Ride or walk mow greens? The answer is usually contained in one simple question: Can you afford to walk mow?

Walk mowing is better for greens in many respects. The quality of cut is superior to that of a triplex mower. Walk mowers don’t have hydraulics. Compaction is decreased since walk mowers weigh much less than triplex mowers. The smaller size of the walking unit allows it to follow the contours of the greens surface closer. Also, walk mowers cost substantially less per unit.

But, do you have the necessary labor and resources to use walk mowers on your course?

Walk mowers typically cut about 15,000 feet per hour compared to 30,000 feet per hour by triplex mowers. These times represent all factors of loading, mowing and transporting. It will take twice as long to walk mow as ride mow with the same number of operators. To get the same amount done in the same amount of time, you will need twice the number of operators.

Ask yourself, also, if you will have the course ready for play on time if you use a walk mower. Is it possible for all of your first-round tasks to be completed ahead of play? A major consideration here is the rate at which golfers tee off, including occasions when golfers tee off at multiple sites simultaneously or employ shot-gun starts.

But, basically, walk mowing comes down to resources.

Walk mowing a typical golf course with 120,000 square feet of greens at a pay rate of $7 per hour will increase mowing green costs about $10,500 a year. Another problem is finding extra employees willing to work only three hours a day in the morning. Therefore, you need to increase the number of positions on staff. Using this concept at an 18-hole facility with a start on both tees with the $7 pay rate, the actual increase in labor costs will approach $29,000 a year.

Consider all the factors when choosing the type of mower for your course. Do your homework. You are the best judge of which method of mowing will work best on your course. LM

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Walk mowing offers advantages if you can afford it