

Mechanically Inclined

MAINTAINING THE EQUIPMENT THAT MAINTAINS THE COURSE

There's been a lot of discussion over the job title of golf course superintendent, greenkeeper, turf manager or director of grounds. What best describes the role and responsibilities of the position? Well, it doesn't stop there. The professionals who keep the golf course equipment running so superintendents can apply all that agronomic wizardry are called mechanics, equipment technicians, equipment managers or shop managers. Whatever the title, you may be the head of the outfit but they are your right hand. There are several equipment technician associations around the state seeking to organize and professionalize the position. Check out the following articles for a look into the role of the equipment manager.

Joel Jackson

HAWK'S NEST

Neatness Counts... From Procedures to Record-Keeping

By Tom Trammel, CGCS

Hawk's Nest is an 18-hole, private golf course in Vero Beach with a maintenance staff of 23. Head mechanic Bruce Raitchel has one full-time assistant, Jacob Watson, and occasionally a part-timer as a second helper. Raitchel, a Lake City CC turf equipment management grad, is in his 13th year as head mechanic, starting his fifth year at Hawk's Nest. He is recognized as one of the leaders in his field.

Daily operations for the upcoming week are on a master schedule board located in the break room. Our goal is to stay as balanced as possible with

mechanic and crew schedules so that it keeps them all in a forward-moving focus.

The shop is swept daily and is kept neat; it's accessed only by the assistant and head mechanic. It is a separate building thus there is no need for staff members to enter. All shop tools are bought and owned by the club. A separate tool box of lesser-value, miscellaneous tools is kept for the rest of the staff.

All the carts and maintenance

equipment items have the operators' names printed on them, making each operator responsible to clean and check the oil on his assigned equipment. A board in the break room allows operators to write down any



Top quality and specialized tools are bought and owned by Hawk's Nest. Photo by Tom Trammel.

issues and problems with the equipment if the mechanics are not available in the shop or if a problem occurs falls over a weekend. For emergencies there is with a radio to call the mechanics if they are out in the field.

All equipment costs, expenses and servicing records are accounted for on Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. The head mechanic has a monthly maintenance and repair budget allotment and performs his own purchasing and invoicing through the golf course office manager.

The head mechanic is responsible for lubricating all pieces of equipment that are driven on the greens. Operators of rough-, slope- and fairway-mowing equipment lubricate their units daily. Time is allocated at the end of the day for each operator to do the servicing and detailed cleaning. The operators are required to report any equipment issues or safety problems to the head mechanic as soon after it occurs as possible.

The superintendent and head mechanic meet at least once a week formally to go over the existing and future status of mowing heights, cultural practices, ideas, needed services and operator performance. Greens mower reels are ground weekly, tee mowers biweekly, slope and rough mowers three times a year. Hydraulic hoses are typically changed out

Hawk's Nest head mechanic David Raitchel has been at Hawk's Nest for five years. David is a graduate of the Lake City Community College golf operations turf equipment management program. Photo by Tom Trammel.



The shop work areas are kept neat and clean. Access is limited to the mechanics. Photo by Tom Trammel.

annually and biodegradable fluid is used.

Innovations

Instead of throwing out a 250 gallon, mini-bulk fertilization tank after it was emptied out, Bruce turned it into a gravity-feed water wagon. This wagon is used wet our native cart paths, keeping the dust level down. It is also used for watering our newly planted trees and foliage and any hot spots throughout the golf course.

In the winter months, the shop is open for a monthly tour. The head mechanic gives a 45-minute behind-the-scenes tour; grinding of reels, backlapping, mower-height adjustment and the differences among slicing, aerifying, verticutting, grooming and more.

Equipment Inventory

2 fairway units, 2 rough units, 2 slope mowers, 8 walk greens mowers (new Toro Flex 21), 6 walk tee mowers, 12 utility carts, Terra Topper top-dresser for light applications, Meter-Matic for heavier applications.

RED STICK GC

It Starts With Skills and Ends With Professionalism

By Corby Coggins

What is the role of a golf course equipment manager? Depending on where this question is

SEED

For Successful Seeding...

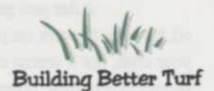
Billy Griffith
407-474-2460

Butch Gill
770-329-9000

- Cool Season Turfgrass Seed •
- Wild Flowers and Native Grass Seed •
- Bentgrass Seed •
- Warm Season Turfgrass Seed •



Calcium Silicate Corporation



Tifton Physical Soil Testing Laboratory, Inc.

