I If you’re thinking of purchasing a walk-behind greens mower, you’re looking to sport the best putting greens in the neighborhood. Walk-behind mowers are recognized for their high caliber of cutting.

But remember that buying a walk-behind mower is like purchasing a Cadillac. You shouldn’t care how much it costs because you desire — and are getting — excellence.

“Quality of cut is the issue for most people who are walk-mowing their greens,” says David “Buddha” Brandon, superintendent for Riverwood GC in Mount Pleasant, Mich. “Price is not a consideration.”

Many superintendents believe walk-behind mowers are better than triplex mowers, says Peter Whurr, vice president of product management for Textron Turf Care And Specialty Products. They are willing to pay more for the single-unit machines and employ additional labor to operate them.

Helmut Ullrich, a marketing manager for Toro Co., says clipping greens with walk-behind mowers is “the ultimate you can do for your clients.”

What distinguishes walk-behind mowers from triplex mowers? For starters, they are better apt to cut severe undulations and contours on difficult-to-groom greens, experts say, and we’re talking one-eighth inch here.

But there are points to consider when selecting a walk-behind mower. Bill Williams and his crew use walk-behind mowers on the severely undulating greens at Worthington Hills CC in Worthington, Ohio. Williams warns that if the front rollers on the mower are too far in front of the reel, the mower may scalp the green when cutting at a low height. So Williams prefers walk-behind mowers with front rollers and reels that are well-balanced. Whurr says the mower must have enough weight on its front end to keep it from bouncing on a green.

“The balance of the machine is important, not only from front to rear, but left to right,” Whurr adds. “Any inaccuracy from left to right will lead to different shades of green.”

Brandon will only purchase a walk-behind mower that features a more durable reel, which transforms into a better-looking and consistent cut, he says.

Speaking of aesthetics, Ullrich notes that walk-behind mowers won’t leave behind tire and compaction marks like some riding mowers. Whurr stresses that superintendents should purchase walk-behind mowers that operate with no engine vibration, which can affect cutting performance and, hence, green reac-

tion. Even small vibrations can cause ripples on greens, he notes.

Noise level is also an issue when selecting a walk-behind mower because most course workers are cutting greens in the early morning, Whurr notes.

Some superintendents might not think they have the time to use walking mowers, especially if they’re running busy daily-fee courses. But Whurr says they can place lights on the mowers to cut the greens at night.

Whurr suggests purchasing a mower that’s versatile enough to add attachments. “If you have thatch on a green, you need to be able to pull it out with a groomer attachment,” he says.

Or a small brush might need to be attached to the front of a mower to flick grass up so it can be precisely cut. “Little things like that help superintendents attain the quality of greens they’re looking for,” Whurr says.

Competition for golfers and tournaments has spurred a renewed interest in walk-behind mowers because superintendents believe quality of cut, not speed of cut, is the main issue, Whurr says. Brandon echoes that sentiment.

“To many superintendents, there’s no bigger issue than quality of cut, and what a green is going to look, putt and feel like when you’re done mowing it,” he says.

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**Hoofing It?**

There are points to consider when purchasing a walk-behind greens mower

*By Larry Aylward*
ClubCorp's chief outlines his company's approach to meeting and exceeding golfer expectations

By Robert H. Dedman Jr.

A favorite pastime of golfers is judging the merits of their club's course. For some, the evaluation has a direct correlation to the day's scores. For better or worse, it's likely to be the course superintendent who is the target of the blame or praise. But the perception of a golf course is a major factor in its success and community image. That's why a superintendent is a vital link in its success.

From ClubCorp's start in 1957 with 54 holes at Brookhaven CC near Dallas, the company has approached golf as it has every facet of its business — with an unwavering goal of exceeding members' and guests' expectations. The key to success isn't a secret; it's member service.

At ClubCorp, we have a culture called STAR Service that works equally well on the golf course and in the dining room. We keep STAR Service on course in golf operations by creating Pride in Belonging. P-R-I-D-E. means:

**Personalized service** We treat every member the same by treating every member differently. This is especially important because golf is a repeat-business industry. We know the golf experience begins in the parking lot and extends to the course. Through personalized service, we strive to make every round memorable.

