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The Opportunity to Become One with the Machines for a Day

Some weeks back, due to lack of key personnel, I was cordially invited to partake in operating various equipment. The weather could not have been better....watching the sun come up over the fairways is truly magnificent. Being out of practice and squinting through the bright orange ball of fire made keeping a straight line a challenge during my first couple attempts. As clipping flew by, I began to get into the rhythm of mowing.

TECH TIP

Measuring the Outside Diameter of a Reel

Need a fast fairly accurate way to measure the outside diameter of a reel? If you have a bench mounted vise that is fairly tight you can place a reel horizontally in vise and gently draw in jaws to just touch the reel blades . . . then when reel is removed you can just measure the jaw opening with caliper.

To simple to take serious?

Not at all. This method will give you a reading $\pm 0.005''$. If you need to think about that .005", then it's time to replace the reel anyhow. Remember this method is only going to give you an idea what the reel dimension is at the center of the cylinder. If you need to figure out if a cone taper exists, repeat the process take several measurements along the axis of the reel. Just don't drop the reel on your foot!

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Soon, I started paying attention to what was actually happening to the fairway mower. I started to add it all up; fairway after fairway, hour after hour, day after day, week after week, I thought. It is truly amazing what each machine goes through, throughout its life. The amount of time that is spent cleaning, greasing, inspecting and adjusting is minimal by comparison to the time the machine is actually in use. I couldn't help but think about my maintenance program. I have always had a strong Preventative Maintenance (PM) program and after operating for a few days I will continue to do so. In fact, I will now move up maintenance schedules on all older equipment. Recently, most of us have been forced to keep machines longer than anticipated and these are the machines that can surprise you at any time with a break down.

Shortly after this season began, a fairway unit developed a lift cylinder leak. While, no one can anticipate when an original component will fail, my experience mowing this spring made me more aware of parts that are continually in motion. When a machine reaches six or seven years in age, a cylinder such as this, has cycled hundreds of thousands of times. It is no wonder this part is a source of wear. While operating the machine for three hours straight, I began making mental notes to check out certain point on each of the three fairway machines later back at the shop. Soon my mind was swelling and I found myself calling my own voicemail from my cell phone. I didn't want to forget any possible problem areas.

Later that morning, I operated one of our rough mowers for three hours on the driving range. The range has many undulations, banks and inclines. I never realized the severity of stress that is put on this machine until I sat upon it with my oversized girth and ventured up and down and around all those angled hills. I don't even want to mention the missed-picked range balls that went banging around under the deck and chassis destroying my precision sharpened blades. Typically, I only see this rough-mower once a week and I now realize how well built and durable it is. The little time I used it only represented a tenth of what it endures every week. Maybe it has a little guardian angel on board.

After seeing the equipment from the operator side, I plan to make time to run other equipment for extended amounts of time, rather than just the usual test run out in the maintenance lot.

If you get the opportunity to operate a machine or two, take it. You'll be surprised at the point of view you will take away. Being one with the machine from time to time will benefit both of you.

For now, keep them running straight and true.

