



golf market has surprised us as we originally felt that they were a little over engineered compared with many of the vehicles Course Managers were running around in. We felt with the heavy duty chassis and engineering that went into it, that they would be more attractive to rough terrain users."

With that in mind Dave and his colleagues had fairly modest objectives and targets but just around that time the market exploded as people began looking for diesel utility vehicles instead of petrol driven quad bikes.

"Course Managers were deciding to by one of ours rather than two from another manufacturer or were working on an extended lifetime using our utility vehicle and getting better lifecosts" explained Dave, who said that they struggle to keep up with demand for the first two years after their launch.



“ The backbone of our business is still compact tractors and the markets they serve, grounds care, golf course management and horticulture are key to us and we can't afford to lose that business. ”

"We've learned an awful lot and are now much better equipped to go after a market which has grown to include even more makes."

In recent years Kubota UK has rededicated itself to the golf market with Dave recognising its importance to other sectors of their business.

He admits that in the past they may have looked at golf as just one, relatively small element of the business and devoted resources in time and marketing proportionately to it.

"I came into the Sales Management role seven years ago and added Marketing five years ago and I looked a little more closely at the various sectors we were operating in. It became apparent that golf provided quite a large proportion of the 30-60 horsepower tractor market in particular, as there are a lot of golf courses on this little island that need tractors, even with the advent of self propelled machinery."

According to Dave, tractors are the unsung heroes of the industry.

"They don't get looked after like cutting equipment, washed down and dried off and parked in the shed every night. The tractor tends to be left sitting in the corner with its loader on, but they are basic work horses and every golf club still needs something to load topdressing and tow the trailer to the bunker renovation site," said Dave, passionately.

But there were other reasons to ensure renewed focus on the golf market.

"Golf is a very high profile arena for us. A lot of people play golf, a lot of people with big houses play golf and a lot of people with big houses need

to buy Kubota tractors and when they see Kubota at the golf club they will think if it's good enough for the Course Manager of my golf club it's good enough for me or my business."

Dave brought Kubota back into Golden Key membership five years ago, and two years ago took over the sponsorship of BIGGA's flagship golf event, The National Championship.

Kubota has sponsored the events held at Dundonald and Glasgow Gables in 2008 and East Sussex National last year and have been delighted with their investment.

"We see sponsoring the National Championship as a great way to get profile, kudos and credibility within the greenkeeping fraternity while keeping investments levels realistic. It has to work for us and the Golden Key Membership and the National Championship sponsorship works very well for us," said Dave.

tractors from 60 to 95 horsepower – and these have enjoyed a favourable welcome by the industry with the company benefiting from the fact that it is somewhat easier to size up a tractor to meeting the horsepower demands of the farming industry than it is to turn larger vehicles into quality compact or mid-sized tractors.

"It is easier to make them bigger than to make a big one smaller and if you look at our main competitors who have a very strong pedigree in agriculture, when it comes to compact tractors, they are using Japanese technology" said Dave, who reiterated the point that Kubota produce all its own engines, all its own transmissions with the watch words, quality, reliability, durability and simplicity.

The other main area of growth for Kubota has been through the arrival of its utility vehicle the RTV 900.

"It was launched in 2005 and its success in the

Looking forward at the golf industry as a whole Dave, a positive thinker, believes that the weakened pound could potentially see golf tourism return to the UK and more outside money coming into golf clubs.

And in terms of product development engine technology will keep advancing in line with the emission targets that are being brought in.

"By 2014 the emission targets are going to be very very stringent and diesel engines will only be allowed to blow out what amounts to fresh air. That's quite a challenge for an engine manufacturer."

He also feels that Bio-diesel has dropped off the agenda for the time being for cost reasons.

"Bio fuels will be part of the plan to get emissions down but I don't think that it will be the great answer to everything that we thought it was five or six years ago. To produce a gallon of bio fuel takes an awful lot of energy and these things have got to balance out."