**Recognition and acceptance** We call members by name and know their individual preferences. We make sure they receive warm welcomes and fond farewells and, in between, become connected to activities at their clubs. This includes showing respect for the little things and paying attention to details.

**Involvement and communication** Member satisfaction surveys help keep lines of communication open among superintendents, members and greens committees. Most clubs have regular columns written by superintendents in their member newsletters. Superintendents attend golf committee meetings to keep members apprised of maintenance schedules and other factors that affect playability.

To enhance this communication, we've made it easier for superintendents to receive and exchange information by the use of e-mail and the Internet. We have made an investment to network our clubs, using PCs in each superintendent's office.

**Developing relationships** Earlier this year, ClubCorp entered into a new six-year agreement with The Toro Co. This and other partnerships help produce well-maintained courses for our members.

When it comes to course maintenance, we're not just talking lawn mowers. We're talking about the people who implement the detailed maintenance practices. Perhaps there is no better example within the company than Pinehurst No. 2, site of the 1999 U.S. Open. This layout required the best golfers in the world to hit every club in the bag and even held up during wet weather. Those facts not only are a tribute to the genius of Donald Ross, but to the agronomic skills of Pinehurst's maintenance staff and the USGA.

We also value protecting and maintaining the ecology foundation of a golf course. About three-quarters of our clubs are members of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program.

**Education and growth** The company pays for certification, continuing education, attendance at GCSAA conferences and other types of training for all employee partners. We want good people to come in and not just do the job, but to be motivated to do the job better every day. Each assistant, head, and regional superintendent candidate is tested not only on technical agronomy skills, but also on personality traits. We search for employee partners who will stay and grow with us.

Robert H. Dedman Jr. is president and CEO of Dallas-based ClubCorp, the world's largest owner and operator of private country clubs and golf resorts.
Night was falling when the golfer completed his 9th and final hole. Too bad. He was just finding his groove. "I sure wish I could play some more," he said, disappointed the dark ended his stellar round.

Dean Wilson and his father, Charles, were within earshot of the golfer's remark. The Wilsons, owners of the course the man was playing, turned and gazed at each other with silver dollar-sized eyes when they heard the man speak. Father and son shared the same notion.

"We oughta light this course up," Charles said, as Dean nodded in approval.

About a year later, Hillcrest GC, located near Houston in Alvin, Texas, was lit up like the Las Vegas strip. The course was equipped with 34-foot-tall light posts from tee to green on each of its nine holes. And, as the Wilsons expected, business began bustling at moonrise.

That was 1994 and nothing has changed, except that night golf is as popular as a pinch of tobacco between the cheek and gum in Houston. Dean says competitors have opened five lighted, par-3 courses in the area since Hillcrest upped its electric usage.

"Our business has increased dramatically," Dean says.

While he refuses to reveal exact sales numbers, Dean did disclose that night golf at Hillcrest boosted profits enough that the family business could afford to build a new, 18-hole, par-72 layout — lighted, of course. The front nine opened in July 1996, the back nine in November 1997.

Dean says Beacon Lakes GC, located about 20 minutes from downtown Houston, takes its name from a Bible passage. "Beacon" means light, according to the Big Book. Dean says golfers love playing at night for various reasons. There are benefits year-round.

Have you ever tried to tee it up on a sizzling July afternoon in Texas? We're talking melting.

For that reason, folks would rather wait until the temperature drops to 90 in the early evening to take to the links.

In the winter, night golf is a godsend for bored working stiffs, who normally head to the bar for beer and Birdie King after the bell rings because it's too dark to play the real deal.

"Our market picks up during the winter because we're drawing from a bigger customer base," Dean says, noting that competition for golfers is limited in the winter, especially if you have a lighted course.

Dean won't say how much the family business paid to light Hillcrest and Beacon Lakes. Of course, the Wilsons paid a lot less because they installed the lights themselves.

