

The Gator Growls

By: Sandra P. Carmouche



Innovative Idea Pays Off

Innovative ideas for improving the tools and equipment used in golf course maintenance are common among golf course superintendents. And since the superintendent must deal with any problems that arise from a product, he is in the best position to know what needs improving.

For Hank Maus, the superintendent at Palmetto Pines Country Club in Cape Coral, the problem in March of 1984 was the trap rake that golfers use to erase their tracks from sand traps.

"They looked horrible," says Maus, "and no matter where you were in a sand trap, the rake was always on the other side."

Then when an employee mowed down 45 trap rakes that had just been purchased, Maus was angered to action.

He came up with a concept for a new product and presented it to his mechanic, Walt Grube.

Together Maus and Grube developed a trap rake that is durable and convenient for a golfer to use while requiring no maintenance by golf course personnel.

Made of lexan, a high quality plastic used to make football helmets, the rake is built to last a lifetime. Engineered for safety, there are no sharp edges and the fiberglass handle was designed for easy gripping by women. Available in an assortment of colors with covers that can be personalized with club logos or names, it folds to fit in a golf bag along with golf clubs.

With a prototype built, Maus and Grube applied for a patent and formed Do Nan Enterprises.

Since then, Maus has suffered good-natured ribbing from peers and the arduous patenting process. Finding a firm to manufacture the product was difficult and Maus and Grube had to rely on the "word-of-mouth" method to market the rake.

Finally, in May of 1985, they received an order from a firm with 11 national distributors. Delivery is scheduled for August and there are several golf courses interested in ordering the rake and giving them to members as dues are paid.

"It will be a great money-maker for pro-shops," adds Maus. "They can be sold as gifts or bought with chits won in tournaments."

With the success of the trap rake, Do Nan has other plans which it hopes to put into production.

Prototypes for several aluminum rakes are being used by Maus and Grube already. Rollers that contain no fluid and are easy to rebuild have been developed by Grube for use on large pieces of equipment, such as fairway units. There are also a few projects on the board that would benefit consumers in general.

But possibly the most ambitious of Do Nan's projects is a new greens mower that will "blow the market" according to Grube. Plans for the mower were sent to Washington D.C. five months ago and Maus and Grube are awaiting a patent.

Although most golf course maintenance tools and equipment reflect quality craftsmanship, there is always room for the market to expand; particularly where new ideas are concerned. And who better to create products for an expanded market than the golf course superintendent. ■

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