

Golf Course Mechanic: The Unsung Hero

by CHARLIE CROSS

The past ten years have brought about a tremendous change in the equipment that golf course superintendents use to maintain their golf courses. Tractor drawn, ground driven units for use on fairway turf and certain rough areas are virtually a thing of the past. The trend to use lightweight mowers in the three and five unit classification on fairway turf has been established and appears here to stay.

Golf Course Superintendents seem to be cutting all fine turf areas at lower heights, which puts a premium on a sharp, properly adjusted, well maintained machine. The person generally responsible for the overall performance of a mowing machine and other golf course equipment is the Golf Course Mechanic.

Many golf courses today have equipment inventories that easily exceed \$300,000 in replacement cost. Included in the inventory are many specialized pieces of equipment which require altogether different preventative and daily maintenance. Mowers of varying types and styles, tractors, transport/utility vehicles, spray apparatus, aerators, trucks, trap rakes, weed eaters and sod cutters. The list could go on. Maintaining all the above mentioned

equipment in proper operating condition sounds like a large responsibility. It is.

The majority of golf course maintenance operations need a full time mechanic. The Golf Course Superintendent doesn't usually have time and is not paid to be the hands on mechanic. The superintendent's time is to be devoted to managing and maintaining his golf course.

A qualified Golf Course Mechanic should have a thorough understanding of internal combustion engines, both two and four stroke, reel mower maintenance and adjustment, and spraying apparatus maintenance and repair. Some knowledge of hydraulic system maintenance and repair is very helpful since so many machines are using hydraulics as a power source.

The equipment maintenance area where the mechanic spends many hours should be neat and clean. A good supply of the proper tools with easy accessibility should be available. Tools should not leave the shop unless the mechanic needs them in the field.

The parts area should be stocked with often used items, plus a supply of items that habitually utilize Murphy's Law, should be kept on hand.

Finding a mechanic that meets your specifications is indeed a tough task. What is a good way to find and keep that "Great Mechanic" we are all hoping for?

One possibility is to hire a vocational school student whose schooling has covered the basics, and by utilizing local equipment dealers to train a person on how to maintain the specific equipment you have in inventory. Also there could be someone on your existing crew who with some extra effort and training could work into the position.

I feel that we, as Golf Course Superintendents, through the use of proper communication channels with our committee chairman or Board of Directors, can have the funds allocated to properly train and educate our Golf Course Mechanic. Once the Superintendent feels comfortable with the mechanic's abilities, the mechanic should be compensated adequately for his skill and efforts. After all, the mechanic's position is a very important one.

When viewing your golf course and the greens are rolling well, fairways striped to perfection and equipment breakdowns are at a minimum, remember your mechanic. He can make your whole operation run much more efficiently. 🍏



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