

# Sheaffer combines best of two technologies

## New aeration system tackles wastewater with ease, efficiency

By Chris Loynd

David Harms was concerned when he heard the new Tustin Ranch Golf Course would be supplied by water from a treatment plant.

"Reclaimed water is great because it lessens demand on the domestic supply," said the Yorba Linda, Calif., builder. "We've built a lot of courses that have reclaimed water. There's always a multitude of problems. The water is so salty it kills the grass. Or there's a slime build up on the water surface and it floats over the shoreline. You can get all kinds of real bad situations."

But Jeff Alderman of Alderman Engineering, who designed the Tustin, Calif. course's three effluent-filled lakes, convinced the developer, The Irvine Co., to try a relatively new water treatment system. The system sends activated oxygen into the water through leaded air lines along the lake bottom.

How effective is the R.C. Sheaffers Co.-designed system?

"The water quality has been great," said Harms. "I've never seen a reclaimed water situation work so well."

### How does it work?

Drawing on technologies from the water treatment and pool and spa industries, the system uses activated oxygen and aeration, carefully proportioned and then diffused into water at the lake bottom, said Ron Sheaffer, president of the Sandwich, Ill. company that designed the system five years ago.

Systems are custom designed for each lake or pond application. Activated oxygen is produced on site from oxygen and water vapor present in ambient air by passing the air over special lamps. Activated oxygen



The waterfall at Tustin Ranch Golf Course.

*'Aeration alone can cut down on odors by keeping dissolved oxygen levels high enough to prevent anaerobic decomposition. But aeration does nothing to affect the levels of dissolved nutrients that feed successive algae blooms.'*

— Ron Sheaffer

contains some of the most powerful oxidizing agents available.

All necessary equipment, lamps and compressor, are placed in a small shed or underground vault. The system requires little pressure. Electricity use and maintenance are lower than aeration systems for a comparable-sized pond.

"An important quality of these powerful short-lived oxidizing agents is that they convert back into oxygen and water, leaving no harmful residuals or toxic buildup," Sheaffer

said.

The system is particularly effective where effluent is used for irrigation, an increasingly common situation with water shortages cropping up across the country.

Two of Tustin Ranch's lakes are 4-1/2 acres. The third is just under an acre. One of the larger lakes feeds the course irrigation system of 2,000 sprinkler heads. That lake is drawn down anywhere from 200,000 to its maximum capacity of 800,000 gallons per day to supply the sprinklers.

"Clarity in the two self-contained lakes has been excellent," said superintendent Steve Plummer. "You can see six to eight feet from the bank to the bottom. The irrigation lake isn't quite as clear because it keeps getting replenished by reclaimed water. There's probably a four-foot-deep visibility from the bank. But there has been no odor and minimal surface scum and nuisance algae on it, or on any of the lakes."

The system has attracted attention from area superintendents and developers, said Alderman.

"We're getting calls about other golf course lakes where they're using effluent water and having some real problems. There are serious concerns when using sewage water in lakes that don't have an activated oxygen system. Number one, they smell. Second, they're a health nuisance. But most importantly, these lakes don't fulfill their original mission, to add aesthetic value and beauty to the golf course," Alderman added.

Said golf course architect Michael Hurdzan: "The system makes good sense. It's only possible drawback would be if a lake has a lot of sediment. Then you might have to raise the line."

### Chemicals, aerators unnecessary

From a design standpoint, all artificial lakes and ponds work against nature.

"Most have no water flow in or out of the lake," said Sheaffer. "Some may have a pump, waterfall or aerator. But these only turn over

the same water. Even a swamp has more water flow with a periodic replenishing of old water with new.

"Superintendents can draw from an arsenal of chemical and mechanical weapons to fight the annual water war against algae, scum and odors. Unfortunately it's a losing battle because none of the available chemicals, dyes, aerators, paddles or pumps adequately address the root causes of eutrophic lakes and ponds.