Accredited by the American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA)

Specializing in:

- Testing All Materials for USGA Golf Green Construction.
- Developing Putting Green Rootzone Mixtures that meet USGA Specifications.
- Recommending Topdressing and Bunker (Trap) Sands that meet USGA Specifications.
- Developing Sportsturf Rootzone Mixes with Optimum Physical Properties for Athletic Fields.



1412 Murray Avenue
Tifton, Georgia 31794

www.tiftonsoillab.com

T. Powell Gaines
(229) 382-7292

asked, I'm sure you're bound to get different answers. As we all know, there are many different types of clubs out there with different styles management. While the Equipment manager's primary reason for being hired is to manage and maintain a rather expensive fleet of equipment, a low course maintenance budget may require him to do other jobs besides his traditional one.

I've seen and even experienced for myself the responsibility of mowing greens, course set up, mowing fairways etc., then coming in and doing the maintenance on the equipment. Sometimes the equipment manager has the assistant superintendent's responsibilities of getting the whole crew started in the morning, and then making sure that their quality of work is acceptable. Job requirements all depend on where you're employed.

I've been in the golf course business now for nine years. I completed the turf equipment management program at Lake City Community College, and have had the chance to work at low- and high-end golf clubs. From that experience I've developed my perception of what the role of the equipment manager should be. There are many quality equipment managers who already operate their shops in a very smooth and efficient manner. The sole purpose for writing this article is to share some insights with current and possible future equipment managers to provide a solid foundation for a successful career.

Personal Skills

Before we discuss the technical skills and tasks of the equipment manager, there are other things that are just as important. A positive attitude is a must to be successful in this business. Think about it. If I got mad every time someone brought in a broken piece of equipment to the shop, my tenure in the golf course industry would be short lived.

For those who get mad and fly off the handle easily, I'll say it again: You have to keep a positive attitude. Fixing broken things is your job. That's what you were hired to do.

Besides, the more equipment you get to work on simply means more experience and more knowledge you gain.

After you get the positive attitude perfected, it's time to work on patience. I don't know about your club, but it seems everywhere I've been, there is always one maniac operator who consistently breaks



The Red Stick equipment manager's office. Having strong communications and computer and skills can help the shop operate in a more efficient manner. Photo by Corby Coggins.

things. That maniac will certainly bend fenders and sometimes our nerves.

Does that mean you can curse at him or beat him up each time he immobilizes another piece of equipment? It may cross your mind, but you have to rely on your positive attitude and exercise patience.

It will take patience in many situations, like focusing on rebuilding that tiny carburetor, while getting interrupted by three radio calls on that maniac operator stuck again on No. 4. Time for making repairs may be taken away for training a new operator on a piece of equipment. If you can cut your tool-throwing down to once a week, maintain a good attitude, and exercise lots of patience, you'll gain a lot respect from the Superintendent and the crew.

Management Skills

Newly appointed equipment managers soon find out that the needed skills can be quite numerous. I think they are all important, but there are a few that I feel are good building blocks for quality equipment management.

I'll start with initiative, or "self-starting skills." Without initiative you're going to sit around every day waiting for a piece of equipment to break,

or rely on the superintendent to tell you everything you need to do.

Wrong!

One who lacks initiative will soon be waiting for things to break at home because their employment will be short lived. Equipment managers are hired to make educated decisions on what and when something is to be done to the club's equipment fleet. Besides unexpected equipment failures, a well-prepared equipment manager should know what they're going to do every day.

Good communication skills are essential. Communications may come easily to some and with greater difficulty to others depending on where they are. Maintenance crews are becoming more diverse every day, and being able to communicate with the operators is essential. You may want to consider taking a basic foreign language course either on tape or at a local school. Regardless of how you choose to strengthen your communication skills, the main goal is to find a way to communicate with the course management and the crew members.

The main objective is to always know what's going on. There's not a worse feeling in this line of work than to spend all day grinding reels only

Dry Fertilizer
Bulk Liquid Fertilizer

Office: 954-741-4041
Fax: 954-741-4082



GREEN-WAY

Quality Turf Products
We Specialize in Keeping you GREEN

MANGA PLEX PLUS • ULTRA - GREEN • BIO-PLEX

10008 N.W. 53rd Street • Sunrise, Florida 33351

to find out the greens are being top-dressed the next day. Whether it's a monthly planner, Post-it notes, a foreign language class, or just a good, old-fashioned conversation between people; good communication skills are a necessity.