On product development Dave has some good news for tractor operators with comfort top priority.

"Forget the CD player now it's got to be the MP3 player. Forget one cup holder, it's got to be two, while seats are becoming ever more comfortable. It's all got to be done without increasing the overall weight of the tractor. They are really advanced these days" said Dave.

But one thing that won't be changing is the colour of the Kubota fleet. This year it will remain orange and you won't be seeing that pearl coloured tractor to mark 30 years of Kubota UK.





ONE TRACTOR – TWO SETS OF WHEELS AND TYRES

By James de Havilland

Tractors come in such a huge variety of shapes and sizes these days it is easier than ever to buy a unit that is just right for a range of jobs. A concern, however, can be the tyres. Are the ones fitted as versatile as the tractor?

Not so long ago you had a limited choice of cleat agricultural, diamond pattern industrial or a block pattern turf tyre. Now tractor suppliers are offering an increasingly broad range of standard tyre, with factory fit options often including specialist turf designs. Sometimes, however, you may still want something else.

This need not be a problem. Tractor dealers can often work with you to come up with a new tyre package to suit a very specific need. But this can

also be the point where you start to compromise the tractor. Opt for nice fat flotation rubber, and the tractor will possibly be compromised when it comes to working on a hard surface. Fat tyres can also make it difficult to access some sites. And do you want to risk these tyres on jobs better suited to narrow, harder rubber?

There is an answer to saving costly flotation rubber, but it is an added expense; investing in two sets of wheels and tyres. This idea is hardly new, with numerous golf courses and contractors having become accustomed to swapping over tractor tyres as necessary. The trick is to make the job as straightforward as possible.

A decent trolley jack, level firm ground, axle stands and powerful air wrench can make a

wheel swap pretty simple. A torque wrench is also needed to ensure the wheel nuts are evenly tightened.

The snag can be when it comes to actually working with larger and heavier wheels. For one person, this can make wheel swapping a real chore.

The answer is a wheel changing unit. These slide under the raised wheel and then use an integral jack to raise a set of support rolls onto the wheel to allow its easy removal. The same unit can then be used to securely move the removed wheel to where it will be stored and then used to pick up the replacement.

When fitting the replacement wheel, the support rolls allow the wheel to be rotated so



Even the front tyres on a large tractor can be difficult to fit and remove. A wheel carrier, such as this unit from Sam Moreton & Sons (Farmers Tyre), makes the job not only easier but safer too.



Standard agricultural pattern tyres can quickly destroy turf, but this type of tyre is often the best choice for general purpose duties...



...turf tyres opening up another set of applications for the tractor. Two sets of wheels and tyres can make a great deal of sense.



FEATURE

it is correctly lined up with the hub. This can be a problem when 'manually' refitting a wheel, particularly if the swapped wheel is of a different diameter.

As an aside, wheel changing needs to be included as part of your standard risk assessment. Although it is common practice to leave a tractor supported only by a jack, axle stands or suitable blocks should also be used to ensure the tractor cannot fall should the jack be accidentally released.

It is also important to check the wheel nuts are correctly tightened and it is well worth re-checking these nuts after the tractor has been in use for a few hours. A torque wrench should always be used to tighten nuts evenly.

Where do you go for advice?

It is all too easy to assume that a tyre wholesale company or fitting outlet is also a tyre specialist. The reality is that it can take some shopping around to find someone who really understands your needs and can source the right tyres. When looking for alternative tyres, first determine what existing tyre and wheel rim are fitted. If these are not doing what is asked of them, identify what the problem is.

In most cases it will be that the tyres footprint and inflation pressures are incompatible with what you wish to achieve. At this stage, the solution will seem to be obvious. Fit as large a set of

tyres as possible onto the existing rims. As long as the diameter of the tyres matches those of the originals, the axle ratios on 4WD equipment should remain the same. The problem is that this is actually more difficult to achieve than may at first be appreciated. This can be due to low inflation pressures or the fact that some tyre diameters will vary according to how much air is in them.

