



Shane Conroy  
Park Ridge Country Club

# The Question

We've all been asked it; some more than others. How you answer is up to you, but for all of us who work in the industry, it's a question we hear too often: "What do you do in the winter?"

With colder temperatures becoming a trend and hours of daylight fading as fast as the Bears offense, winter is upon us. Winter gives us greenkeepers the chance to catch our breath and look back on the season that was. It also allows us to prepare for the upcoming season, which will be here before we know it. However, before that new season arrives, everyone just can't help asking 'the question.' We can all answer easily and accurately, if we are so inclined. We all know our work doesn't stop just because the calendar says January. In fact for some of us there is enough work that we could still show up at 5:30 on a Saturday morning if we wanted, just to keep up with the flow of our routine.

Just because the bulk of the work moves indoors doesn't make it any less important. Equipment has played a vital role during the season. It's been used day in and day out. Now is the time for inspection and repair. Anything with reels or blades gets ground or backlapped. The oil is changed in each machine, and each engine and component is inspected and repaired to make sure it performs at its optimum. Carburetors are rebuilt if necessary. Bearings, bushings, and seals are checked and, if needed, replaced. Hoses are examined and repaired. And that's just the beginning. Each facility has its own fleet of equipment, and there are a lot of pieces to maintain. Each technician has his own system for maintaining and servicing this fleet. With the help of the superintendent and assistants, he makes sure that each piece of equipment is ready to go come spring. Whether the tech likes to start with the walk-behind mowers, utility vehicles, rough and bank, there's no doubt it's a large undertaking that couldn't be done without planning and the right people.

Sprayer maintenance is another large chore in the off-season. Tanks must be cleaned and sanitized; nozzles and filters must be cleaned; gaskets, pumps, and solenoids need to be checked and repaired. Sprayers, in my opinion, are not the most fun piece of equipment to work on, but they may be one of the most important in our fleet. Forgoing work on the sprayers during the off-season is a recipe for disaster. Come spring, when that proxy/primo application goes down without a hitch, you'll be glad you put in those winter maintenance hours.

Tee and green equipment is another piece of the puzzle when it comes to winter work. Wood pieces such as benches, trash cans, coolers, par three divot boxes and cart arrows need to be sanded and stained. Metal pieces are no different. Ball washers and trash cans also need a sanding and a fresh coat of paint. Tee markers that have chipped or broken during the year are repaired and painted as well.

Facility maintenance also comes to the forefront during the winter. Each of us has a shop, office and/or clubhouse to look after. Some of that work needs to wait until our duties on the course aren't as demanding. Some of that work can't be done while members are actively using the facilities. Many of us are working in shops and offices that are older than we are. These buildings need attention, whether it's minor or major carpentry. The off-season is great for checking some of those facility jobs off your list. It's also a great way to gain valuable experience working on projects that don't necessarily occur on the course.

Speaking of the course, let's not forget the winter work that actually gets done outdoors. The early part of this December was mild. It allowed crews to continue outdoor projects that, in years past, Mother Nature made tough to



*Bearings are just one of the few things that get checked and replaced in the winter months.*

The Question continued.....from 3

complete. Tree maintenance as we all know is a constant battle, especially on courses with hundreds of trees on the property. The frozen, snow-covered ground creates a great opportunity for getting equipment on the course and getting some tree work done. Whether it is corrective pruning or a master tree plan, winter is the ideal time to get this type of work completed. Many of us are also in charge of winter activities for members or for the general public. Ice rinks or cross-country ski courses are very popular at golf courses in the winter. These activities also require extensive labor hours and planning. They are just another 'thing' we do in the winter. Snow removal is another task that requires our full attention (not including last season), since most of the time the grounds department is responsible for clearing the parking lots and sidewalks.

This is only the tip of the iceberg, when it comes to what we do in the off season. Each facility has its own agenda and its own techniques. Each piece of property is different and has its own unique winter challenges and projects. This says nothing about the various construction/improvement projects, both on and off the course, that many of us will oversee throughout the winter months. There are also green committee presentations to prepare, board meetings to attend, budgets to create, and agronomic plans to prepare for the upcoming season.

Winter is just another season in the year of our shared passion—maintaining a golf course. We know what can be accomplished in the winter months, and we plan accordingly. Contrary to popular belief we still show up and get things done each day. So the next time someone asks what you do in the winter, answer as you see fit, but we all know the real answer.

# THE LITTLE GIANT

## RTV500

**Starts quicker.  
Runs quieter.  
Stops smoother.**

The new Kubota RTV500 compact utility vehicle has all the comfort, technology and refinements of a larger utility vehicle. Available in Kubota orange and Realtree® camouflage, the four wheel drive RTV500 is ready for work or play. Visit your local Kubota dealer to test drive the only utility vehicle of its kind.



**Martin Implement, Inc.**  
18405 115th Avenue  
Orland Park, IL 60467  
(708) 349-8430

**Kubota**  
www.kubota.com

\*Realtree is a registered trademark of Jordan Outdoor Enterprises, Ltd.  
© Kubota Tractor Corporation, 2008



# HOLLEMBEAK

## CONSTRUCTION INC.

SINCE 1969



*Ridge Country Club - Hole 13  
Chicago, Illinois*





**Golf Course Construction • Renovations • Bunkers  
Clearing • Feature Grading • Shaping • Drainage  
Tee and Green Construction • Cart Paths • Grassing  
Shoreline Stabilization • Pond Construction and Dredging  
Laser Tee Leveling • GPS Golf Course Mapping**

**P.O. BOX 103 • BIG ROCK, IL 60511 • 630-556-3891**

## FINALLY, A BETTER SOLUTION FOR TOPDRESSING SAND.

- Bunker sand
- Topdressing sand
- Divot Mix
- Cart path material
- Rip Rap
- Limestone & Gravel





**SHORELINE  
SAND SOLUTIONS**

**301 West U.S. Highway 20 • Michigan City, IN • 46360  
Phone: 219.878.9991 • Fax: 219.878.9989 • Email: mark@norville.com**