

Enterprising used equipment broker proves that one superintendent's pile of junk is another's latent treasure

Old mowers never die...

BY EARL COLLINGS

HOBE SOUND — You've heard of the "people-to-people" program where travelers exchange their experiences with people from other countries on a planned face-to-face basis?

Bill Barnette has started something like that in the turf business that might be called the "superintendent-to-superintendent" program to buy and sell used turf equipment as is.

And it is almost face-to-face. Barnette finds excess used equipment, lists it, photographs it as is and, when a buyer wants it, Barnette picks the unit up from the seller and delivers it. The selling price listed includes his brokerage fee.

Barnette's business is called UTEC — Used Turf Equipment Co. Simple enough. He started the business in behalf of the overworked superintendent who doesn't have time to go out and look for buyers of equipment he no longer needs, or who doesn't have time to go out and find used pieces to fit his needs and his budget.



UTEC

Bill Barnette, left, with David Paul, service manager at the Loxahatchee Club in Jupiter

UTEC is really a used equipment clearing house.

The company started a little more than a year ago when Barnette, who had been selling new turf equipment in south Florida, suddenly realized that every course he called on had several pieces of used — sometimes almost new — equipment sitting idle in the yard.

He would hear his prospects say, "I would like to get that new unit but I can't get rid of some of this extra stuff I have around here now." Or "I sure need one but my budget won't handle one. Do you have a good used unit?"

The light went on, and Barnette set up shop.

"Shop," that is, with a truck, a trailer, a mobile phone and a camera. Plus the conviction that he could fill a real need. He knew that all the unused equipment he had

seen for a couple of years was useful and saleable. He knew the area. He knew the business. And he knew machines. (He had been division director of maintenance for the South Florida Water Management District and, before that, had been in construction, an authority on welding.)

His plan was simple. Find the turf equipment superintendents want to sell. Take a picture of it in color. Get an honest listing of it and its condition. Publish a flyer to all courses offering the equipment for sale. When he has a buyer, pick it up, deliver it and get the check.

It worked. In fact, he has already worn out one truck.

When asked why so much extra used equipment is available, Barnette suggests several reasons. A superintendent might

(Continued on page 74)

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(From page 73)

find equipment he is not familiar with at his new course. He phases out his inherited equipment as soon as possible, and gets his old favorites.

Or the superintendent at a more affluent course might feel it is more economical in the long run to have a good routine maintenance program and replace equipment every two to four years on a rotating schedule rather than do major repairs.

Or since major turf equipment is so specialized, a superintendent at one time might have bought a unit for a special use and it is now rarely if ever used.

Barnette points out that all such cases offer the opportunity for clubs with smaller budgets to get that needed unit at great savings. And from experience, he knows

that a good mechanic can spruce up almost any unit. Many times the used equipment needs only the clean-up-tune-up-grease-or-sharpen treatment. Barnette, however, does not repair or rebuild equipment himself. But he does have a list of qualified turf mechanics he can refer the buyer to.

UTEC serves southeast-central Florida, roughly the area covered by the Palm Beach, Treasure Coast, Ridge and Central Florida chapters. Shipping is free for transactions between superintendents in the same chapter; otherwise it's \$1.50 a mile.

The most common equipment available? Greensmowers, sand rakes and trim mowers. However, UTEC has sold everything from an almost-new fairway mower in excellent condition for \$22,500 to golf cars in fair condition for \$480 to a \$300 sod cutter. Barnette will list any piece for sale, but his minimum brokerage fee is \$100. The selling price includes brokerage on a sliding scale of 20 percent or less.



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Currently UTEC offers a couple of major units available from the Chicago area. In those cases, the sellers have arranged for commercial carrier delivery and included that in the price.

The color photos Barnette takes are in his working catalog he personally shows to customers. He urges them to call the seller or his mechanic. He also mails a black-and-white flyer showing equipment on a regular basis.

Where does UTEC go from here?

Barnette is expanding slowly. In August, he entered into a joint venture with Lakeland-based Golf Ventures to represent UTEC in the Bahamas and much of the rest of the state. David Miller and Jim Sartain will represent the company in Central Florida, Bob Schroter in North Florida and David Cheesman in South Florida and the Bahamas.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Earl Collings is a free-lance publicist based in South Florida. Advertisers may submit feature stories about their companies, which will be edited to meet Florida Green standards and will be used when space is available. Priority will be given to stories about new products and services.

Ransomes buys Cushman, Ryan

JOHNSON CREEK, WIS. — Ransomes America has acquired three major names

in turf equipment with the purchase of Cushman, Ryan and Brouwer Turf Equipment Ltd. from the Outboard Marine Corporation.

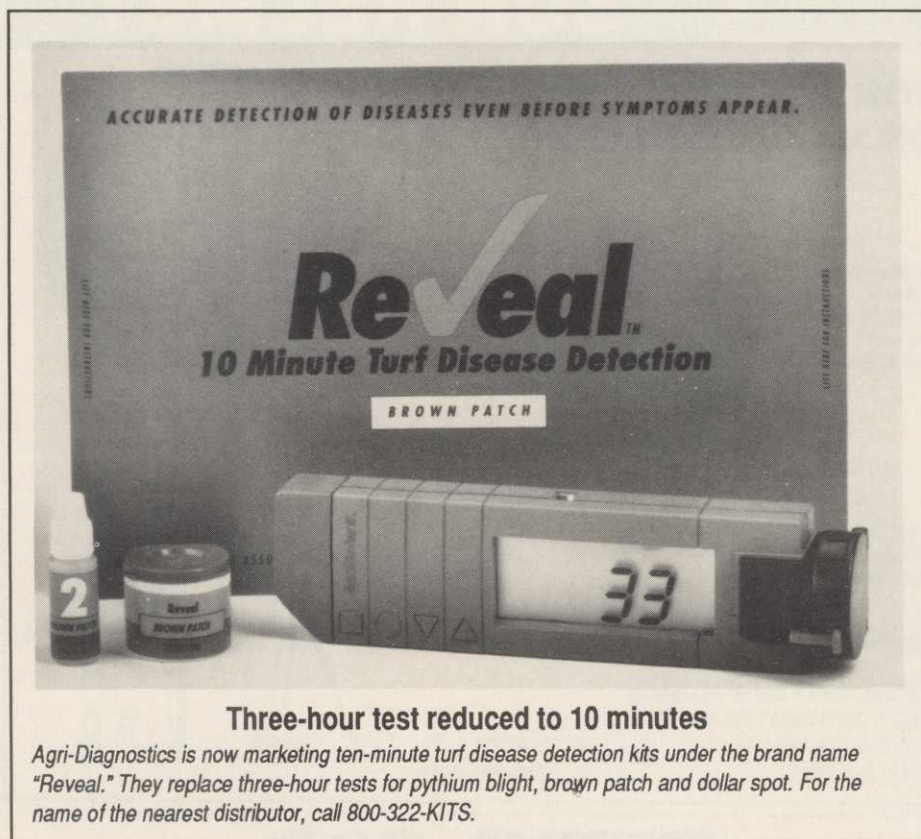
According to Helmut Adam, president of Ransomes America — a division of Ransomes plc (*sic*) of Ipswich, England — the price was \$150 million.

The Cushman group, based in Lincoln,

Neb., includes Cushman turf vehicles and mowers, Ryan aerators and sod cutters and Brouwer mowers, vacuums and sod harvesting equipment.

"It is a well-run company with a good name," said Adam. "We are not going to change something that runs as well as

(Please see RANSOMES, page 78)



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