



Cal's technicians at Celtic Manor

MANAGING MECHANICS

Melissa Toombs asked Workshop Manager, Patrick Callaby, just what it takes to set up a workshop...

Patrick Callaby, or Cal as he is more fondly known, is Workshop Manager at Celtic Manor Resort. Supported by three technicians - one of Cal's team is a trainee at Evesham College and the other two are graduates from there.

Cal started out in the industry at St Pierre Golf & Country Club, at Chepstow, where he remained for eight years before moving to Celtic Manor in 1994 - just as the golf courses were being built. He has been working as a mechanic for around 40 years, studying full time for six months and taking evening classes for five years. Cal has been working in golf industry for 22 years and is an Associate Member of both the Institute of the Motor Industry and the Institute of Vehicle Recovery.

What would a mechanic require to run a small workshop, a medium sized workshop and an all singing, all dancing workshop?

"A small workshop is generally created with a small budget in mind. A few tools and some space set aside to work on machines on wet days when work on the course is not possible. "Created" is possibly not the right word for such a set-up more like "evolved", it's happened almost by accident. Nothing wrong with that, not all clubs need more than that and view it as a cost saving.

"A medium workshop for say, 27 to 36 holes takes considerably more

money to set up and a lot more thought. The skills of the person working there will dictate the level of equipment to be purchased therefore it will also have a bearing on the money required initially. As the skills of the mechanic develop then the equipment level will rise and must be viewed almost as a work in progress. Will the budget run too grinding machinery? Again it depends on the person employed, how much work is generated, the general age of the machinery and its condition, the level of care and presentation of the golf course and whether there is an exchange program in place, also how far away the local dealership is. All these things need to be considered, after all it's pointless buying a mig welder if the mechanic can't weld for instance.

"A large workshop is usually purpose built and incorporated inside the main building. Often with heating, good lighting, good access from outside and inside, airy and spacious, if these things are in place we need only address the equipment level.

"More than 36 holes would justify a large workshop and more than justify an "in house" grinding set-up. This is where costs go up considerably, quality grinders for both cylinders and bedknives will cost between £18,000 and £23,000 depending on manufacturer and specification.

"Justification for this outlay is a subject on its own and I won't go into it here. Gas and electric welding equipment, a machine lift, tyre changing machine, jacks/stands, bench grinder, angle grinder, electric drill, vice,

bins for parts storage, I won't continue as the list is considerable but allow £30-35K for initial set-up and first year re-evaluation. Staffing levels have to increase with the bigger fleet, extra cost there."

What tools should every workshop have?

"Hand tools on a personal level are much like chefs and knives, the individual supplies them. So it follows that the tools used would be much the same in each workshop.

"A rough guide would be:

- A set of metric spanners from 5mm up to 30mm.
- A set of metric spanners from 5mm up to 19mm.
- A set of imperial spanners from 5/16 up to 1 1/4".
- A set of imperial spanners from 5/16 up to 3/4".
- A very full set of sockets.
- An air impact wrench in 1/2" drive with correct grade 6 point sockets. (Often supplied as set).
- A 32oz ball pein hammer.
- A 16oz ball pein hammer.
- A set of screwdrivers.
- A set of cold chisels.
- A test light.
- A multi meter.
- A set of prise bars.

"Pliers, sidecutters, mole grips, point nose pliers, hacksaw (standard and junior), breaker bar, circlip plier set (heavy duty), wire brush, oil

filter wrench, many other items that one begs, borrows and steals over the years to numerous to mention.

"The mechanics tool kit is very personal and differs from one to another but here you have the nucleus, the foundation tool kit without which the job cannot be done. Depending on grade and make this will cost anything from £200.00 to £2,000.00, the tool cabinets are very expensive but not essential and individuals have different tastes and budgets."

Do you hold spares in your workshop? If so, how many?

"Yes, we hold many spares, consulting my excel spreadsheet I use for stock there are 1300 rows but since each row only represents one part number but more than one of those parts is kept I would guess that we keep around 4000 items. Downtime with machines is very inconvenient and we minimise this by having most commonly used spare parts in stock."

Is communication between mechanics and greenkeepers important?