Do not be afraid to mix and match different brands or patterns of tyre between axles. As long as the rolling diameters marry up on 4WD axles to prevent torque wind up, there will not be a problem. A specialist will be able to offer advice and come up with tyres to meet specific needs.



Trailed equipment, to include top dressers, are often offered with a choice of tyre size plus the option of two or four wheels across the rear of the unit. All this is wasted if the drawbar weight is transferred to the ground via skinny rear tractor tyres.



Taken at the Michelin test plant in France, this picture is often used to illustrate the difference a tyre can make to soil compaction. Although too extreme for turf, the key point is that a tyre with good flotation is less likely to compress the soil enough to stop air penetrating the root zone.



When looking to fit large flotation rubber to a tractor, seek advice. Fat tyres can foul mudguards and, if they have a different rolling diameter to standard, alter the tractor's gear ratios. Front and rear tyres need to be matched on 4WD models.



Tight budgets can make swapping to softer rubber difficult, but a tyre specialist may hold stocks of part worn tyres, sometimes fitted to a rim. A tyre that is past its best for on-highway use may well be fine if confined to turf or low speed work on hard surfaces.



Some older tyre types are often inflated to needlessly high pressures. Try letting out some air, but mark the tyre and rim to check for tyre creep and look for any excess bulging. If the tractor has to carry a heavy load you may need to up the inflation pressure.



When considering alternatives to standard tractor tyre offerings, remember a wheel rim can have its central 'dish' position varied to allow a wider tread to be fitted with no risk of fouling the tractor's bodywork.

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OVERSEEDING

GET BETTER RESULTS THIS SEASON

Overseeding can provide a highly cost effective route to introducing desirable new grass varieties and improving turf quality on greens, tees and fairways. But success for many has, in the past, been limited. Keith Kensett gives his top tips and advice to get better results this season.

Get into the groove to over seed

In recent years seed breeders have developed some superb new varieties of bent grasses and fescues that are better suited to changing UK growing conditions and respond more effectively under sustainable Integrated Turf Management programmes. Overseeding gives the opportunity to gradually introduce the new varieties, with the advent of new techniques to assure faster and more consistent results.

New equipment, such as linear groover machines, can achieve far more reliable germination and establishment, while new techniques such as using a growth regulator programme to reduce competition from the existing sward while the seedlings establish, further improves the chances of success.

Overseeding is also going to become increasingly important with the advent of new selective herbicides which, in trials, have successfully taken out aggressive, low-quality rye grasses, while leaving desirable fescues and bents. Overseeding will be an integral part of filling the gaps to quickly restore turf quality and prevent invasive weeds and grasses establishing.

Solve problems

So how do we assure the best possible results? Overseeding into a strong, well established turf that is growing well can, with the right techniques, prove highly successful. But if the programme is being used as part of a rejuvenation of tired, poor turf, managers must first assess why existing turf is struggling - as trying to establish new seedlings into conditions where existing plants can not thrive is almost certainly doomed to failure.

Drainage must be put right before starting, with verti-draining and sand-injection potential

options to alleviate compaction. If it is an area subjected to heavy wear, overseeding with wear resistant varieties will help longer term, providing walkways can be diverted long enough for plants to get established. The soil pH may be a factor, where again choosing the right new variety to over seed will help, but it could prove more effective to cure the cause first. Shade is also an issue, but introducing shade tolerant varieties can enable defining landscape features to be retained along with improved quality turf.

Where once overseeding was considered an early autumn operation, in practice it can be undertaken at any time from early spring and, with the trend towards milder, more open autumns, extended right through to mid-October. Overseeding in spring and summer, when soil temperatures are rising, can help achieve faster germination and, providing there is sufficient moisture, stronger establishment. For irrigated tees and greens, overseeding can take place at any time during the growing season.

