

Firms developing rotary mowers to meet diverse needs

Golf course superintendents use rotary mowers more often — and for increasingly diverse tasks — than ever before, according to an industry poll conducted by *Golf Course News*. The same survey also indicates that manufacturers are working overtime to increase the versatility of these once-specialized machines.

Ergonomic design, fuel-efficiency and easier maintenance have all been factored into the new breed of rotary mowers.

Yet the basic appeal of rotary mowers has not changed. The inherent vacuum action, for example, allows rotary machines to stand the grass up before cutting it. This is particularly helpful in the rough, where cart traffic tends to flatten things out.

When the rough is moist, the vacuum feature also stands superintendents in good stead. Whereas the old seven-gang approach sometimes left matted areas uncut, large rotary machines float over an area, stand the grass up, and cut it without tracking.

Of course, they don't cover the ground a seven-gang band machine can. But rotary mowers are generally rear-wheel driven, making riding models quite maneuverable. In general, rotaries are lighter and trim closer to delicate course features.

THE CUTTING EDGE

Judging from surveyed responses, the industry is not

Simpler maintenance a major aim

content to sit on its technological laurels. Here's a sampling of what's new:

Manufacturers have taken numerous steps — many of them hydraulic — to make maintenance simpler. For example, Walker Manufacturing Co. now offers a sealed hydrostatic wheel drive, tilt-up body for access to the drive train. Snapper is in the process of standardizing models to a common frame, and has a hydrostatic walk mower in the making. At Jacobsen, the HR-5111 motor has lifetime lubricated spindles that never need lubricating.

Encore Manufacturing Co. has addressed traction concerns with hydro-wheel motors and double-grooved, wheel-drive belts, while Excel features an hydraulic drive clutch. Kubota has concentrated on maneuverability by combining zero diameter turn and auto assist differential four-wheel drive.

Ergonomics have also been prioritized. This will come as good news to those crew members who spend eight hours combing the bentgrass byways. Howard Price Turf Equipment, for example, now offers tilt-wheel, cruise control and air conditioning as optional equipment on its 1260 Turf Blazer.

If there's one universal complaint regarding rotary mow-

ers, it involves cleaning the mowing deck. Yet, virtually all surveyed producers have addressed the situation via flip-up decks.

"Just flip it up and hose it down," advises one manufacturer.

THE RIGHT CHOICE

There are a few things to consider when purchasing a rotary mower. Traditional thinking says "dedicated mowers" — large tractors used solely to cut grass — offer maximum productivity and are best suited for wide-open courses with unfettered roughs and fewer trees.

For productivity and a higher degree of maneuverability, a riding mower with a front-mounted deck may be the optimal choice. A cutting width of 72 inches is the most popular, but decks from 44- to 88-inches wide are available.

When choosing a cutting deck, take into account contours and landscaping. If the terrain in question features distinct undulations, the benefit of greater productivity from a larger deck will be negated by its inability to follow contours. Smaller decks — 50 to 60 inches — may be better here.

An experienced driver can use a rotary on fairly severe hills and dales, thus eliminating the scalping often associated with band mowers. However, such activity requires the traction offered by a four-wheel drive model.

Company	Model	Width of cut (in.)	Height of cut (in.)	Weight	Mowing speed	Grass-catching capacity (bush.)	Horsepower	Fuel	Tank capacity	Clutch	Cost	Number of service centers
Deere & Company John Deere Road Moline, IL 61265 309-765-4613 Jim Mitchell	F935	60-76	1-4.5	1,400	10.0	9	22	Diesel	11.0	Electric	\$15,721	500+
Encore Manufacturing Co. P.O. Box 888 Beatrice, NE 68310 402-228-4255 Dick Tegmeier	60" Hydro	32-60	1-4	430-560	5.0	3	12-18	Gas	4.25	Mechanical	N/A	350
Excel Industries, Inc. P.O. Box 7000 Hesston, KS 67062 316-327-4911 Ken Raney	Range Wing	146	1-4	2,300	5.0	None	54	Gas	11.0	Hydraulic	\$24,000	85
Howard Price Turf Eqpt. 18155 Edison Avenue Chesterfield, MO 63017 314-532-7000 Howard Price	1260 Turf Blazer	126	1-5	2,740	10.0	None	40.5	Diesel	8.5	PTO	\$25,400	60
Jacobsen 1721 Packard Avenue Racine, WI 53403 414-637-6711 Jim Byrnes	HR-5111	63.5-134	1-5.5	3,681	6.0	None	51	Diesel	20.0	Hydrostatic trans.	\$40,000	79
Kubota Tractor Corp. 550 W. Artesia Blvd. Compton, CA 90244 213-537-2531 Pat Carroll	F2400	60-72	1.5-4	1,820	4.6	14	24	Diesel	9.0	Hydrostatic trans.	\$16,900	800
Ransomes America 900 N. 21st Street Lincoln, NE 68501 402-475-9581 Sandi Gridley	6150 Wing Rotary	35-117	1-4.75	3,000	7.0	None	51	Diesel	15.0	Electric		70
Snapper Power Eqpt. P.O. Box 627 McDonough, GA 30253 404-957-9141 David Earnhart	ZU2013K	48-60	1-4	300	7.5	5.5	20	Gas	4.0	Electric	\$7,750	8,000
The Toro Company 8111 Lyndale Avenue S. Minneapolis, MN 55420 612-887-8805 Dennis Brown	Groundsmaster 455-D	54-126	1-5	3,550	6.5	Mulches	55	Diesel	14.0	Electric	N/A	50
Walker Manufacturing 5925 E. Harmony Road Ft. Collins, CO 80525 303-221-5614 Bob Walker	MDD426Hs7.0	42-54	1-4	980	5.0	7	16.5	Diesel	3.0	Manual	\$9,450	150