



Triplex mowing the putting greens at Pinehurst No. 8 has saved time without compromising putting green turf quality.

## IMPLEMENTING A NEW TRIPLEX MOWER PROGRAM FOR PUTTING GREENS

Pinehurst Resort, Course No. 8 | Pinehurst, N.C. 28370

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### ISSUE

Converting the putting greens on Pinehurst No. 8 from bentgrass to ultradwarf bermudagrass required a new surface management program to account for the aggressive growth of ultradwarf bermudagrass during summer. Putting greens would be double mowed regularly and the existing walk-behind mowers would need to be equipped with grooming attachments. Concerns were expressed about possibly needing more walk-behind mowers and operators to carry out the new program.

## ACTION

Instead of purchasing or leasing a fleet of 12 to 14 walk-behind mowers with grooming attachments and hiring more operators to cope with the demands of double-tee starts and double mowing, it was decided to lease three triplex mowers. The triplexes would enable the staff at Pinehurst No. 8 to accomplish the same amount of mowing with much less staff time than walk-behind mowers would require.

The timing was perfect for making the transition from walk-behind mowers to triplexes because the Pinehurst Resort was able to negotiate a new lease agreement that allowed them to have the triplex mowers in place before the putting green conversion began. As the bentgrass was taken out, so were the old walk-behind mowers.

## RESULTS

The two biggest impacts that came with the change to triplexes were:

- The financial savings from leasing three triplexes instead of 14 walk-behind mowers was quite significant – approximately \$70,000 over the term of the lease. For courses that choose to purchase triplexes, they retain value much better than walk-behind units due to the high demand for used triplex mowers.
- Another significant impact has been the time savings. Double mowing the putting greens with walk-behind units consumed 19 to 22 labor hours each day using six or seven operators. Three triplexes only require eight or nine labor hours to double mow the same number of putting greens. The time saved can be reallocated to other maintenance tasks.

Triplex mowing putting greens on Pinehurst No.8 delivers the same quality of cut that was achieved with walk-behind mowers. Unless a golfer sees the putting greens being mown with a triplex, they would never know what type of equipment was used.

Making the transition from walk-behind mowers to triplexes did require some adjustments. One of the biggest challenges initially was avoiding turf damage in the collars and surrounds from the triplexes turning. Triplexes are less maneuverable than walk-behind mowers, so it can be challenging to spread the wear and avoid damage in the collars and surrounds.

The solution was to discontinue turning the triplexes on the collars and surrounds and mow the entire putting green in the same direction. Instead of turning, once a pass has been made the operator raises the cutting units and reverses back across the putting green to line up for the next pass. The mowing direction is adjusted daily to avoid causing wear on the putting green. Playing conditions in the collars and surrounds have never been better and after more than a year of implementing this mowing technique there have been no detrimental effects on the putting greens.