

UTILITY VEHICLES: SIDE BY SIDE VEHICLES FOR USE OVER THE ROUGH STUFF

By James de Havilland

Ransomes Jacobsen, John Deere and Toro are key suppliers of utility vehicles to golf courses, with the companies' respective Cushman/E-Z-GO, Gator and Workman ranges listing among the most popular models currently in use. Here we look at models that are designed to carry two people and a load over rougher terrain.

Golf courses adopted what are generally described as light utility vehicles back in the 1970s, the once ubiquitous tractor and trailer soon making way to buggies that included three, four and even five wheel designs. As these vehicles have evolved, models that can suit a wider range of applications have been developed that enable machines to tackle 'rougher' terrain. Four-wheel drive, greater ground clearance and improved suspension systems now means there is a choice of side-by-side utility vehicles that can include units that will rival an ATV for off-road ability.

Take a look at the E-Z-GO ST 4x4 from Ransomes Jacobsen. Powered by a twin-cylinder Honda 614cc power unit developing a healthy 13.5kW (18hp), this machine boasts a generous 240mm ground clearance, locking front and rear differentials and a rear load platform capacity of 500kg. It has a top speed of 25mph and will tow up to 680kg.

John Deere also offers its Gator HPX 4x4. Offered with a choice of Kawasaki 617cc twin cylinder petrol 20hp or torquey 21hp Yanmar 854cc triple diesel, this small vehicle will carry 454kg and tow 635kg over pretty difficult ground, its 152mm of ground clearance proving its only disability in really rough going.

Toro do not offer a Workman model that is designed to compete in the tough terrain sector, but that is not to say models like the 4300 are



Although it does not boast as much ground clearance as some, the John Deere HPX Gator will negotiate some tricky terrain. Full and part cab options offered on this and other makes and models.



Rough terrain capable utility vehicles come in a wide range of shapes and sizes. Pictured front to back are the Kawasaki 610 (petrol), Yamaha Rhino (petrol), Polaris Ranger (petrol), Arctic Cat Prowler (petrol), Massey-Ferguson MF20D, Kubota RTV 900, John Deere Gator HPX and Kawasaki Mule Trans.

unable to tackle some pretty rough going. Powered by a 20kW (26.5hp) diesel, the all-wheel drive 4300 will take two people and 800kg plus rear load to places on a course that many would consider inaccessible by a vehicle.

Club Car are another company that offers models that push the utility vehicle concept beyond a machine that is at home on roughs and fairways. Take the company's rough terrain models that include the CarryAll 295. Power comes from a choice of 20hp air-cooled Honda petrol or 20hp Kubota diesel engine. The 295 features Intellitrak all-wheel drive. This automatically diverts power to the wheels as required.

In some markets, the CarryAll 295 is offered in a long-wheelbase four-seat version and as the SE with a front attachment system. All of which points to the increased versatility of this type of utility vehicle.

Talking of four-seater models, Kawasaki and its now ubiquitous Mule range have had its four-seat Trans model on sale for a while now. Based upon the established Mule 3010 diesel, the LWB Trans can be used either as personnel transport with a reduced length load platform or, by folding the rear seats, as a high capacity utility.



Road homologation is another feature offered by manufacturers to include Kubota. With its hydrostatic transmission and power steering, the RTV 900 is currently unique.



Club Car CarryAll 295 has generous ground clearance and automatic selection of all-wheel drive. This type of machine offers great off-road ability.



The E-Z-GO ST 4x4 offers greater off-road scope than other models in the company's line-up, and serves to illustrate just how much choice there is in the utility vehicle sector.

The Mule Trans converts between four-seat and long load mode quickly and easily. It is extremely versatile as a result. At the other extreme, the company sells its petrol powered 'baby' Mule in 600 two-wheel and 610 four-wheel drive versions. Powered by a 400cc petrol engine developing 9.9kW (13hp), the Mule 600 / 610 have a 181kg load capacity but are rated as having a generous 500kg towing capacity.

Kubota is unique in offering its RTV 900 with a full hydrostatic transmission. Powered by a 16.1 kW (21.6hp) 898cc diesel triple, the RTV also boasts power steering and, dependent upon specification, a really powerful hydraulic tip for its 500kg capacity load bay.

The ever growing choice of utility vehicles now includes models that are able to tackle rougher ground than more established designs. This is good news. Rugged and built to take tough conditions in their stride, these machines could have long service lives on a typical golf course. Just make sure the load height of the rear platform is taken into consideration. The greater the ground clearance, the higher the lip of the rear platform.



With seat belts for four, but room for possibly six, the Mule Trans is a versatile tool. The rear bench folds to provide a full length load platform.