Let's move on to computer skills. I know not every club has purchased a computer for the shop, but for those who have, I'm sure management envisioned neat, organized documents being printed out of that \$1,700 computer package they just purchased and not a higher pinball score at lunch time every day.

Having strong computer skills will create endless possibilities like being able to design different forms, record expenses and inventory to help the shop operate in a more efficient manner, or having online access to most of the major equipment suppliers in the industry. For those fortunate enough to have a computer, learn how to use it and make it part of your everyday role.

Next are organizational skills. Without these skills, an equipment manager would simply run himself ragged. For example, someone brings in a piece of equipment that has a broken part that you don't have in stock. Let's also say that this part requires an extensive amount of time to be removed.

Do you drop what you're doing to take it apart immediately and get consumed in it for the majority of the day?

The smart thing to do would be to finish the daily schedule so tomorrow's equipment will be ready to roll. If time permits, you can start breaking

down the broken machine. There are always times when you have to prioritize what and when jobs need to be done.

If you are blessed with an assistant or assistants, you may have several projects going on at once. If any job or project lacks good organization, it will likely be completed improperly or not at all.

Technical Skills

The last set of skills is definitely the most important. Do technical skills ring a bell? I bet you were wondering if I was ever going to mention these. Technical skills are definitely a broad category but I'll touch on a few that I feel are essential in the equipment manager's role.

Understand electronics and electrical systems. You don't have to know how to solder microscopic parts to a circuit board but it is helpful to be able to read an electrical schematic so you can troubleshoot that faulty part.

Be mechanically inclined. It's our job to know how gas, diesel, two-stroke and four-stroke engines operate and to be able to troubleshoot them if they fail. I don't know about other technicians, but I wasn't taught everything there is to know about all the equipment I'm responsible for just by enrolling in a small-engine class. Sometimes one has to learn by doing and that is where being mechanically inclined helps out.

Know hydraulic systems. It's very important to learn how the hydraulic systems work in the

different pieces of equipment.

Last but not least, reel grinding and reel set up will probably be the most reflective technical skill that you will encounter. What I mean is that whether you work for a private or public course, all the eyes of the players usually see quality of cut. If the player consistently plays on turf with streaks and stragglers, they will sometimes start to presume that the equipment manager doesn't know what they're doing.

We can also look at this situation from a different point of view. A set of reels could have a perfect cut, but the mower they're attached to could be mechanically unfit. That is why it is equally important to be strong in all the skills that I have mentioned in this section and not just one or two.

There's no way around the technical skills involved in performing the role of an equipment manager. If one chooses to strengthen or implement the other skills I've mentioned into their daily role, others will start to develop a more professional image of them.

Repair and Maintenance Budget

When you become an equipment manager, you often inherit the responsibility of spending a portion of the golf course's annual maintenance budget. This is usually the repair and maintenance budget or R&M budget line item. The R&M budget is for monthly replacement parts and shop supplies for the club's fiscal year. It is the responsibility of the equip-

South Florida Grassing, Inc

Over 35 Years in the Grassing Industry

TifSport

SeaIsle
Certified Seashore Paspalum

Sod, Sprigs and Rolls available

- We provide reworking and planting services for fairways, tees and greens
- Our grass is grown in Hobe Sound on gassed, sand-based soil
- Hydro-mulching, grassing and mulching also available

Tifway 419

TifEagle

Tifdwarf



Certified Producer

Southern Seed
Certification Association

(561) 546-4191

www.southfloridagrassing.com

800-483-4279

ment manager to spend this money in the club's best interest by buying only necessary items and not the \$150 case of brake cleaner from that cute blonde in the mini skirt.

It is important to keep a monthly log with a running total of the R&M purchases so you can keep track of total expenses for the year. I would suggest a log that includes the following: date of purchase, invoice number from sales receipt or packing list, vendor name, what was purchased, and the amount spent. Not only will this log help you stay on budget, it's good reference material for any questions that may arise in the event that you do go over budget.

Parts, Tools, and Shop Supplies

When it comes to purchasing important and necessary items for the shop, the equipment manager will be faced with many decisions. Questions like, What parts do I need to stock? Who is the best vendor to buy from? What brand of tools should I purchase? or perhaps What kind of supplies do I need?

All of these are legitimate questions and should be considered carefully. Although technicians' opinions will vary on each of the previous questions, here's a list of things to consider before making a final decision.

