



Industry Update

ASTON VILLA STAYS SHARP

Jonathan Calderwood, Grounds Manager of Aston Villa Football Club, needed a fast solution to keeping the pitch edges sharp when the new stadium surface was built two years ago.

"After the new pitch was laid the edges became flush with the rubber track surround," said Jonathan, a former IOG Groundsman of the Year, who was at the old Wembley Stadium and Wolverhampton Wanderers before joining Aston Villa five years ago.

"Using traditional edging tools up to the concrete divide would take us an hour. Then we discovered the Atom Professional Edger from DJ Turfcare - and the job now takes just five minutes."

He was so impressed that he has bought two more for the Aston Villa training ground at Bodymoor Heath.

The new training ground has three full size pitches, three goal kicking areas and a warm-up pitch. Alongside this are five full-size pitches in the old training ground, which is to become the Football Academy.

Aston Villa's Paul Mytton, Deputy Head Groundsman, with the Atom Professional Edger at the training ground.



NEW UK DISTRIBUTOR

Rochford Garden Machinery, founded in 1982 - and operating from one of the largest purpose-built showrooms in the country - has agreed to be the UK distributor to the specialist trade for DJ Turfcare's unique range of turf and grounds management products.

Managing Director Peter Rochford, and DJ Turfcare Managing Director, David Jenkins, said the relationship will be an exciting development for marketing the range of "niche market" products.

DJ Turfcare Managing Director, David Jenkins (right)



LELY LEADS THE WAY

With the turf maintenance machinery industry under increasing pressure to implement a nationally recognised operator's qualification, Lely UK is leading the way by introducing an in-company training initiative.

Pre-empting the possible future introduction of a forklift truck-style operator's licence, Lely UK personnel now need a City & Guilds NPTC Level 2 Certificate of Competence in the Safe Use of Mowers in order to operate Toro mowers.

Lely's Toro Training Manager, Ian Sumpter, is a qualified assessor in the certificate and is leading the initiative alongside senior product specialist for the UK, Clive Pinnock. After a full day's training with Clive, operators complete a two-hour assessment with Ian.

"We felt that, as a company, we could lead the way by going over and above the minimum requirements for mower operatives," Ian explains. "At the moment, our workshop staff operate mowers every now and then, loading or demonstrating machines. Though they've had informal training, we want to maximise health and safety with the introduction of this formal training."

Having completed the first phase of training, 37 members of staff are now qualified. Ian hopes to have a total of 60 mower operatives trained by the end of 2008. Those without the certificate will no longer be able to operate Toro mowers.

IRRIGATION SYSTEM SAVES THE DAY

Ireland's Ballyliffin Golf Club said that its new Toro Irrigation Golf Decoder Controller (GDC) system "saved the day" when a prolonged dry spell almost prevented the 2008 Irish Seniors Open from taking place.

Having been installed 15 years ago, the County Donegal club's existing system had reached the end of its useful life - in particular, crumbling pipework left the course inadequately irrigated and led to water wastage. And so General Manager, John Farren, selected Toro's state-of-the-art GDC system as a solution.

The system soon proved its worth when an unseasonable spring drought set in after installation. "We went seven weeks without rain in May," said John, "and without the new irrigation system we wouldn't have been prepared for the Irish Seniors Open in June. It saved the day and enabled us to prepare and manicure the course to the high standards required."

SPREAD THE WORD!

“Time for a change” said Tim Merrell, Managing Director of The Grass Group. “We are now representing a number of mainline companies and I wanted our customers and suppliers to be able to see we are promoting individual brands but through a group they will know and trust.”

“We are also delighted to be working with Tycrop, who decided they needed a change within the UK market and were very impressed with the new structure and how we are growing and able to represent them in the UK” said Paul Trowman, General Manager of The Grass Group. “We have an excellent product range to offer our dealers and we look forward to a long successful relationship with all concerned”.

The Grass Group has been set up as a neutral platform through which we are representing Trilo, Progressive, Tycrop, Green Clipper and Pro Blades.

In terms of positioning the new strapline “professional from the ground up” we hope to encapsulate both the attitude and deliverables of the Group and our people.

SCOTTS BUYS HUMAX

The Scotts Miracle-Gro Company has recently purchased the Humax business for an undisclosed sum. Scotts Miracle-Gro plans to integrate the Humax business so that customers from commercial horticulture and gardening retail continue to receive top quality products that are fit for purpose. Scotts Miracle-Gro will be reviewing the existing Humax range of garden products in both retail and professional over the next few months. In due course the company expects to fully integrate the Scotts and Humax brands and operations.

SHUTTLES AND PERSONNEL VEHICLES

John Wells, Estate and Golf Operations Manager at Bocket Hall, has taken delivery of a selection of E-Z-GO electric utility vehicles for housekeeping and client transportation duties around the conference and golf course complex, from local dealer Ernest Doe and Sons.

The Bocket Hall complex, set in 543 acres of mature parkland, features an international conference centre in the stately home, two 18-hole championship golf courses, the Faldo Golf Institute, Melbourne Lodge with 16 luxury bedrooms and Auberge du Lac restaurant.

NEW IRRIGATION SYSTEM

The first complete new irrigation system for tees, greens and fairways using John Deere parts is going in at Blackpool North Shore Golf Club, following the company’s move into the European golf irrigation market earlier in 2008.

John Deere is now the only worldwide manufacturer to offer irrigation, domestic and commercial grounds care equipment, utility vehicles, compact tractors and finance, all under one brand name.

Designed by consultants York Martin International of Ringwood and installed by Arden Lea Irrigation of Preston, Blackpool North Shore’s new system was arranged through John Deere dealer Balmer’s of Burnley, as part of a five year preferred supplier agreement and service contract for course machinery and irrigation equipment.

The irrigation installation will include a state of the art computer-based Aurora control system and a new water storage facility. The links-type course’s existing John Deere fleet has already been extended with the addition of a new 8700 PrecisionCut fairway mower, 8800 TerrainCut rotary mower, 2653B tees & surrounds mower, 2500E hybrid greens triple mower, two 180C and two 220C walk-behind greens mowers, bought on a John Deere Credit finance programme.

L to R: Dealer salesman Darren Barker of Balmer’s, Blackpool North Shore Golf Club captain Graham Shaw, John Deere territory manager Marcus Morris and course manager Iain Gunn with the new John Deere machines.



THE FASTEST RISING WEB RANKINGS IN GOLF

Booking tee times is the UK’s fastest-growing online golf activity, according to new figures released recently by Online Teetimes Ltd (OTL).

The worldwide traffic ranking for the company’s internet booking engine - which powers several of the leading green fee websites in the UK - has increased by 58% in the last three months.

The success is partly due to a 106% rise in the number of golfers making online tee time bookings in the same period. OTL also reports that the number of rounds booked online in the third quarter of this year has increased by 140% compared to May-June 2008.

SINGLE FIGURE GOLFERS TAKE ON THE PROS

What would happen if a team of single figure handicap golfers took on a team of seasoned professionals in a Ryder Cup-style head-to-head?

Now we know - thanks to Single Figure Golfer, a brand new online community for low-handicap amateurs which launches a competition ‘tour’ next March culminating in a high-profile team showdown against the Pros in October 2009.

Any golfer can join the club free of charge by registering at: www.singlefiguregolfer.co.uk, but only those with a handicap under 10 have the right to call themselves SFGs and take part in the forthcoming nationwide tour.