

FEATURE II

Jason Wolf, *Whisper Creek Golf Club*

Rocky Bunkers?



After spending countless hours manually removing rocks from Whisper Creek's bunkers, our team thought there had to be a better, less time consuming way.

Whisper Creek is located 50 miles from Chicago, in the northwest suburb of Huntley, in the Dell Webb active adult community. The course was designed by Billy Casper and Greg H. Nash. It stretches out over 7,000 yards and includes more than 70 bunkers of varying sizes, all in need of constant maintenance.

In the process of researching what was available, I stumbled on a walk-behind sand cleaner commonly used for beach cleaning. This machine is self propelled. It utilizes a vibrating sift screen to process sand and remove rocks and other unwanted debris. It manually lifts and elevates the sand for cleaning. Clean sand falls through the screen, while contaminants move back into the collection hopper. There are three interchangeable screens: 3/16, 3/8, and 9/16."

By using a hand wheel, the depth of cleaning can be adjusted from 0 to 4 inches by the operator, at any time, even when the machine is in use. The unit is eight feet long and easy to maneuver because of an independent wheel brake on each wheel as well as differential assist. An air-cooled 5.5hp gasoline engine powers this machine.



Whisper Creek's 70 bunkers were constructed with Best Tour Grade sand. Bunker size varies from small pot bunkers to fairway bunkers in excess of 8,000 square feet. Over the past ten years, much of the Best Tour Grade sand has blown away and contaminants have become a problem.

We are currently in the process of renovating the bunkers with Morris sand. This unit works great in both the Best Tour Grade and the Morris sand. The problems we have encountered are effectiveness after a heavy irrigation cycle and ability to perform while on an incline. When the machine encounters wet sand, the sand clumps and then clogs the sifting screen. This reduces the effectiveness of debris removal. Any sifting that occurs on an incline or around the bunker faces will dig and tear at the bunker liner. The machine is most effective in the flattest areas of the bunkers.

Overall, we are very pleased with the purchase. Not only does it remove objectionable stones and

rocks, but it also loosens and conditions the sand. The purchase of this unit gives us a more efficient, effective way to clean and groom our bunkers. Use of the unit has been rotated into our maintenance program once a month. It leaves the bunkers more playable and rock free. **-OC**