

Greenkeeper

INTERNATIONAL

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The path of leased resistance

A Guide to profitable options for acquiring new golf course equipment

Ask any young blood and he will tell you about those first tingling charges of adrenalin – they come as standard equipment with any new sports car – and how rapidly they evaporate. The harsh reality is that adrenalin plummets just as soon as the realisation hits; that fistfuls of hard-earned cash have flown from the pocket quicker than you can shake a stick. Called depreciation, it's very, very painful, especially where boy-racers and their motor cars are concerned.

Thankfully, depreciation of golf course machinery is quite unlike that prevalent in the motor trade. One obvious reason is that turf care machinery earns its keep, rather than being a mere status symbol, so there's no free-falling without a parachute. Another reason, taking a tractor as a prime example, we have a vehicle that has a long, useful life, with relatively low maintenance costs, thus it's most unlikely to dive in value as the result of fashion-freak body styling.

Nothing, it seems, causes the collective mind of a golf club committee to focus quite like competition. Not competition of the games variety, but that which beckons from just over the hill. A rash of new proprietor-owned golf clubs, built in the past decade or so, has caused many an old-guard committee man to ponder the vexatious question of how to keep his club competitive.

Playing quality and value for money are the yardsticks by which a nomad player measures his rounds – new courses or old – and each time the golfer opens his wallet both will be held for comparison.

No longer immune from today's fast-moving business arena, those in golf club management increasingly find it necessary to investigate alternative ways of financing, rather than paying cash, for their equipment. The good news is that

they are finding the right answers.

There are many good reasons for financing, the most obvious being that the true value of working equipment comes from its use, not its ownership. Add to this the increase in immediate cash-flow; by freeing capital for more profitable uses, the freedom from 'hidden costs' and the bonus of keeping the golf course in peak condition – it's hardly surprising that more and more 'savvy' committees are opting for the practical option of leasing.

One popular form of lease financing is a package unique in the turf care market and tailored specifically for the golf course industry. Devised by Ransomes in association with Farming & Agri-cultural Finance Ltd (FAF), the flexible finance option is known simply as Select 123.

Because this type of financing allows a wider flexibility of options – to become the owner, to trade in the equipment at an agreed and guaranteed buyback price, or simply to walk away from the agreement – it allows the golf club to make the final decision.

There are three flexible plans available, so whether your club is considering a new compact tractor, a professional greens mower, or one of a range of aeration products, Select 123 offers the purchasing solution. The three options are:

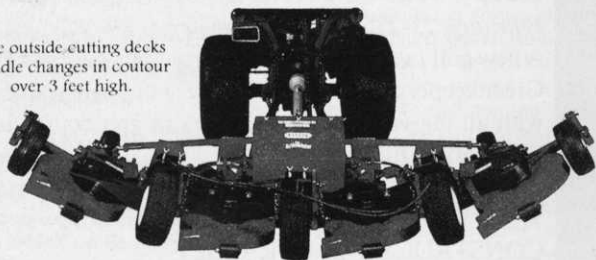
- Your club can make a final 'balloon' payment to become the owner of the machine.
- Take full advantage of the guaranteed residual value by either:
 - Trading in as part exchange for a new machine.
 - Handing the equipment back and walking away from the agreement.
- Extend the final 'balloon' payment over an agreed further term.

To illustrate, here are some typical examples:

The Articulator LasTec

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	Eg 1	Eg 2	Eg 3
Description	GA30 Aerator	Fairway 305	3-Wheel Cushman
RRP	£13,410	£29,065	£11,479
Cost (assumes 10% discount/part exchange)	£12,069	£26,159	£10,331
Term	4yrs	4yrs	4yrs
Profile to customer	1+3	1+3	1+3
Payments per annum	£3,067	£6,322	£2,649
Balloon payment/ Guaranteed buy back	£1,743	£5,523	£3,089

Still not convinced? Consider these further benefits:

Farewell to obsolescence

Access to state-of-the-art equipment, especially grass-cutting machinery, provides a cushion against technological obsolescence. Though certainly not in the same league as computers, which seemingly become obsolete on the shelves, most golf machinery manufacturers quite rightly seek to improve and upgrade their models, year after year. It makes sense, therefore, to plan against any uncertainties by transferring the risk to the lessor.