"Yes, the building has many signs asking for machinery faults to be reported to the workshop; this is as opposed to telling one of the technicians over lunch when it could easily be forgotten about. The fault is then entered on a task sheet (along with many others) this helps me to prioritise repairs.

"All greenkeepers are trained on individual machines regardless of their past experience and reporting faults is part of the training and is entered on the training sheet."



How could communication between mechanic and greenkeeper be improved?

“Although we do not have communication problems here I understand many golf courses do. I think that the way to encourage greenkeepers to report faults is to keep working relationships on a friendly footing, thank the person for reporting the fault, add the fault to the task sheet in front of the greenkeeper (if possible) to demonstrate and confirm that his observations are valued.

“Unreported faults can be dangerous and must be discouraged at all levels, a few enquiries usually reveals the offender; unfortunately the bigger the workforce the more difficult making enquiries becomes.”

Do you consider mechanics to be a specialist job? Some people work as greenkeepers and mechanics?

“I most certainly do. Experts in their field train technicians over a long period in colleges on a variety of machines, they are trained in the workplace and mentored by senior technicians. The vast array of machinery found on the average 18 hole golf course can be daunting for the faint hearted. The key to employing a good technician is what training has he had and what experience has he got. Here at the Celtic Manor we have a huge fleet of very diverse machinery involving just about everything you can think of that can be found on a machine, electrics, electronics, computers, diesel, petrol and 2 stroke engines, transmissions that involve everything from a simple belt and pulley set-up, sophisticated hydrostatic drives, electric clutches and hydraulic transmissions. The standard of greens presentation gets higher and the height of cut gets lower, this requires that greens mowers are in the best condition possible whether they are pedestrian or ride on, this calls for specialist machinery to sharpen both bed- knives and cylinders and technicians who know how to use them to the best effect.

“Agreed that some “mechanics” have two hats, one for the golf course and one for the workshop but often he is limited to changing oils and filters on wet days and mending punctures, more difficult work is often contracted out to local dealerships in favour of work on the golf course because he is a greenkeeper first and mechanic second. Don’t get me wrong, I’m not knocking it, this works very well for some clubs.”

How much time and money do you think you can save by having your own workshop?

“In the scenario above where greenkeeping is prioritised over machinery maintenance, but still having a person who is competent in the workshop can pay dividends in less downtime. Machinery problems can be addressed at the earliest opportunity as opposed to transporting to the nearest dealership, getting

a place on the end of a considerable queue then transporting the machine back again a week or two later at great expense and inconvenience.”

How do warranties work?

“Warranties are where a manufacturer guarantees the machine for a pre-determined period of time against defects in materials used and design but excluding accidents and misuse. The period is commonly two years or X amount of hours or miles, sometimes there can be longer warranties on component parts. Electric golf carts from Club Car, for instance, come with a two-year warranty but the batteries are four years, such is the advance in battery technology. Warranty work is normally carried out by the supplying dealership.”

If you lease equipment do dealers have to do the repairs or can anyone do them?

“Leasing is tailored to individual company needs and priced accordingly; the repair and maintenance terms are generally specified in the contract.”

Should every golf club have a mechanic?

“Ideally yes, I think if you asked Course Managers the same question they would all say yes because they are the people who are most inconvenienced by machinery failures. But there are other factors preventing clubs from employing a mechanic. In my opinion first and foremost would be budgeting constraints, justifying a mechanic to those who pay the wage bill, although many clubs now see the wisdom of maintaining expensive machinery for a longer working life. Justification often comes when he is employed with the aforementioned two hats. Just as a point of interest I was employed as a single-handed mechanic at a 36 hole complex for eight years and was the only full time mechanic on a golf course anywhere in Wales. It’s a different tale now although I don’t have any figures to prove it.”

Are you in touch with many mechanics within the industry?

“Yes, I am an active member of both www.golftechs.net and www.igcema.org, golf techs is a somewhat “casual and informal” site catering for golf course technicians, mainly Americans, there are other nationalities who contribute to the forums; The International Golf Course Equipment Managers Association is built on education for technicians. There is also a forum and members may ask and answer questions on many subjects. The word International means just that and we have many members around the world, membership currently stands at 852 from approximately 15 countries.”

