



BUNKER RAKES: THE RAKE'S PROGRESS

By James de Havilland

Based around a three-wheeled 'tractor unit', the most popular models of ride-on bunker rakes in the UK include the Jacobsen Groom Master II, John Deere 1200A and Toro Sand Pro 2020, 3040 and 5040. With entry level retail pricing starting at under £9,000, these diminutive machines need not be restricted to a life working in a bunker either.

With their light footprint, there is no reason why a ride-on bunker rake cannot be used as a light tractor unit. Example applications include pulling a small drag mat to knock off the dew ahead of early mowing through to applying light solid dressings

through a small trailed spreader to areas that are less accessible to larger or heavier kit.

In practice this sort of versatility is seldom exploited. Most users employ their machines for their primary role of keeping bunkers not just raked but conditioned to a greater depth to improve consistency. A good number of courses will have modified some bunkers to allow them to be accessed by a ride-on rake, so if you are not using one due to poor bunker access, this is a point to consider.

These tools can also be used for heavier 'landscaping' duties, their ability for light grading making them ideal when undertaking reconstruction work,

landscaping etc. There is no reason why a rake's skid unit cannot be exploited as a light 'tractor' unit to operate a brush or blower either.

So what is on offer? Starting with the John Deere 1200A bunker and field rake, this simple, robust tool can trace its roots back to 1995. Powered by a Kawasaki 10hp petrol engine, the 1200A has a rear axle differential lock. This helps boost traction when undertaking heavier work, freeing off the diff to allow the unit to turn pretty much within its own length.

Fitted with flotation tyres with an offset lug, the 1200A should actually grip well, a useful point to consider when trying to scale a bunker edge or grade heavier material. Sticking with



traction, the Deere is fitted with mechanical drive, a wet clutch and torque converter taking up drive. Two foot pedals on the left control the direction of travel, the right throttle pedal. Top travel speed is 18.

The 1200A is equipped with a three-section rake as standard, with a choice of serrated or optional smooth blades. Electric power lift is standard for the rear-mounted rake, and there is a fitted rear basket. The sections float and articulate to follow the bunker's contours.

A cultivator and front blade with spring-assisted lift are available as options. Dual headlights and/or rear work lights can also be specified.

Jacobsen offers its Groom Master II with a choice of Briggs and Stratton 18hp petrol or Kubota 19hp diesel power. Both versions have full hydrostatic drive to all three wheels with a variable speed range of between 0 and 15kph.

A driven front wheel is important as it not only improves traction but also helps to 'pull' the unit along as it is steered.

Running on three 10x11.00-10 tyres, these units again offer low ground bearing pressure with great manoeuvrability. Power steering helps in this respect, fast lock-to-lock turns really helping spin the machine round quickly.

The basic skid unit can be dealer specified to meet specific requirements, the essential choices including mechanical of hydraulic lift blades, cultivators and fan rakes. A drag mat and carrier, scarifier, box blade, can also be specified.

Joining the established Toro two-wheel drive and 16hp petrol powered Sand Pro 2020, the more recently introduced 3040 and 5040 have a three-wheel parallel drive system for optimum traction.

With respective 16hp and 18hp Briggs and Stratton power units, the 3040 and 5040 are designed for all sizes of bunkers, including those with steep faces and uneven contours.

Unlike the 2020, both models boast the added benefit of power steering, plus a slight increase in transport speed to 10mph. In addition, the tractor unit's ground clearance has been increased to 6in and 7.5in on the Sand Pro 3040 and 5040 respectively.

This essentially allows these machines to work over rougher terrain, a feature that is of value during course reconstruction and landscaping.

Sand Pro attachments for bunker repair and maintenance include a spring rake, tooth rake, spikers of various widths, a manual or hydraulic blade, a

variety of mats, a finish grader and levelling bar. Attachments for other landscaping tasks include a rear broom, utility box, debris blower and weeder/cultivator.

All models feature foot pedal controls, forward and reverse, a Quick-Attach System (QAS) for the front and rear hydraulics, mid-mount capability for several of the attachments and an optional light kit to help extend the working day.

As can be seen, these machines are actually more diverse than a casual glance may suggest. Several landscaping companies employ a 'bunker rake' for finishing work, grading slopes and levelling ground prior to seeding or turf laying. They are serious bits of kit and far more versatile than non-users may think.

Although all models are easy to operate, it does take practice to exploit what they have to offer. If arranging a demonstration, ensure you take in some of the tips and advice offered by the demonstrator before assuming you can rake your bunkers to perfection from day one.

Also ensure you get to try some alternative rakes, blades and attachments. It may be difficult to convince those controlling the purse strings that a bunker rake is justified, but showing a ride-on unit has other potential applications may help.



(Main image) With a choice of petrol or diesel power, the Jacobsen Groom Master II offers all-wheel drive and power steering plus a good choice of attachments.



(Above) Simple to use, economical to buy and easy to look after, the John Deere 1200A bunker rake is well established in the UK. With its locking rear differential, the two-wheel drive 1200A has decent traction when needed and great manoeuvrability for tight bunker corners.