"Let's just say it's a profitable venture," Dean adds.

Besides seeing the light, the Wilsons are also seeing green. Dean would like for the family business to take on a new role — consulting, as in here's how to install lights on your golf course.

"We didn't do all this work just to give away free information," Dean says. "If someone is interested, we'll consult for a fee."

What's that line about a free lunch? Anyway, if you're looking to drum up new business, consider lights for nighttime play. And why not? It's time the golf industry catch up to the 21st century.

Did you know the first Major League baseball game played under the lights took place in 1947 at Boston's Fenway Park? Baseball owners lighted their stadiums because they discovered more people could attend games at night.

Finally, a half-century later, golf course owners are finding out that more players are eager to tee it up under starry skies. Better late.
Clearing Up a Murky Matter

A multi-use lake required a clean-up effort of excessive algae and bottom sediment.

Problem
The irrigation lake at Addison Reserve GC was overcome with algae and bottom sediment, causing a variety of problems from clogged irrigation heads to unpleasant odors.

Solution
A system to aerate and better circulate water from the lake’s bottom, and a bioaugmentation product to destroy algae food sources.

Problem
The irrigation lake at Addison Reserve GC in Delray Beach, Fla., performs several functions related to the successful operation of the property.

For starters, the four-acre lake, part of an interconnected waterway system of about 27 lakes, is the irrigation lifeblood of the golf course. The lake, which averages a depth of 10 feet, also serves as an aesthetically pleasing natural background for a number of upscale houses on the property. It also has a sinister side — it can be a distracting water hazard for golfers.

The lake is an integral part of the golf course. So when it began experiencing problems with excessive algae and bottom sediment, there was concern.

“Like a utility baseball player playing various positions, the irrigation lake at Addison Reserve GC in Delray Beach, Fla., performs several functions related to the successful operation of the property.

Solution
A system to aerate and better circulate water from the lake’s bottom, and a bioaugmentation product to destroy algae food sources.

Problem
The problems started in early 1997, about a year after the course was built. George Elliott, director of golf course operations for Addison Reserve, noticed algae growing throughout the lake.

“It’s a common problem down here,” Elliott says, attributing the problem to southern Florida’s constant heat and humidity, as well as nutrient runoff into the lake’s shallow water, which made for a perfect breeding ground for algae.

Eventually, nutrients overloaded the lake to the point where excessive algae and bottom sediment affected the course’s systems. The algae and decomposing nutrients clogged the irrigation pump station intake valve and irrigation sprinkler heads, causing them to perform erratically at best.

Elliott says the nutrient masses “were the size of,
and looked like, hockey pucks.” The algae and organic nutrient mass formed layers on the pump station pipes and filters. If that weren't enough, the lake no longer looked attractive.

Solution

Elliott's goal was to reduce the lake's nutrient load to alleviate the associated problems — clogged irrigation heads, pump station filter and piping, unwanted algae blooms, increasing bottom sediment layer and unpleasant odors — while maintaining a natural lake setting. After speaking with crew members, he selected two products from Otterbine Barebo, an Emmaus, Pa.-based company that develops and markets natural methods of treating water quality problems.

Elliott used the company's Air Flo diffused air aeration system and Otterclear Biological Water Treatment together to correct the problems. The Air Flo aerates and circulates water, and Otterclear removes the primary food sources of algae, including nitrogen and phosphorus, causing algae to die. It also digests dead organic matter and eliminates odor caused by ammonia and hydrogen sulfide.

Outcome

With the Air Flo system, the lake water is aerated and circulated with minimal natural surrounding disturbance. The slow-moving "boil-type" current created by the upwelling water circulates the water and transfers oxygen from the atmosphere to the lake bottom. This stimulates the natural digestion process, which consumes organic nutrients in a quick, efficient manner.

The Otterclear bioaugmentation product complements the aeration system. The club applied the blend of bacteria and microbes at recommended dosages and it performed as expected, Elliott says. He began to see results after about three months.

