintendents becomes greater when equipment sent to dealer or factory repair shops take months to repair due to backlog. To relieve this burden, the trend is toward superintendents establishing a self-sufficient maintenance and repair shop staffed by a full-time mechanic.

Some distributors and manufacturers, particularly in the North, have a four-month backlog of machines waiting to be serviced during the slack winter months. However, the increase in golfers and the playing season have precluded the luxury of “locking up for the winter” while sending equipment in for repair. According to one midwestern superintendent, another advantage of a full-time mechanic who services equipment such as golf cars, tractors, mowers and even irrigation equipment, is the prevention of the big repair bill and the increased operating efficiency and life of the equipment.

The task facing the golf course superintendent is finding a mechanic capable of servicing turf equipment. One major equipment supplier estimates it takes from six months to one year to convert a good automobile mechanic into a golf course mechanic. Because superintendents have neither the time nor the skill to train mechanics on this new dual-purpose equipment, a vacuum of skilled turf mechanics has resulted.

Equipment manufacturers, distributors and dealers are trying to meet their responsibility by acquainting golf course mechanics with their products—however, they are not running a training school for mechanics. Said one service school representative, “One superintendent sent people to these clinics who had very limited mechanical knowledge and ability. We cannot take the time, nor do we have the manpower, to train people sent to us by the golf courses. We want golf courses to send us mechanics who are already familiar with turf equipment and engines. Then we will train them on the servicing and repair of our equipment.”

Jacobsen Mfg. Company offers a special factory service and repair school to acquaint mechanics with Jacobsen products. These three-day clinics run from October through March and provide theoretical and practical experience on all Jacobsen products. The cost of the clinic is $45 per person with lodging, or $15 without. The Jacobsen clinics have attracted over 400 mechanics throughout the five-month period.

Toro Mfg. Corp. provides service clinics on its equipment through its regional distributors. Western Toro in Burlingame, Calif., held ap-
experienced welder, upholsterer, public and private courses feel they
vying for a good mechanic as skilled craftsman. The mechanic is also an ex-
dustry. This is usually $4 an hour
stealing of good turf mechanics in
em superintendent, rivalry has
down. Following the manual, his
mechanic had put the part in the
right place, but the wrong way. The
superintendent received a maxi-
Return on his investment in
sending his mechanic to these clinics. Upon the mechanic’s return, he
helped train other course workers
who could act as backup men in case
of an emergency.

There apparently is no end in sight
for the backlog of machines to be ser-
ved during the winter months. In-
deed, the period may well be extended
ear around. It has been stated
that the 1970 production of small
gas engines in the United States will
be about nine million, of which seven
million will be power mowers.
Many of these mowers go to small
homemakers, but larger mowers go
to golf courses, parks, cemeteries,
schools and other institutions. This
increased equipment production has greatly exceeded the ability of
mechanics at the dealer and factory
levels to keep up with repairs. “Each
person calling to get his mower or
other turf equipment repaired wants
to be placed at the top of the list,” says
one manufacturer. Because me-
chanics working in dealer repair
centers are getting high wages, they
are not interested in working over-
time, hence a backlog of machines
waiting to be serviced. Says one deal-
er, “I get $12 an hour for service in
my shop and I wish I could do away
with that department. It does not
make any money. This is due to the
large inventory of parts which I must
pay for, paperwork and the sal-
aries and benefits paid to mechanics
and parts men. I can make money
sharpening mowers,” he states, “but
not on repair work. I keep the repair
shop only because I am required to
service what I sell.”

Mechanization is rapidly replac-
ing the manual laborer on the golf
course. But, with mechanization,
comes the related equipment mainte-
nance and repair services which golf
courses must establish if they are to
operate as profitable and efficient
business ventures.

Service Clinics for Turf Mechanics

The following are a list of some of the major
equipment manufacturers which provide training
service clinics for golf course mechanics using their equipment. Superintendents interested
in finding out if manufacturers not listed
below offer service training clinics should contact
their local dealer or distributor for further
information.

Turf maintenance equipment

International Harvester: Dealers are trained
by the factory to work with golf course me-
chines in the area they service. They also have
two “troubleshooters” mobile units traversing
the country. Contact your IH dealer for more
information.

Jacobsen Mfg. Company: Service schools
 held at the factory October through March.
Three-day clinic includes theory and practice on
all Jacobsen turf equipment, including mower
grinding. Cost: $45 with lodging, $15 without.
Reservations for 1971-72 should be made.
Contact Ken Weill, Jacobsen Mfg. Company,
Racine, Wis. 53403.

Kohler Company: Training sessions avail-
able to users of Kohler equipment. For appoint-
ment contact your local Kohler dealer or Ed
Anderson, Kohler Company, Kohler, Wis.
53044.

Roseman Mower Corp.: Training sessions available
on Roseman gangmowers. Contact
Robert Duguid, Roseman Mower Corp., Glen-
view, Ill. 60025, for appointment.

Ryan Equipment Company: Training sessions available
on Ryan equipment. Contact Russ
Rose, Ryan Equipment Company, St. Paul,
Minn. 55109

Toro Mfg. Corp.: Training service clinics
handled through regional distributor. Factory
representatives will be on hand to assist with
clinics. For additional information contact your
Toro distributor.