Matching revenue to payment

By matching payments with the income a club generates over a complete year, working capital will be released, rather than being tied up.

Say farewell to botching

Nothing is more irritating than 'making do' with machinery that is ill-equipped for a job. At best it's inconvenient, at worst it can be downright dangerous. Spreading the load by financing equipment will give you the proper tools to do the job.

Machinery that is in peak condition

Ransomes and FAF want you to keep your equipment in tip-top order. With their finance option, they will ensure the machinery is serviced by an approved dealer on a regular basis.

How you can sway the decision - in your favour!

No one knows better than you what new machinery is needed, or which ageing piece needs replacing, though to smooth the go-ahead for capital improvements it will pay you to doff your salesman's hat. While it's bad to whinge about not having the right equipment, (it will, be assured, get you nowhere), it helps enormously if you are seen as the guy who makes the most of

what he has; one who does a good job and solves problems.

Unless your Green Chairman is an absolute no-hoper, you will gain Brownie points by aiming his attention to each little area of improvement taking place on the course - moreover those that need extra application - while, of course, explaining the reason and thinking behind what you would like to undertake, if only...

Choosing the right moment for discussion is important, which might well come during those times when your Green Chairman is making his inspection. Even better, if you can play a few holes with him this will provide you with a great opportunity to draw comparisons, perhaps by calling upon experiences shared with a colleague at 'the course down the road.'

Every chairman worth his salt wants to see a well-conditioned golf course. Simply by carrying out a little homework beforehand you can present him with a well-considered case. Of course, it is your job to keep him informed so that he may report to his committee, so make lists, but don't try to baffle him with science.

Prepare a plausible presentation and ensure that you include specifications so that you may talk in precise terms about the improvements that proposed new machinery will offer. You should include all the benefits that will come from upgrading, for example the increase in the speed of greens or fairways cutting, improved turf conditioning and a reduction in running costs. This latter item, increasingly, is a vitally important factor. Let him know how much you want to retain a competitive edge. He'll thank you for it.

Finally, enlist the help of your dealer and get him on your side. Developing a sound relationship will never hurt your cause.



A Cut above

**Tim Kirk of T. Kirk Forestry -
ATB Landbase Registered Instructor**

Portable hand-held chainsaws are widely accepted as being potentially dangerous machines which need to be handled with utmost care.

The Health and Safety Executive has produced Guidance Note GS48 which is aimed at people who either use chainsaws at work or who employ others to do the work.

The Guidance Note is concerned with the minimum levels of training and competence required by chain-saw users. It states that operators should be adequately trained and that by obtaining a relevant certificate of competence or national competence award (NVQ/SVQ) recognised by industry will show that adequate training has been received.

This applies to employers, employees and the self-employed.

There are several regulations within the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992 which place legal duties on employers and the self-employed in relation to the use of chainsaws at work.

Chainsaw operators should have a reliable and mature attitude to their work. They should have a reasonable degree of both physical and mental fitness. People with disabilities need not necessarily be excluded from work with chainsaws, however, medical advice should be obtained about their suitability.

There are many hazards when using a chainsaw, the most obvious are contact with the moving chain, being struck by falling timber and incorrect manual handling techniques.

Most accidents occur due to lack of knowledge and failure to provide

adequate personal protective clothing (PPE).

Training is very important in the control of accidents - it should be of the highest quality and normally carried out by specialist instructors or organised training courses.

Although most courses contain



small amounts of theoretical classroom work the majority of the course is devoted to practical supervised instruction.

In the next issue we will look at the requirements of PPE and the different routes to certification in the safe operation of chainsaws.

For further information on training courses and consultancy contact Agenda Training Ltd - Jean John Tel: 01282 831973 or Tim Kirk - T. Kirk Forestry Tel: 01484 685114.