5 Great Years ... And The Best Is Yet To Come

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Read It. Live It. Love It.
You thought you could only customize the cars you drive to get to work. But now you can dress up the vehicles you drive on the golf course. Utility vehicle manufacturers offer superintendents the chance to spiffy up their riding machines with extras. OK, we’re not talking chrome wheels or fuel injection. We are talking cargo boxes, hose reels, sprayers and other useful additions to help superintendents perform their jobs more easily.

Augusta, Ga.-based Club Car began its custom solutions business in the mid-1990s, but not in the golf industry. Club Car’s customization business began with ... would you believe ... cartoon characters. In 1994, Club Car was requested by a major U.S. theme park to drum up something so its popular cartoon characters could fit their large, cumbersome feet on the vehicles’ floorboards. Club Car met the park’s needs with a few revamped vehicles.

“We made a conscious business decision to put together a small team to meet [the theme park’s] needs,” says Randal Crook, Club Car’s manager of custom solutions.

But that small team kept busy and customized about 100 vehicles for the park in a year. That’s when Club Car’s decision makers got to thinking about creating a division dedicated to custom projects.

“It has taken off leaps and bounds, and grown far bigger and broader than we had ex-
Let's cut through all the hype about biostimulants. Fact is, many products marketed as "biostimulants" are little more than expensive, liquid fertilizers, and we've got analyses to prove it. They may make your turf look healthier for a short time, but they aren't going to improve its condition in the long run.

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Guoping Yang, Ph.D.
Research & Development

always thinking ahead.
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pected it to,” Crook says. “I guess you could say meeting a customer’s needs turned into a business opportunity.”

Club Car is also extending its customizing services to the golf course maintenance industry, Crook says. The company realizes superintendents desire multipurpose vehicles.

“We want them to know that we’re capable of doing most anything they need us to do,” Crook says. “We have the engineering resources on hand and can turn around these things quickly.”


“Most of it is done for us at the local level by our dealers and distributors,” he adds. “It’s difficult for us to do a lot of customization the way our manufacturing is structured.”

E-Z-GO does offer several options and accessories to make it easy to customize utility vehicles, however. Skenes says a vehicle has recessed threaded inserts in the walls of the cargo bed. “So if you want to mount racks or carriers or tiedowns, the inserts are already there,” he adds.

Neil Borenstein, senior marketing manager for utility vehicles, sprayers and debris products at The Toro Co., says he gets customizing requests frequently from superintendents. But most of the requests are handled at the distributor level.

“Certainly, if they want one of our accessories installed and it’s not a standard accessory, and they’re ordering a number of units, we will try to install them on our line when the units are going through production,” Borenstein says. “It’s the least-expensive method of doing it, and the best way to guarantee quality.”

Aaron Wetzel, group product marketing manager for John Deere & Co., says customizing requests from superintendents have been on the rise the past five years.

“Kept it quiet

While their requests for customized projects are on the rise, many superintendents may not realize that utility vehicle manufacturers offer the service outright. But some of the companies, such as Club Car, haven’t marketed the service much in the golf course maintenance industry.

But Club Car is stepping it up. At the GCSAA show in February, the company displayed a customized utility vehicle for all superintendents to see.

Here’s how the process works at Club Car. A request is called in and analyzed by professionals who decide if it’s feasible. Safety is a huge issue in regard to the request. If it’s anything that jeopardizes the safety of the vehicle, it will not be accepted. If it is accepted, a de-

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made to order

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sign of the request will be sketched up within
a week or less and forwarded to the customer.
The project could be completed in a week or
it might take two months. “We try to work
within a four-week window,” Crook says.
The cost of the customizing project de-
pends on its nature and complexity. Of
course, the cost is passed on to the customer,
but there’s no additional markup on the price,
Crook says.

Club Car has had to say “no” to requests
before. One superintendent asked Club Car
to raise the height of a vehicle’s body and speed
it up so it could run 25 miles per hour.
“He wanted to be able to go anywhere on
the course, and he wanted to be able to get to
and from places quickly,” Crook says. “But
those are two things we felt he couldn’t have.”

Going mainstream
It makes perfect business sense that utility ve-
hicle manufacturers are interested in the pos-
sibility that a superintendent’s customizing
idea could lead to mainstream production. It’s
sensible because it’s a low-cost venture from a
research-and-development standpoint.
“We don’t have to go through a labor-in-
tensive process to find out if something is a good
idea,” Crook says. “It’s a launch pad for new-
product development at a very low risk.”

For instance, Crook says superintendents
will soon see increased functionality on the
platform of its Carryall Turf 6 utility vehicle.
The platform will feature drop-down sides so
the vehicle’s cargo box can be converted into
a flat bed. This custom solution originated
with a Club Car customer.

Bammann says Yamaha would consider a
superintendent’s customizing idea if there was
an audience for it. “That’s what we’re all
about,” he adds.

Along the theme, but not exactly cus-
tomizing, Bammann says Yamaha has devel-
oped a new line of utility vehicles “with the
superintendent in mind.” It’s called the UMAX

“We’ve found that a lot of
superintendents really want
their products customized
to their needs.”

AARON WETZEL, JOHN DEERE

line, and its vehicles contain cargo boxes, head-
lights and larger tires, among other things.

Skenes says E-Z-GO also introduced a line
of utility vehicles — the Multipurpose Truck
line — that are targeted specifically to super-
intendents. The vehicles feature cargo beds
with heavy-duty bedliners.

The customer
In the end, it’s all about customer service — and
in this case, satisfying superintendents’ needs.