I'll start with "What kind of parts should be stocked?" While it's impossible to stock every part for every piece of equipment in your fleet, you should

stock the high-wear items such as belts, rotary blades, bearings, bedknives, filters (air, oil, & fuel) for most of the equipment, spark plugs, stick edger blades, string trimmer line and anything else your maintenance crew seems to use or "break" a lot of. The key is to keep records of what parts seem to wear out most often and stock two or more of them to prevent equipment down time.

"Where should you buy your parts?" I would suggest buying them from vendors who are knowledgeable about their parts inventory and will stand behind their products after the sale. When purchasing parts, don't buy the cheapest, buy quality. The last thing I want to do is repetitively replace junkie "will-fit" parts. I would also recommend supporting your local vendors as much as possible. By supporting local vendors, you not only help out the little man, but they will usually go the extra mile when you desperately need a critical part.

"What brand of tools should an equipment manager stock?" When purchasing tools, there are a few things that need to be considered, like: Who's going to be using them? How often are they going to be used? or How much money is in the tool budget?

The answers to these questions are very simple. The tools that are used the most should fit comfortably in the primary user's hands and be made of the best quality materials that a club or the technician can afford. However, you may want to re-think the previous statement when buying tools for the

crewmembers or irrigation technician. When purchasing tools for them, I usually try to buy the cheapest and safest tools possible.

The reason for this is that it makes absolutely no sense to purchase hundreds of dollars worth of tools only to have them buried in a hole or dumped out of a cart bed at the end of the day. I tell everybody that the company tool box is full of David Copperfield tools, meaning that every other day a tool seems to make itself disappear. Unlike Mr. Copperfield, the missing tools prove that their absence is no illusion; they're simply never seen again.

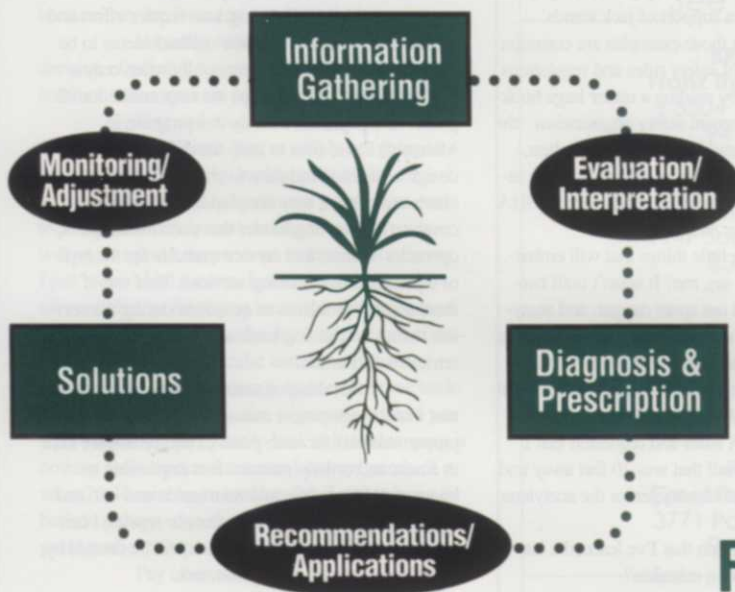
Now that we know tools can disappear on their own, lets move on to supplies that need to be kept on hand at the shop. While the supply list could go on and on, here are a few things that are important to have readily available.

Every shop should have as many of the following assortments as possible: o-rings, nuts and bolts (metric, standard, fine and coarse thread, minimum of grade five), cotter pins, roll pins, clevis pins, electrical wire and connectors, electrical fuses, square key stock, woodruff keys, battery terminal ends, penetrating oils, chain and cable lube, brake and carburetor cleaner, implement pull pins, tapes (Teflon, electrical, duct), wood screws, machine screws, set screws, and if possible, pop rivets. These should all be of the best quality afforded by the budget.

There may be other supplies that will be acquired as time goes on, but those just listed will

The Floratine Approach

"Prescription Without Diagnosis is Malpractice"



- Accumulation of comprehensive, site specific information from laboratory analysis, physical examination, and client dialogue.
- Evaluation and interpretation of information to understand and explain agronomic conditions.
- Recommendation of scientifically sound, environmentally responsible methods and materials to promote optimum soil functioning and turf quality.
- Continuing conscientious monitoring and appropriate program adjustment to achieve maximum health and aesthetics.

Floratine of Florida

Terry Brawley 727-638-3481 Jim Lawson 941-633-6398 Tom Phillips 561-719-6265 Carl Bronson 727-638-5858



SPREADRITE, INC.