Regulate competition

One major advance that we have seen in recent years is the use of a Primo MAXX programme to regulate growth of the existing sward prior to overseeding. This essential part of the over seeding programme reduces competition to the establishing seedlings and enables them to get started more effectively. Further applications - once the seedlings reach the two leaf stage - promotes tillering of the seedlings to fill gaps and encourages faster, stronger rooting. Keeping the turf in regulation also reduces the frequency of mowing and any stress on the establishing seedlings.

The Syngenta programme, developed following research by STRI, advocates that where turf is actively growing an application of Primo MAXX





Keith Kensett with slot seeder

should be made three to five days prior to the planned over seeding. This is followed by a half rate application once seedlings are up and established, with a three-quarter rate four weeks later and then back into the standard programme.

Remove thatch

From experience, the thatch poses the single greatest threat to successful over seeding. Thatch prevents seed making good contact with the soil. If seeds do germinate, the poor air flow will exacerbate seedling diseases and damping off. Seeds growing in thatch are likely to quickly burn off under any drought stress. Reducing thatch is an essential part of the over seeding process programme.

It is possible to over seed after hollow tine coring, and brushing in seed with a sand backfill. But in practice, some of the seed is buried too deep in the holes to ever emerge, whilst generally two of three seeds per hole will try to establish - with each competing for water, light and nutrients and resulting in three poor plants instead of one good one. Even with coring at 5 cm spacing, it is still only 400 new plant spacings per m², which will have little beneficial impact on overall turf quality.

Studies by the USGA have shown that hollow tine coring will impact on less than 5% of the soil surface, compared to around 15% with a Graden machine cutting grooves in the soil to remove unwanted material and create an effective seeding slot.

Linear groove

Overseeding into a linear groove cut into the turf is far more likely to prove successful. Seed distribution is infinitely more uniform, it can all be placed at precisely the right depth for optimum establishment and, most importantly, there is far better seed to soil contact that is essential for effective germination and strong, rapid establishment. Typically, with a Graden

Water management

Irrigation is probably the most crucial factor under the greenkeepers' control. During germination the surface ideally needs to remain permanently damp, as a good indication that there is sufficient soil moisture available. The more sophisticated the irrigation system the better this can be achieved.

Once germination has occurred, however, water applications should become more infrequent and heavier, allowing time for the surface to dry between applications to reduce the risk of damping off diseases developing. Good air flow through the dethatched sward will help, but a fungicide application such as Heritage can help to reduce the incidence and effects of disease attacks.

Over sown turf will be subjected to the same management and mowing regime as the existing sward, to maintain playing conditions. But where possible, raising the height of cut even one or two mm can make a significant difference in

helping the seedlings establish. Again the use of Primo MAXX is an advantage, with cutting height raised slightly to alleviate stress, with no loss of playing quality or ball speed on the greens. The soft new leaf growth of the new seedlings means it is essential to ensure that cylinder mowers are razor sharp and carefully set up to avoid tearing and damaging the leaf.

The new seedlings will also require sufficient nutrients to promote strong root growth and establishment. Take special care to ensure there are sufficient macro nutrients - N, P & K - but also manganese and magnesium trace elements important for new seedlings. Experience last year highlighted that, in wet conditions, nutrients can be quickly lost, especially on light soils or sand-based constructions. Feeding little and often can help to alleviate stress on new seedlings and established turf.

With an on-going programme of over seeding, turf managers can now successfully introduce new grass varieties, to significantly enhance turf quality and improve future management.

About the Author

Keith Kensett is the director of R&K Kensett Ltd, which specialise in the renovation of all sports turf surfaces. Kensett Sports are the sole UK importers of the Australian Graden turf management equipment.



(Above) Keith Kensett's results from trials undertaken at Hadley Wood Golf Club in Hertfordshire.



(Above) Overseeding STRI trial - untreated left, Primo right.

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SO YOU HAVE JOINED THE COMMITTEE...

