

# Cutting It

Roland Taylor gets out and about and discovers what some greenkeepers feel about the cylinder mowers they use.

The principle of the cylinder mower has changed very little since Budding patented the system back in the 1830s.

The main differences since those early models are the methods of propulsion, number of blades in the cylinder, the means of powering them and materials used in their construction.

Bearing in mind that the actual cutting is virtually the same on every mower. What makes one particular model a Course Manager or greenkeepers choice? To find out some of the answer to this question a number of courses have been visited to discover which machines they were using and why they chose them.

Gavin Playford of Royal Norfolk GG tackles his fairways, in the rain, with the John Deere 3235C



Built virtually on the beach, the Royal Norfolk Golf Club can be pretty hostile and cold with freezing northeast winds coming straight off the northern ice cap. When visiting this course it is advisable to check the tides, as there are times of the day when it is cut off from the mainland.

The fairways are on sand, so grass cover is often sparse, especially in drought conditions even though the course has its own bore hole for irrigation. The course is a continual challenge against the elements for Head Greenkeeper, Gavin Playford, and his team.

For mowing their fairways they use the latest John Deere 3235C. Gavin said they are very pleased with the machine's high output and quality of finish.

Because they are running a number of different John Deere machines they have found that the standardisation of height adjustment and cylinder settings make it easy for the operators.

"Spending all day on a mower can be very tiring, so ergonomics regarding the driving position and layout of the controls are important. We have found on this machine that this is a major feature of the design.

"A very comfortable seat can be adjusted to suit each operator and all the controls are within easy reach. What we do need however is a cab; it is not very pleasant out there on the course with a gale howling in from the northeast. I understand they are developing one let's hope it is sooner rather than later," explained Gavin.

Other features they liked about the mower are the simple servicing procedure and ease of access to all moving parts.

The 3235C has a 48.5hp turbo diesel engine and servo controlled hydrostatic pump to all the wheel motors. There are five cutting units and the Royal Norfolk have the eight bladed version, which has a height of cut range from 9.5mm to 76.2mm and a frequency of cut of 2.14 km/h.

## Get the credit you deserve

A control module enables the operator to monitor the machines performance and identify any problems.

There are a number of reasons why Gavin has chosen John Deere, but one of the most important is the outstanding after-sales support they get from their dealer, Ben Burgess, of Norwich.

"We are out in the wilds so if a machine goes down or we require replacement parts, backup is needed immediately, our dealer ensures this happens.

"This type of service is paramount to us if we are to carry out our commitment to provide the club members with the playing surfaces they expect," said Gavin.

Spalding in Lincolnshire is famous for its bulbs, horticultural and agricultural produce. One of the reasons for the soil's fertility is that this area of England was once, long ago, under water.

Rivers flowing into the sea at this point left deep silt deposits that have, over the ages, combined with fine clay to form a highly productive

the wheels and tyres from a G-Plex III have been fitted. The 12" tyres will be of benefit on the steep sides of tees and also enable them to cut very close to bunker edges without damaging the lips.

Spalding has an excellent workshop where they carry out all their maintenance and repairs including regrinds.

"The MagKnives will give us considerable savings in downtime and for this reason we are considering fitting these cylinders to our Fairway 405. The units are interchangeable with the T-Plex and will give us even more flexibility," explained John.

The MagKnife, which was launched at Saltex, is claimed to have a revolutionary method of fitting bottom blades, which in the past have been held in place by a number of screws.

Removing a worn or damaged blade has always been difficult and when a new one has been fitted it has often had to be ground to ensure it is level.

The MagKnife is said to eliminate these problems and where as before



◀ John Masell, Spalding GC with his new Jacobsen T-Plex MagKnife

and moist retentive soil.

John Maskell, Head Greenkeeper of Spalding Golf Club said that when they were building an on-site reservoir, the work was stopped three times because ancient saltpans were discovered and archaeological records needed to be taken before the work could continue.

The fairways on the course considerably benefit from this type of soil base and maintain their greenness longer in drought conditions.

John, who has been involved in greenkeeping for over 28 years, joined Spalding G C 18 months ago. He said that part of their programme was to rejuvenate their tees and provide higher quality playing surfaces.

To help in this project they have recently purchased a specially-adapted new Jacobsen T-Plex MagKnife. The machine has been modified to suit their compact tee boxes.

Eleven bladed reels are used for a fine cut and to achieve better traction

the changeover per unit has taken in the region of one and half hours the new operation is said to be completed in three minutes.

MagKnife uses powerful magnets with a force of 19kgm instead of screws to hold the bottom blade in position on locating dowels. According to Jacobsen a special tool is required to break the magnetic force and once this is done its only a matter of removing the old bottom blade and locating a new one.

Barkway Park Golf Club is a privately owned course, built 11 years ago on agricultural land in North Hertfordshire. The underlying soil is heavy clay, which makes it a difficult course to maintain and adding to this problem there is a wind factor, so drying out often occurs.

Anthony Lake is the Head Greenkeeper and has been at the club for just over eight years. For the last two years he has used a Toro Reelmaster 6500 D for the fairways.



"We like the unit very much especially its robustness and strength. For us this is important because our dry ground conditions can place a lot of stress on the machine. The high level of output is another feature that goes down well here at Barkway, as there is only two of us plus occasional help to look after the 18 holes," he said.

"We have found the Reelmaster very 'user friendly' and comfortable to operate for the long hours it is worked throughout the year. It is easy to maintain and the backup support we receive from our local Toro service dealer, Cam Mower Services, is excellent."

To maintain the standard their players expect, the fairways are mown weekly at alternative angles of cut and are fed and scarified once a year.

Toro's Reelmaster 6500 D has a mowing width of 2.44metres, which is made up of five 56cm cylinder units mounted on a LINKS cutting system

It is not just the grass that will be stressed by blunt or badly set cylinders all the mower's components can be effected. In addition with the high temperatures the machines are working at the situation is compounded by placing extra loading on the engine, bearings and drive systems.

With all the machines featured, keeping the units sharp and correctly set is well catered for and relatively easy to carry out. Some would say easier on certain models than others.

Next month some other clubs will be featured with details of the types of mowing machines they are using for their fairways, tees or greens.

**See Buyers' Guide for companies that specialise in mowing equipment.**

The Toro out on a very wet day at Barkway Park Golf Club



suspension. This consists of four free-floating linkage arms and individual lifting arm dampers to ensure the units hug the ground contours.

Power is provided by a 55hp Peugeot diesel engine. The data log system is available as an optional extra that enables a mechanic to find intermittent problems. There are diagnostic points on the mower for the front and rear-cutting unit drives and lift plus ones for the steering and hydrostatic transmission.

From the clubs visited it is clear that in their particular areas there has been a strong growth of grass over the last three months, although at the time of writing, temperatures are soaring into the high 20s.

Regardless to the amount of grass and the standard of the fairways one of the most important factors for producing a quality finish and smoothness of the mowing operation is the sharpness and set of the cylinders.

**OTHER COMPANIES THAT SPECIALISE IN MOWING EQUIPMENT:**

Claymore Grass Machinery	01789 490177
Dennis	01332 824777
Etesia UK Ltd	01926 403319
Hayter Ltd	01279 723444
John Deere	01949 860491
Lastec UK Ltd	01622 812103
Lloyds of Letchworth Ltd	01462 683031
Massey Ferguson (AGCO)	02476 851286
New Holland UK Ltd	01268 292580
Ransomes Jacobsen Ltd	01473 276223
Wessex M/C	01420 478111
Wiedenmann UK Ltd	0141 8143366