CUSTOM SPREADING
 FERTILIZER • DOLOMITE • GYPSUM
 ARAGONITE • HYCAL LIME

FAIRWAY TOP DRESSING

LAMAR SAPP
ART SAPP

6001 S.W. 19th STREET
 PLANTATION, FL 33317
 MOBILE: (561) 479-9417
 MOBILE: (954) 383-4036

Upstart Products, Inc.

Performance Chemistry
 For Aquatics & Turf

CASCADE PLUS
 LIQUID OR GRANULAR

PHYTO-FOS
 FAST RELEASE SYSTEMIC PHOSPHOROUS

AMINO ACID BIOFERTILIZERS
 Quelant-Ca — Quelant-K
 Macro-Sorb radicular — Macro-Sorb foliar

1 800 203 5629

Laserturf.
Setting the Standard

Laser Controlled Leveling
 and Topdressing For:

Golf Tees
Sports Fields
Tennis & Croquet
Courts

- **Dale Witting**
Main Office
- **Ron Butler**
Central Florida
- **Gary Clemmer**
Southeast Coast
- **Tom Mackanos**
Northeast Coast

772-225-3771

1535 NE Darlich Ave.
 Jensen Beach, FL 34957

usually get you by. When purchasing supplies, don't be afraid to try different products on the market. Experiment until you find the ones that work the best at the right price for you. One thing equipment managers should keep in mind while experimenting is to use up what they have before ordering another kind. If you don't, you may end up with five cases of different brands of penetrating oil sitting on the shelf collecting dust. This may indicate to upper management that the equipment manager is purchasing unnecessary items and may result in the time-consuming requirement that all future purchases be approved before any order is placed.

Shop Organization and Safety

Keeping a shop well organized will not only improve the efficiency of maintenance procedures, it will also produce a more professional image of you and the other staff each time somebody visits the maintenance facility. From tools to air filters, a properly organized shop should have a designated place for everything. Once locations have been established for items in the shop and parts room, it is the equipment manager's responsibility to make sure they stay in an orderly manner. It will not only make it easier to find parts and tools, it also creates a safe atmosphere by not having trip hazards in the middle of the floor.

When organizing a shop, keep things where they will be utilized in the most efficient way. Simple things like keeping tire tools close to the tire machine, keeping your welder and welding supplies close to each other, or even fabricating a rack to store oils and grease guns on, will definitely aid in efficient utilization.

It is also up to the equipment manager to maintain a safe shop. Shop safety usually amounts to nothing more than a little common sense. You certainly wouldn't put a reel grinder or welder near a flammable parts washer. Nor would you want to work on a jacked-up piece of equipment without the extra support of jack stands.

Although those examples are common sense, there are a lot of safety rules and regulations that must be learned by reading a rather large book published by a government safety organization - the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, called OSHA. I highly recommend reading this literature so you will be somewhat prepared if OSHA decides to inspect your shop.

It's all the little things that will embarrass you - or should I say, me? It wasn't until two years ago that I found out spare oxygen and acetylene bottles couldn't be stored next to each other on the same wall. I was so proud of the way I had the bottles chained and secured to the wall but the local fire marshal thought differently. He kindly enlightened me to the OSHA rules and requested that I drill more holes in a wall that was 20 feet away and chain and secure either the oxygen or the acetylene bottles there.

Did I mention that I've learned a lot over the years by making mistakes?

Regardless of how we learn the proper way to do things, try not to make too many mistakes when it comes to safety, and remember this last statement. The equipment manager should always

lead by example by using - and making sure others are using - the proper safety equipment recommended for individual jobs at the workplace.

Making Preventive Maintenance Programs a Success

Getting the longest possible life out of the equipment fleet should be one of the primary goals of the equipment manager. The best way to accomplish this is to design and implement a good preventive maintenance program. There are various PM programs available for technicians to use. There are computer programs where you can spend hours typing in key information from each piece of equipment and then keep track of how many hours each piece of equipment ran each day in order for the program to schedule the services.

Then there is program known as the "hourly method." This simply means that somebody walks around to every piece of equipment at the end of each day and records the hour-meter readings. This program usually results in following the manufacturer's exact specifications when certain services need to be done at certain hour milestones. In a perfect world, (and with a few assistant mechanics), I would have to say this program would promote the greatest longevity on the equipment. It does require one person to devote almost their whole workday to ensure proper filters are being ordered and the right services are being scheduled.

