

Making machinery last

Anyone underestimating the importance of having sound, reliable machinery need only ask themselves how they would manage if a vital piece of equipment failed or performed below expectations on the day of a major club tournament. No matter how quickly your workshop or local dealer is able to sort out the problem, any delay is likely to affect the whole maintenance programme on the course, with difficult questions to be answered at the end of the day.

In an ideal world, every machine would start first time, operate at the required setting and maintain peak performance throughout its working life. In the real world, any machine can only deliver the goods if it is properly used, regularly maintained and treated with care and respect.

Apart from the tangible benefits that will result from having equipment perform as near as possible to its initial design specification, one can also look forward to extracting a longer



working life and a higher value for the investment when the time eventually comes for change.

The first step for anyone wanting their machinery to remain in peak condition for as long as possible is to ensure that those responsible for using and looking after the machine receive proper training and instruction. This should normally be carried out by the supplying dealer and can take place at the course or as part of an organised session at the dealer's premises. In some cases, the manufacturer will also be involved.

A thorough understanding of the machine is essential if one is to extract maximum benefit from it. User and bystander safety is also vital, so do not allow anyone involved with the equipment's operation or care to skip a training session. And if you feel unhappy or are unsure about any part of the instruction, ask the person responsible to go over the points again.

The dealer should also be willing to provide training at a later date for new members of staff or to refamiliarise operators with a machine which is used infrequently. This latter point is also particularly important when specialist equipment is hired-in for short periods.

Any concerns over the level or standard of instruction received should be reported initially to the supplier's sales representative. If that course of action is not possible, then contact the dealer's sales manager or managing director. As a last resort, speak directly to the manufacturer or distributor of the

machine. It is in their interest to ensure that the product is performing to its maximum potential and they will want to hear about any shortfall in user training or instruction.

Regular, planned servicing and maintenance in accordance with the manufacturer's schedule is something which should happen as a matter of course. Full information will normally be provided within the machine's instruction book and this can be supplemented with guidance from the dealer. Ensure that the people responsible for using and looking after the machine have access to the appropriate manuals. They are of little use locked away in a cupboard or drawer.

Many end-users are surprised at the amount by which machinery maintenance standards can be raised simply by ensuring that storage and servicing areas are kept tidy and the machine is regularly washed down. Not only will a clean machine be easier to look after but it will maintain its value



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Clean machinery lasts longer and is easier and more pleasant to service and adjust



Check settings and make adjustments before returning the machine to the shed

better and for longer.

Secure storage is something which most clubs take very seriously. Anyone entrusted with a key must ensure that the area is secured after a machine or piece of equipment has been collected or returned.

Apart from the obvious safety and security benefits, allowing free access to tools and machines does not promote a high level of care and attention. Having to check items in and out will help instil greater pride in the equipment and allow operational or service problems to be noted and acted upon promptly.

In addition to full service histo-

ries of each machine, many clubs keep a log of any problems and the actions taken. It can also be helpful to note down points such as cutting height settings so that an unfamiliar operator can use the machine without wasting time making unnecessary checks or altering settings.

Always try to carry out adjustments and maintenance when returning a machine after use to the storage building. This is far preferable to waiting until the following day when important items can be overlooked or forgotten.

Experienced operators do it without a second thought, but the novice greenkeeper will almost

certainly need guidance in using machinery within its design capabilities. Two common reminders for the inexperienced are that mowers rarely benefit from being driven at high speed across bumpy terrain and tractors have a higher centre of gravity than turf vehicles, so be extra careful on sloping ground.

In the longer term, all clubs should seriously consider setting up a planned replacement schedule for the principal machines on the course. Knowing when a machine is going to be replaced will allow budgets to be set and ensure that one is always in a position to take advantage of

technological progress.

If you employ a dedicated mechanic at the club or have someone with a serious interest in machinery maintenance, it can be worthwhile taking advantage of the service courses offered by many manufacturers on individual machines. Although you may need to provide a separate working area and special tools, the pay back can be considerable, especially if it ensures that your course machinery is always maintained to the optimum standard, leading to higher levels of performance and operation and able to find a ready buyer when the time come for change.

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