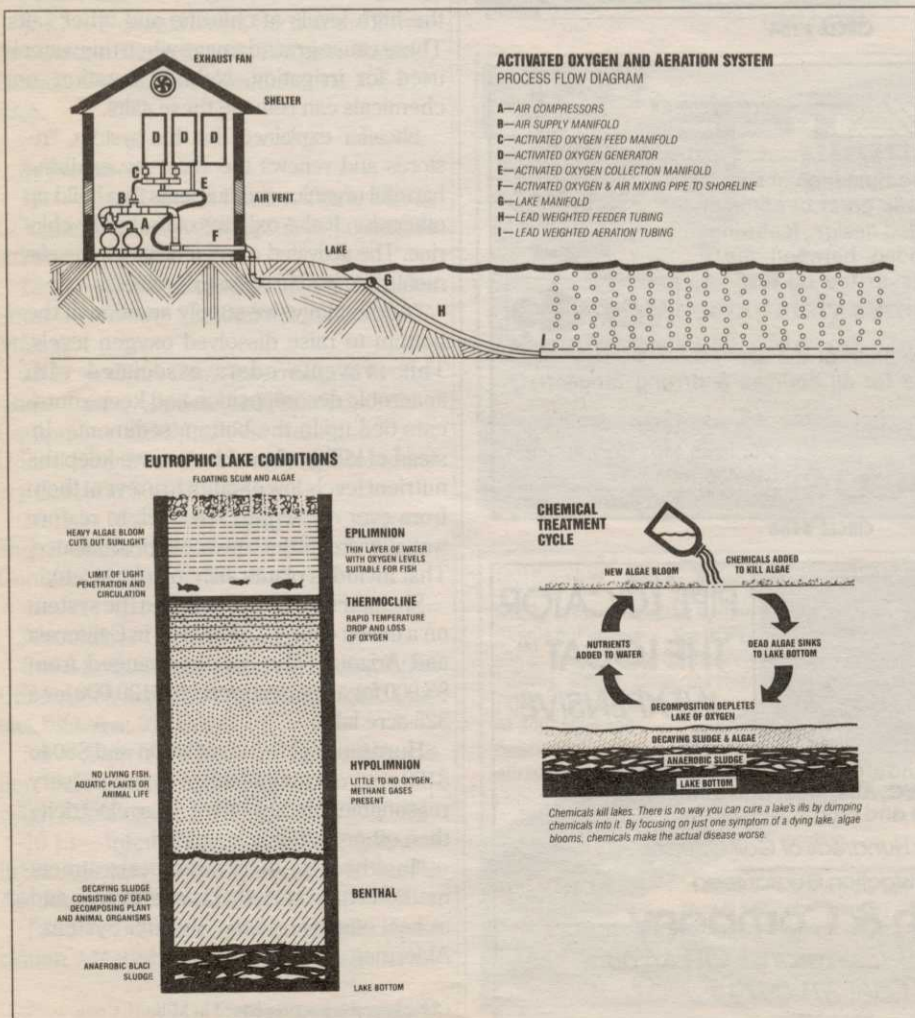
"It's high levels of dissolved nutrients and low levels of dissolved oxygen that cause all the problems superintendents face. Water flow in a natural body of water flushes out nutrients and replenishes oxygen. In a golf course lake you can't generally do this.

"Unfortunately the first step by most superintendents is to use chemicals to kill nuisance algae blooms. However, chemical treatments only re-release nutrients trapped in the algae back into the water. As it decomposes, the rotting algae basically acts as or-

Continued on page 53

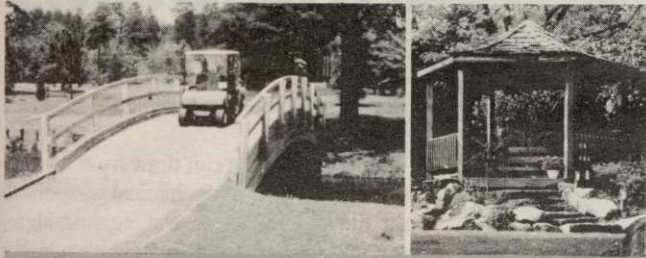
### AD LIST

RS#	ADVERTISER	PAGE
116	Airlake Aeration	23
125	Ametek	31
129	B.H.Sales	36
108	Barebo, Inc.	14
126	Barebo, Inc.	32
165	Bell Turf Equipment	53
122	Best Sand	25
168	Bloch & Co.	53
115	Ciba-Geigy	21
135	Club Car	43
151	Colorado Lining Co.	52
164	Continental Bridge	53
131	Di Giacomo	38
145	E-Z-GO	55
158	Excel Bridge Mfg.	52
143	Fermenta	50
139	Flexalon	48
117	Fore Par	23
144	Fraser Golf Consultants	50
120	Fuerst Brothers	24
140	Glennmac	48
159	Golf Course News	53
171	Golf Course News	51
119	Goossen Industries	24
111	Grace-Sierra	2
142	Greens Encroachment Barrier System	49
112	Guettler & Sons	30
127	Hoechst-Roussel	34
128	Jacklin Seed Co.	35
102	Jacobsen	56
105	John Deere	8-9
146	Lasco Fittings	3
118	Lebanon Turf Products	24
123	Lebanon Turf Products	25
152	Maine Surveyor's Service	52
167	Markers, Inc.	53
160	Master of the Links	53
150	Milona Turf Products	52
124	Mobay	26-27
101	Nearby Mfg.	16
113	New Golf Concepts	30
103	O.M. Scott	4-5
138	O.M. Scott	46-47
132	Oregon Fine Fescue Comm.	40
156	Page Com	52
110	Par Aide	16
147	Par Ex	18
109	Partac Peat	16
121	Perfection Sprinkler	25
114	Precision Small Engine	18
153	Precision Tool Co.	52
155	Precision Tool Co.	52
157	Precision Tool Co.	52
169	Quail Valley Turf Farm	51
106	Rhone-Poulenc	10-11
133	Rhone-Poulenc	41
137	Ringer	45
163	Schipper Bulb Co.	53
141	Southern Concrete	49
154	Sporting Valley Sod	52
107	Standard Golf	13
162	Sunbelt Path Pavers	53
166	Syntennico	53
148	Technic-Tool	31
134	The Andersons	42
104	Toro Comm'l. Prod. Div.	6-7
136	Toro Comm'l. Prod. Div.	44
130	Turf Seed	37
172	Warehouse Radio	51
161	Willadsen Scale Models	53
170	Yard Edge	51