The last PM program that I'll mention is the one I use on our equipment fleet. This program is known as the "calendar method." The calendar method program works by estimating the amount of time each piece of equipment gets used each week or month, then making preventive maintenance charts for each type of equipment by following the manufacturer's recommendations as to when services are to be performed. Then the maintenance service for each piece of equipment is put into a four-week interval chart to simplify things.

Yes, all PM programs require effort and commitment, but the calendar method seems to be the most practical for me, especially when only a few people (two at my shop) are responsible for 92 pieces of equipment. I set up this program in Microsoft Excel files to keep the different charts I design organized and easy to change. After the charts are printed, they are placed in a transparent cover on a three-ring binder that contains the parts, operators' names, and service manuals for the type of equipment that is being serviced. That way if there are any problems or questions during the service, there's no running back and forth to the office to retrieve information.

Speaking of manuals, it is very important that the equipment manager make sure all the proper manuals for each piece of equipment are kept in a neat and orderly manner. It is impossible to know every piece of equipment inside and out, and by guessing at certain adjustments or repairs, I can assure you that most of your work will be created by you if you don't do your homework.

Another thing the equipment manager should keep in mind when performing oil and filter changes is the quality of materials being used. Always follow the manufacturers' recommendations

as to what *type* to use, but it's up to you to figure out what *brand* to buy. As far as filters go, there are only a handful of companies that manufacture them so do your research before making a decision on what brand should be installed in your equipment.

On the other hand, there are a lot of choices when it comes to purchasing engine and hydraulic oils. There are petroleum-based oils, semi-synthetic oils, fully synthetic oils, and biodegradable oils. A good rule of thumb for engine oil, once again, is to buy the best you can afford. I look for engine oil with a high TBN number and make sure that its API service classification meets or exceeds industry standards. When I purchase hydraulic oil, the first thing I do is make sure it's compatible to the manufacturer's specifications, then I look at a few things like its thermal stability, anti-wear protection, rust protection, hydrolytic stability, and demulsibility.

When quality oils are purchased, oil drain-and-change intervals can be extended. Longer drain intervals reduce labor and most importantly, generate less waste oil and filters. As you can see, there are many key factors involved in designing and implementing a PM program, but no matter what program you choose, always remember that a good PM program will help you manage the equipment and not let the equipment manage you.

Backlapping vs. Grinding

"Do I grind or backlap?" Every equipment manager is going to be faced with this question sometime in his career.

There is no wrong or right answer to the previous statement. But if you were to attend some of the technician meetings I've been to, you'd think it was some big, complicated decision. From what I've seen in the industry, it's mostly the equipment manager's preference and/or the turf conditions that lead to the final decision. Believe it or not, there are still clubs that do not have both grinders or backlapping machines, which makes the decision even easier because they are forced to do one or the other.

Naturally, certain factors will aid in the decision of whether to grind or backlap. It's mostly common sense but here are a few examples anyway.

Your end product is going to vary with different turf conditions. You're simply not going to get a reel to cut paper by backlapping it after it has mowed all those freshly topdressed greens. I'm sure there are some equipment managers out there who will argue against the previous statement, but for me, I just haven't had success. Let's say you have a fairway unit that, as far as you know, mowed only grass on all the fairways. Let's also say it takes four to five hours to grind that particular unit. Since the reels haven't taken a severe beating, most of the time backlapping can bring back a nice edge and also save you time. Either way you want to look at it, backlapping is nothing more than maintenance between grinds. If it takes 20-30 minutes to backlap a dull reel to bring it back to a sharp edge, then make a strong attempt to grind it whenever possible.

Pay close attention to the dulling curve because the longer you wait, simply means more damage and stress to the grass. Whether it's grinding or backlapping, the main objective in reel maintenance is to have a sharp reel that produces a high

TURF TOUGH. TURF TENDER.



Kubota gives you a range of affordable compact utility tractors for turf and landscape work. They are tough and tender at the same time.

Tough: Handle all the different landscaping and grounds maintenance jobs you need to get done with Kubota's Performance-Matched loaders and backhoes, plus operate tillers, mowers, sprayers, snow blowers and more.

Tender: You can choose standard turf tires, Galaxy turf special tires for a light step on the turf or R4 industrial tires for multi-purpose use.

Your Kubota dealer can help you choose the powerful, versatile, affordable model that's best for your work and your budget.

See One Of These Kubota Dealers Today!

