

OVERHAULIN' Golf Car Style

Doug Davis, Flagg Creek Golf Course

I love old things. Old music, old movies, old cars. Oldies but goodies right? It wasn't until I got into the golf business that I knew or cared about motorized golf carts. Back in the early '70s memories of golf carts were of the Harley Davidson three-wheelers with a swivel steering arm, loud engine, and they ran and ran.

In 1987, Dennis (Skip) Willms (Onwentsia Golf Club) hired me fresh out of college to work as his assistant at the Racine Country Club in Wisconsin. While there I saw one of the oddest, oldest, most unique looking golf carts ever, a 1963 Cushman Golfster. This was Skip's personal cart.



When I trailered the car from storage, it didn't seem to be in that bad of shape.

The Cushman Company was founded in Lincoln, Nebraska, in 1903. The more familiar Cushman Trucksters were produced from 1952 to 2002 and were used for everything from ice cream sales, mail delivery, police departments, mall and stadium maintenance to, of course, golf course maintenance. The Model 735 Golfster Golf Cart was produced from 1961 to 1964. It was built on much the same frame as a truckster, used an 18hp OMC

engine, and had one forward and one reverse gear. President Dwight D. Eisenhower bought a Cushman Golfster in 1963 and used it for many years in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, where he retired.

Fast forward to March 2011. I sent an email to Skip saying hello and asked him if he still had his old Golfster. He replied that he did still own the Golfster, but had not run it in over 20 yrs. He would be glad to sell it to me, for a very reasonable price. I drove up to Onwentsia. Tucked away in an incredibly large equipment storage facility, under two inches of dust and bird poo, sat the Golfster. We got it up onto my trailer, and I got it back home. After a thorough pressure washing, I surveyed what I was up against: missing parts, frozen parts, rotted tires, body damage, to name a few. I began the disassembly, and very soon the cart was broken down to a lot of individual this and that.



Once I started the disassembly, I started to find out the project was going to take a little more than I had anticipated.

Fortunately, there are still Cushman enthusiasts out there on the web who offered a wealth of resources, leads, information, parts, etc. I was lucky to get my hands on an original owner's manual and parts book. I decided that rather than re-build the old 18 hp OMC engine that came with the cart we would buy a Repower kit, a 20 hp Honda engine, which included a clutch adapter and wiring instructions for joining new with old. Also, since the Golfster uses a lot of the same internal parts as a Truckster, I was able to use a Truckster three-speed transmission. About this time the weather started getting warm. My "real job" was calling me, so the project got put on hold and sat all summer. During this time, though, I was able to search for and find other components that the cart needed. When it was all finished, I had found and purchased parts from seven different states. After everything was back together, it was time to begin body work. Sanding through layers of paint in three different colors was a chore. I didn't want to sandblast for fear of damage to the metal and fiberglass. After a lot of body work the cart received two coats of primer. I selected hot rod paint from House of Kolor called "Lapis Blue." The paint job turned out great. When the sun reflects on it, there are at least three different shades. We powder coated all the trim pieces, front/rear bumper, and seat bracket with a nice contrasting chrome color. (Actual chroming is really expensive!) Finally, I took the bench and back rest to an upholstery shop, and we worked up a design we thought would fit nicely with the "era" of the cart.

There is so much more involved in an overhaul than I could ever have imagined. I have to give a huge thanks to my Equipment Technician, Ed Horaceck. Without him the cart would still be in 300 pieces. Thanks also to Mark Johnson, for his guidance and the "parts" Golfster he shipped to me from South Florida, and to Blake Winters for his body work and painting prowess. Ernesto

Jimenez's talents with needle, thread, and vinyl upholstery were also essential.

Stop by my shop if you want to see this little piece of history up close and personal. I might even let you borrow the keys!



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