Borenstein says Toro representatives are
constantly seeking feedback from customers
by talking to them and observing their oper-
ations. They also listen to superintendents’ un-
solicited opinions about particular products.

Borenstein says Toro’s new Heavy-Duty Work-
man has many features on it that customers
requested, such as a place to plug in their cell
phones, a larger glove box area and a new lo-
cation for the parking brake.

Wetzel says the group’s associates talk to
customers on a regular basis about utility-ve-
hicle attachments.

“We look at how they’re using utility ve-
hicles, and we talk to them about what they
would like to see on them,” he says. “We ask
them what they need to make the vehicles
more versatile.”

Adds Skenes, “We’re constantly listening
to the voices of our customers about the things
we can do to make the vehicles more useful
to them in their day-to-day operations.”

Yamaha has developed a new
line of utility vehicles “with
the superintendent in mind.”
The line is called UMAX.
It's noon and the course superintendent's workday is half over.

Only 8 hours to go.

Our accessories are designed to require little attention so you can devote your time to what really matters.

www.paraide.com
Tank mix approved
A tank mix of Proxy Plant Growth Regulator and Primo MAXX plant growth regulator recently received registration from the EPA.
Registered for many years for use on cool-season golf course turf, Bayer Environmental Science's Proxy slows turf growth, reducing frequency of mowing and volume of clippings. In addition, Proxy suppresses Poa annua and white clover seedhead development.

Primo MAXX, a plant growth regulator from Syngenta Professional Products, also slows growth of cool-season golf course turf, such as bentgrass, perennial ryegrass and Kentucky bluegrass.
For more information, contact www.sygentaprofessionalproducts.com.

Liquid fungicide
Eagle fungicide is now available in a liquid formulation for superintendents to use to treat dollar spot, anthracnose, summer patch and brown patch. Dow AgroSciences said the fungicide now comes in 2.5-gallon jugs and pint containers as well.
"We've enhanced the packaging and pricing of Eagle with our customers in mind," says Chris Wooley, marketing manager at Dow AgroSciences LLC, makers of Eagle. "Superintendents will find the newly registered formulation and new container sizes to be what they will prefer — a liquid that's available in the amounts they need."
For more information, contact www.dowagro.com.

Energy bar
The Colorado Baking Co. offers the all-natural energy bar, Peakbar. The company says the Peakbar is low in fat, contains 24 essential vitamins and minerals and is fructose-based. Peakbar is available in five different flavors: Fruit Mania, Oatmeal Raisin, Chocolate Chip, Super-Lean Chocolate Malt and Bodacious Peanut Chocolate Chunk.
For more information, contact 719-578-5000 or www.coloradobaking.com.

De-scaler
Clearwater Enviro Technologies offers the ScaleBlaster SB-300, an electronic descaler that eliminates scale formation in water lines, misters, sprinkler system nozzles and other equipment.
The integrated circuitry system produces a complex modulating frequency waveform to an induction coil that is wrapped around the outside of an incoming water line. This hits the resonant frequency of the calcium carbonated molecules causing them to lose their adhesive properties.
For more information, contact 727-562-5186 or www.scaleblaster.com.

Bio pesticide
TerraCyte Broad Spectrum Algaecide/Fungicide from BioSafe Systems is an environmentally friendly granular that can be added directly on to growing plants and turf for the prevention and control of moss, algae, slime, molds, liverwort and their spores. TerraCyte's peroxygen chemistry allows for the oxidation and prevention of disease organisms and offers benefits in comparison to metal-based algaecides and fungicides.
For more information, contact 860-657-2211.

Edger
The Echo PE-260 Perfect Edge Power Edger provides a powerful, lightweight, operator-friendly design. It features Echo's commercial-grade Power Boost Tornado engine with a durable hardened cylinder, fully caged needle bearings and forged connecting rod. Designed for demanding and frequent commercial use, the PE-260 Power Edger is equipped with a heavy-duty wheel height adjustment.
For more information, contact www.echo-usa.com.
We've got a reason to smile, again.

We are proud to announce that Golfdom magazine was named a winner in the 2003 Folio: Editorial Excellence Awards.

The Folio: Award, one of the highest national honors in publishing, is awarded to magazines that are judged outstanding in achievement of their editorial missions. Golfdom was named the top national business-to-business magazine in our category for the second time in three years!

Please join us in congratulating our entire editorial and design team.

Golfdom
Bobcat Co. introduces the MT52 mini track loader for projects too big for shovels and wheel barrows, but are in areas too small for a full-size skid-steer loader. The Bobcat MT52 is the only mini-track loader on the market with a ride-on platform option that can be installed or removed within a couple of minutes, the company says. This feature offers both ride-on and walk-behind capabilities.

The MT52 mini loader is outfitted with a new user-friendly control system. The direction and speed are now controlled by one multifunction handle, instead of two independent hand levers. Additionally, the loader's lift and tilt functions are controlled by one lever.

This mini track loader has a 520-pound rated operating capacity. Its compact size (3 feet wide, 6 feet long) enables it to go where many skid-steer loaders cannot. The MT52 also features a turf-friendly lug track that distributes the rain over a larger area, minimizing damage to turf. The rubber-track undercarriage provides improved traction and better flotation, even in soft, wet or muddy conditions with minimal ground disturbance.

For more information, contact 866-623-7898.

New fertilizer company

For more information, contact 800-323-6280 or www.precisionlab.com.

Soil penetrant
JADA Corp. introduces FloThru 2403 Soil Penetrant. It helps provide healthier turf and more consistent playing conditions, and helps reduce water loss from runoff and evaporation. It also helps speed up greens and dries out courses faster after heavier rainfall.

For more information, contact 973-762-8002.