BRADENTON
Franz Tractor Company
5504 15th Street, E.
941-755-5722

FT. PIERCE
Pippin Tractor
3200 Kings Highway
800-332-7896

CRESTVIEW
Wise Equipment Sales & Service
1147 South Ferdon Blvd.
850-682-3366

HOMESTEAD
Richards Tractors & Implement
1995 N.E. 8th Street
305-247-8711

DELAND
Triple D Equipment
2820 S. Firehouse Road
386-734-2119
tripledeq@worldnet.att.net

LAND O' LAKES
Gulf Coast Tractor & Equipment
3827 Land O' Lakes Blvd. (Hwy. 41)
813-995-2533

FT. MYERS
Creel Tractor Company
3771 Palm Beach Blvd.
941-694-2185

PLANT CITY
Gulf Coast Turf & Tractor
404 N. Frontage Road
813-764-0603

Kubota Everything you value.

Kubota Tractor Corporation markets a full line of tractors and construction equipment through a nationwide network of over 1000 authorized dealers.





Offering a HUGE variety of floating fountains and bottom-diffuser aeration systems at factory-discounted prices! Installation and service available throughout Florida. Spray heights and patterns from 3' to over 60'. Excellent quality construction, many lighting options, deluxe control centers and excellent warranty.



Call us now for a SAME DAY discounted quote and a FREE CATALOG
1-800-353-5253
www.lakefountains.com

quality of cut. I've tried both methods and I would suggest to anyone who hasn't, go ahead and give them a try, because when done properly you'll see they are both very effective.

Working with an Assistant Mechanic

I know every shop doesn't automatically come equipped with an assistant mechanic, but there are some with up to five or six. If an equipment manager is blessed with one or more assistants, he should exercise patience and try to teach them everything they want to learn about equipment management. Over the years at technicians' meetings, I've heard several equipment managers say that they don't let their assistants anywhere near the reels.

Let me get this straight. These equipment managers have asked for assistants, got them, and now they're afraid to teach them something? I've thought about that statement and can't for the life of me figure out why anyone would have such an attitude. I guess that means these individuals go on vacation only to come back to a pile of work because the assistant mechanic wasn't trained on how to do it.

Assistant mechanics are employed so the equipment maintenance can be shared, not so they can change oil and sweep the floors at the end of the day. If they have questions, take time and answer them. If time doesn't permit, make a mental note and answer it later. Just remember,

you had to start somewhere too. The more knowledge that the assistant mechanic acquires will only make the equipment manager's job easier.

Praise your assistants. You'll be surprised how far a little compliment will go. Encourage them to enroll in classes that pertain to equipment management, such as a small-engine class or perhaps a reel-grinding class. I know these classes aren't available everywhere, but I also know that some of the major manufacturers offer seminars that would benefit assistant and head mechanics. Bring your assistant to these seminars when possible; let them learn with you.

For those equipment managers who are scared or threatened by a smart assistant, they apparently have the "you can't teach an old dog new tricks disease." Don't be afraid of your assistant learning more things about this industry. Those who have well-trained assistants know just how valuable they are.

They also know how much time and patience may have been invested in training them. I bring this up because at some point in time your assistant will reach his or her goal by landing an equipment manager's job. No matter how much time was spent training them, do not get mad or fault these individuals for improving themselves. All you can do is hope that some quality work ethics were instilled in them and

LOSE YOUR MARBLES

Are fertilizer granules on your greens driving you crazy?
GreenEdge® can fix that.

- **GreenEdge®** liquid products are designed to enhance growth, improve color and increase stress tolerance in turfgrass and ornamentals.
- Liquid **GreenEdge®** provides all the benefits of granular fertilizer without leaving particles on your greens.
- Use liquid **GreenEdge®** by itself or with a low rate of our patent pending ultra fine greens grade product for increased nutrient uptake efficiency.

Call toll free 877-GREEN30 for more information about **GreenEdge®** products.



GreenEdge®

GreenTechnologies, Inc.

605 NW 53rd Ave., Suite A-15, Gainesville, FL 32609, www.green-edge.com

**Agronomically Superior Environmentally Sound
 Technologically Advanced**



An equipment manager also has to be organized mentally and in the physical work space to get the job done properly. Photo by Corby Coggins.



Equipment Manager Corby Coggins (left) trains assistant mechanic Mike Cole on utility vehicle engine maintenance. Coggins believes well-trained assistants make his job easier.