The irrigation lake functioned normally and appeared healthy after about nine months, Elliott says. The water quality and clarity improved, and the lake surface remained algae-free. The natural solution reduced clogging in pump and irrigation heads, as well as sludge and organic sediment at the lake's bottom.

Leaders

Rohm and Haas Co. named Gray C. Wirth as strategic market manager for turf and ornamental products. Wirth is responsible for pricing, promotion and positioning strategies for all turf and ornamental products.

James Connolly formed Spokane, Wash.-based James Connolly Consulting, which will provide agronomic assistance and services for both existing and new golf course projects.

The Central Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association named Ricky Craig of Center Hill, Fla., with its $1,500 Danny Burgess Memorial Scholarship. Craig will use the money to attend Lake City Community College.

Bob Alonzi is the new superintendent at Fenway GC in Scarsdale, N.Y. Alonzi comes to Fenway from Fairview CC in Greenwich, Conn.

Tyler Enterprises named Robert L. Murphy to its Indiana sales team. He will be responsible for sales of Tyler’s custom-blended fertilizer products and custom fertilizer application system in the golf course market.

Flowtronex PSI promoted Mark Bartley to lead its Carolina Regional sales effort.
Lease program
Golf courses can finance the cost of Flowtronex PSI’s pumping systems, including the cost of freight and installation, with a leasing program recently introduced by the company. Flowtronex PSI’s preferred lease rate schedules provide flexible monthly payments for pumping systems, according to the company.

For more information, contact Flowtronex PSI at 214-357-1320 or CIRCLE NO. 202

Course markers
KBJ Enterprises offers ProMark golf course yardage markers to help speed play without adding to the maintenance worries of superintendents. The yardage markers, which come in regulation colors, are easy for golfers to spot without being obtrusive. They are made of plastic from Bayer Corp’s Plastics Division.

The markers are suitable for tees, fairways, cart paths and driving ranges. They are available in blue, red and white and are made of Bayer’s Lustran ABS 752 resin with a cap of Centrex 833 weatherable polymer.

Most of the markers are used as yardage markers to show distance to the green. But they are also used to show yardage to landing areas or to and over hazards, to indicate quick-coupler locations and to show yardage to targets on driving ranges.

For more information, contact ProMark at 800-552-3485, www.yardagemarkers.com or CIRCLE NO. 203

Turf blankets
Typar Turf Blankets retain warmth and moisture throughout the winter so turf can survive cold spells. Air and soil under the blankets are 3 degrees to 7 degrees higher than surrounding uncovered areas, providing warmth for turf, reducing the incidence of winterkill.

When spring arrives, the extra warmth and moisture mean that turf responds earlier than it would if it were uncovered, according to the company.

The lightweight blankets are made of 100 percent spun-bonded polypropylene, and they feature continuous filaments that will not ravel or fray.

For more information, contact Typar Turf Blankets at 800-456-3392 or CIRCLE NO. 205

Walk-behind mowers
Husqvarna Forest and Garden Co. introduces six new walk-behind mowers, featuring two hydro and four gear units.

Powered by commercial grade Kawasaki engines, the mowers offer strong cutting performance on tough terrain, according to the company.

The four gear models feature five-speed transmission with a nine-spline coupler shaft for ground speeds from 2 mph to 6 mph. The two hydro models offer dual hydro gear pumps and Ross wheel-drive motors.

For more information, contact Husqvarna at 704-597-5000, www.husqvarna.com or CIRCLE NO. 201

Generators
John Deere K-Series generators offer extended life, longer run times, easy starting and strong voltage regulation, according to the company. The generators deliver from 2,500 watts to 5,000 watts. They feature Kawasaki OHV engines with automatic compression release for easy starting and automatic electric voltage regulation of 6 percent that protects hand tools and electronic devices by keeping voltage constant.

For more information, contact 800-537-8233, www.deere.com or CIRCLE NO. 204

Golf lift
Derek Weaver Co.’s Golf-Lift division offers the GL-9 Golf Lift, featuring the patented lift apparatus with tire adapter, known as the Tire Wedge turf arm system. Maximum productivity is achieved by taking up the least amount of floor space and removing all obstacles found on other lifts, the company says.