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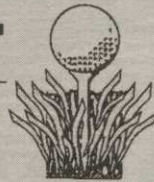


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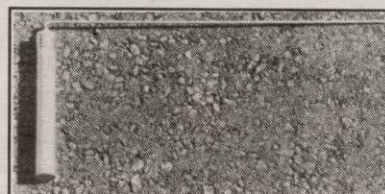
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Continued from page 52

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Fla. Contact Associated Landscape Contrac-  
tors of America at 703-241-4004.

18-21 — Professional Lawn Care Associa-  
tion of America Convention and Trade Show  
in Tampa, Fla. Contact PLCAA at 404-977-  
5222.

19-21 — Inland Northwest Turf and Land-  
scape Conference and Trade Show in Spo-  
kane, Wash. Contact show producers at 800-  
729-5904.

### December

3-4 — Southern Grounds and Turf Main-  
tenance Expo in Myrtle Beach, S.C. Contact  
show producers at 800-553-7702.

9-12 — Ohio Turfgrass Conference and  
Trade Show in Cincinnati. Contact Ohio  
Turfgrass Foundation at 614-292-2601.

\* — For more information or to register,  
contact Betsy Evans, education coordinator,  
Golf Course Superintendents Association of  
America, at 800-472-7878 or 913-841-2240.  
The seminars are dependent upon the avail-  
ability of the instructors, and are therefore  
subject to change. One-day seminars cost \$100  
for GCSAA members and \$120 for non-mem-  
bers; two-day seminars cost \$180 for members  
and \$210 for non-members.

## Sheaffer

Continued from page 54

ganic fertilizer for the next algae crop. Fur-  
thermore, this decomposition uses up a lot of  
oxygen. Once all the oxygen is gone, decom-  
position goes anaerobic and that releases the  
methane and sulfur gasses that smell so bad.

"Properly employed, aeration alone can  
cut down on odors by keeping dissolved  
oxygen levels high enough to prevent  
anaerobic decomposition. But aeration does  
nothing to affect the levels of dissolved nutri-  
ents that feed successive algae blooms. Aera-  
tion can beat the water severely enough to  
prevent green filamentous algae growth. But  
it can't stop the blue-green algae that stay  
suspended throughout the pond and contrib-  
ute to a dark, murky appearance.

"Important for sewage treatment water is  
the high levels of chlorine and other salts.  
These cause grass damage when this water is  
used for irrigation. Neither aeration nor  
chemicals can remove these salts."

Sheaffer explained that his system, "re-  
stores and renews the water by oxidizing  
harmful organics and nutrients that build up  
otherwise. It also oxidizes out salts like chlo-  
rine. The activated oxygen destroys the ele-  
ments that lead to so many problems.

"Additionally, we supply aeration at the  
bottom to raise dissolved oxygen levels.  
This prevents odors associated with  
anaerobic decomposition and keeps nutri-  
ents tied up in the bottom sediments. In-  
stead of killing algae blooms, we keep the  
nutrient levels low enough to prevent them  
from ever occurring. We work to restore  
water by creating a true ecological balance.  
That includes plants, fish, plankton, etc."

Sheaffer said he has installed the system  
on a dozen courses, primarily in California  
and Arizona. The cost has ranged from  
\$5,000 for a one-acre pond to \$120,000 for a  
325-acre lake.

Hurdzan said the installation and \$80 to  
\$100 per year maintenance costs are "very  
reasonable." It also uses less electricity  
than other systems, he added.

"In all honesty, there's no other treatment  
method I have seen that is as effective, and  
as cost effective, as the Sheaffer System,"  
Alderman said.

Chris Loynd is a writer based in Milford, Conn.