Read up on OSHA regulations and make sure your shop is always clean, organized and safe. You never know when an inspector might show up. Photo by Corby Coggins.

they reflect a good image of the people that trained them.

Professionalism

When you enter the golf course industry and strive to become a quality equipment manager, I can't emphasize enough the importance of professionalism. Equipment managers need to work as a group to create a more professional image for the position. Face it, when most people think of an equipment manager, they think of a greasy mechanic standing around with his shirttail out and a rag hanging out of his pockets. It's sad, but this image was created by us.

I can't say how many times I've seen individuals out in public who are obviously finished with

their day's work but still have grease all over their arms and face. I go to seminars put on by professional organizations only to see individuals come in with hats and shirts displaying their favorite NASCAR driver and a cell phone that won't quit ringing during the session. Don't get me wrong. I like NASCAR too but I think there's a time and place to display those sorts of things. One can dress nicely and look professional for far less money than what some of that race wear costs.

While our job does require us to get dirty or greasy, we can do little things such as wash up and tuck in our shirts before going to pick up items from the local parts store. If you're starting to get a little scruff on your face and you're not trying to grow a beard, shave it and make yourself look presentable.

You never know when you may have a face-to-face conversation with upper management or just people in general.

I'm sure some equipment managers are reading this saying, "I don't care what I wear to the seminars," or "I don't care if I have grease all the way up my arms when I stop for milk on the way home." They should care. These are usually the same people who are always saying they're overworked and underpaid. You never hear a professional-looking equipment manager complain about his pay because it usually matches his image. It's plain and simple: act like a professional and you'll get treated like a professional.

For information about the author, see inside cover.



When it comes to your turf, we're very protective.

Golf. Soccer. Softball. Picnics. Your turf has to take a lot and still look good. To keep it healthy, dense and weed free, count on professional turf protection from Southern States. We can deliver proven turf blends adapted to your specific climate and growing conditions. And provide herbicides, adjuvants, colorants and markers formulated to take your turf to new levels of quality and playability.

Call the Turf Division of Southern States today at 1-877-383-3199. We'll connect you to a trained professional who knows how to get results. Because when it comes to your turf, we're very protective.



Visit our web site at www.turfnotes.com

Growing Solutions in Turf

Plugging in Paradise

By Darren Davis

Last summer I took a trip to paradise, Paradise Island that is. During my stay I visited with Jeff Hood, the director of agronomy at the Ocean Club Golf Club. Paradise Island is connected by two bridges to the island of Nassau. Together they make up what is known as New Providence, Bahamas. New Providence is only 2 percent of the total land area in the Bahamas, but the two islands account for 60 percent of the country's population with approximately 311,000 residents.

Hood, who also had a stint in Barbados as a golf course superintendent, has been working in the Bahamas since the summer of 2000. He has found that innovation is not just a method or tool to solve an occasional problem; in the Bahamas, innovation is a standard approach to even routine golf course management issues.

Hood previously was employed in Florida as the golf course superintendent of Bonita Bay East, and as the IPM specialist for Colliers Reserve, both in Naples. While Hood's current assignment in Paradise Island is just a short commuter flight across the ocean from Florida, he sometimes feels that the mere 185 miles might as well be half way around the world. When I asked Hood what he misses the most about being stateside, he quickly responded, "Convenience. You can't get in your car and go to a Home Depot or Wal-Mart for one-stop shopping like we have become accustomed to in the States."

One Super Tip that Hood shared with me highlighted the innovative attitude that he and



Paradise Island Superintendent Jeff Hood holding two sizes of pluggers. Photo by Darren Davis.



Bigger than standard pluggers. Less damaging than a sod cutter: Welded bedknives with lifting rings surgically remove Paspalum off-type patches in TifEagle greens. Photo by Darren Davis.

his staff exude. The problem that they were facing was how to effectively and quickly remove paspalum off-type patches in his TifEagle greens and fill the void with pure TifEagle from his nursery green. A sod cutter would be too aggressive and lacked the preciseness that Hood preferred on the putting surfaces. The standard cup cutter or hexagon-shaped plugging tool would be too small for most of the patches and therefore would be too time-consuming.

The solution Hood devised was to have his equipment manager weld old bed knives into the shape of a square. Different sizes were developed and hooks attached to allow the home-made tool to be lifted from the surface of the turf. A consistent depth was obtained by inserting the tool to the same depth both on the golf course green and the nursery. The result was a process that went smoothly, quickly and was the least disruptive possible, which was equally important to keep the golfers happy at this high-end facility.