Paul Lowe, Course Manager of Bromborough GC and Derek Hartley, Green Chairman, offer some advice

Firstly, may I congratulate you on your appointment? You must feel very proud, all your friends and peers voting for you at the AGM. You must be a popular figure at the club...I hate to be the bearer of bad news but this popularity won't last.

This is a light hearted article aimed to prepare you for the rollercoaster ride that is the 'Greens Committee'.

Let me start by listing some common mistakes we committee members make while in office, hopefully these can be avoided.

- Pleasing everyone
- Second guessing - I don't know
- Greens meeting calamity
- Not trusting the experts
- Trying to achieve the impossible
- Neglecting your prized possession...your greenkeeping team

Pleasing everyone is impossible. The problem you are going to face is that golfers are human beings. Complex, emotive and passionate - especially when it concerns their golf. No two golfers are the same. From the dear old grandma who plays a few holes on ladies day and then supports the clubhouse with her cup of tea and half sandwich, to the young gun with the 300yd drive and ego to match. How can you please everyone when they are so diverse? The fact is you can't.

Then you have our favourite, the compulsive moaner; those members who are only happy when they are complaining. It's not personal, it's just the way they are. It's only a small percent, but boy they can make some noise after a few pints and a bad round.

Trying to please this lot is certainly impossible, they are unappeasable. Trying, will ultimately and certainly have a detrimental effect on the course and the work needed to maintain the course. The skill is determining who is a compulsive moaner and who has a genuine complaint. If you get this wrong then you are wasting your time - time that ought to be best spent on the genuine concerns. You will get criticized, it's part of the job.

Avoid second guessing at all cost. Just by saying "I don't know" will get you out of difficult and

sometimes confrontational discussions. Remember to follow it up with "I will ask the experts". Don't fall into the trap of second guessing. Remember that it's human nature to question what they don't understand. Greenkeeping is a very complex profession; it takes many years of studying and experience to reach the dizzy heights of Headman. Don't expect your members to grasp this complex subject and don't you expect to grasp it yourself. Just ask the greenkeeper, and report back. You could even ask the greenkeeper to explain to the members personally; after all he is the expert and will be able to explain better than you can.

The committee greens meeting - formal Green meetings are set on a regular basis. This gives the greenkeeper the opportunity to reveal his progress and problems in a formal manner and vice versa. The Green Chairman and Greenkeeper should always discuss the agenda before the meeting and everyone should have the agenda before a meeting. This gives everyone ample time to prepare. Encourage open lines of communication; the outcome being surprises at meetings are kept minimal.

Never intentionally wait for a meeting to attack or even gets one over the greenkeeper or anyone else. This is poor practice, poor teamwork, poor management, poor conduct, and poor communication and is not acceptable at a meeting. If you corner a wild animal, it will bite and attack you. Humans are no different. This only encourages discontent and communication breakdown. Good teamwork and open communication is a more productive way of working.

Trusting the experts. You have just got on to the committee; you're full of gusto and want to change the world. You're under pressure - peer pressure, there's no bigger pressure placed upon your shoulders than your mates at the bar. Well hold on... take a deep breath and calm down a moment. Golf courses have been around for hundreds of years, and during those years they have made many mistakes. Sadly the mistakes keep repeating, why? Maybe because we keep listening to our mates and failing to trust the experts.

It sounds ludicrous but it is very common. You employ your staff, you spend the club's money on



college education, training them, and you send them on seminars, workshops and conferences. You buy them the latest books, magazines and publications to keep them abreast of new initiatives. You may appoint a consultant, a person who is at the peak of all greenkeeping knowledge and education with a string of letters after their name. Your consultant will visit a vast amount of courses seeing firsthand the successes and failings of others and relay this invaluable knowledge back to you. Then, your highly educated staff, your highly regarded consultant is undermined because you choose to listen to bar room talk.

You may disagree with certain matters. But before you start expressing your opinions, why not read some articles, go on the internet and Google the subject...make an educated opinion, instead of an emotional one. I know it's difficult, but now you are on the committee it's part of your responsibility to communicate and educate