Using the system requires no changing of adapters when changing vehicles, no beams protruding around the vehicle, no runways underneath the vehicle and no overhead beam obstacles, according to the company.

For more information, contact Golf-Lift at 800-788-9789 or CIRCLE NO. 206
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Out of Bounds

digital cameras

I magine never having to purchase film again — no overpriced X-brand from a convenience mart, no long drive to take the film in, nor a seemingly longer drive to get it back. And the best part? No clerk telling you, "There musta been a mix up at the lab."

It doesn't take a rocket scientist — or techno geek — to understand that digital cameras are redefining the way we share and preserve memories. As the prices tumble and the technology of digital cameras improves, now is a great time to consider making the jump to a faster and easier way to take photos.

There ARE things you need to know before you get started, primarily having to do with the computer and printer you either have — or don't have.

Once you know what you need, choose the price range. Like many electronics items, there are about three tiers of digital cameras — $350 to $400, $400 to $600 and $700 and up. The differences in the ranges are real, with lower-end models offering less clear pictures (because of lower pixel capabilities), less strong zooms and less storage capability. When browsing, keep these features in mind:

• Resolution — This determines how crisp your pictures will look. If you're just e-mailing vacation pictures to a relative, resolution isn't as important, but if you want pictures for your club's newsletter, higher resolution will mean better printing.

• Optical zoom vs. Digital zoom — Basically, digital zoom is a computerized zoom, and optical zoom works more like a traditional camera. The higher the optical zoom, the better zoom pictures are going to be. If a camera touts a digital zoom, remember that the zoom pictures will tend to look more choppy and pixilated.

• Batteries — Rechargeable is the only smart way to go. Make sure before you buy that you can use either nickel-cadmium rechargeables or Nickel Metal Hydride rechargeables. They will cost more initially, but will save you money over the long haul.

• Interface and software — Make sure the interface on the camera is easy to use. If you don't, it will mean headaches later. All cameras come with software to view the pictures on screen and sometimes allow for picture manipulation (like taking that demon red out of your eyes).

• Storage — This is another part of the digital camera equation with many questions. These cards, or sometimes floppy discs, are where the digital camera pictures are stored. CompactFlash can offer more memory than SmartMedia cards, but in either case, transfer to computers is normally simple, as is transfer to floppy discs.

While final decisions should be personal, one good way to go is Minolta's Dimage EX Zoom 1500 ($699). The camera has high picture quality zoom and wide-angle lenses and can shoot 7.5 frames a second. The camera is a great introduction to the ease and implicit of digital cameras, and more experienced photographers will enjoy the ability to set manual exposure and focus.

For printers, the Epson Stylus Photo 750 ($250) delivers excellent printouts, is cross platform and prints a 4-inch by 6-inch print in about a minute.

Digital cameras may not be for everyone, but if you're looking for something easy to use and without the hassles of real film and processing, it's tough to beat one of these powerful tools that operates like it were a toy.

Happy snapping.

 Freelance writer Mark Luce always takes the scenic route while traveling in his hometown, Lawrence, Kan.
Introducing new

TurfVigor

with high impact beneficial microbes and key organic nutrients.

**6 NEW MICROBES** New TurfVigor is a complete nutrient and microbe complex featuring six new microbes specially selected and screened to encourage turf health. During times of stress, TurfVigor responsively triggers the synthesis of essential growth factors and regulatory elements to maintain a healthier stand. Its performance has been validated through research conducted at leading turf grass universities.

**ONE STEP APPLICATION** Because TurfVigor contains both beneficial microbes and organic nutrients, it can be mixed and applied in one easy step. In fact, TurfVigor is tank-mix compatible with a variety of fungicides and growth regulators. Its highly stable nature assures a long shelf life.

**IT PAYS TO BE SELECTIVE** Like all GREEN-RELEAF products, TurfVigor is environmentally friendly with microbial strains selected strictly on their ability to provide targeted turf benefits and manufactured under strict ISO 9002 quality control.

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