

Greens mower makers ever seeking the perfect cut

By MARK LESLIE

If it's January in Orlando, this must be a riding greens mower day. If it's a Wednesday in August in Kansas City, it could be a walk-behind greens mower day.

In this world with an ever-more-demanding call for perfection, the day of the week, the time of year, and the disposition of a golf course's members can call for entirely different greens mowers.

"Some people out there will walk exclusively, some will ride exclusively," said Mike Hoffman, director of marketing and service for The Toro Co. "Some will walk during the week and ride on weekends, some will walk during the winter when the turf is softer and ride during the summer. In Florida, some may walk in the winter during heavy golf play and ride in the summer when play is lighter. There's a lot of different ways to cut it. There's no magic answer."

"They all [mowers] cut about the same. They're all good mowers," said Gary Champeny, vice president for sales and marketing at Bunton Co. "Tell me the type grass you have, what height you're at, and what speed you want."

"It all comes down to: What are you trying to produce. If your customer wants 10.5 [Stimpmetered] greens, you'd better have a mower that sits down and snugs that green. If you want 10.5 greens and they're undulating, that will dictate a little bit of the type of mower you buy. If you want 10.5 greens and you have big old flat greens, that gives you some other options."

The array of choices available to superintendents is wide indeed.

Number of blades, width of cut and the machine's weight distribution are all important, plus each superintendent has to weigh his course's uniqueness in deciding what greens mowers to buy.

In years past, manufacturers have added turf-grooming attachments and

rollers to their greens mowers. Research and development teams have introduced improvements yearly.

There are roller scrapers. There are

tournament bedknives. There are brushes, vertical cutters and two-inch guide wheels.

"We are totally market-driven," said

Peter Whurr, product manager for Ransomes America Corp. "We are aware the market demands a very high

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GOLF COURSE NEWS

GCN's exclusive 1993 survey

Company	Model	Price	Date introduced	Cutting height (in.)	Cutting width (in.)	Weight (pounds)	Frequency of cut
Bunton Company 4601 East Indian Trail Louisville, KY 40213 502-966-0550 Gary Champeny Circle #201	BG61L-16.5 KD	\$14,403	1991	1/8	61	1,344	.187
	BG61L-18KOH	\$13,006	1991	1/8	61	1,186	.187
	BG61L-18BTV	\$12,806	1991	1/8	61	1,146	.187
	GS-26	\$4,996	1983	5/32	26	N/A	.23
	GS-13	\$4,236	1983	1/8	22	N/A	.187
	GS-19	\$4,236	1991	1/8	19	N/A	.187
Deere & Company John Deere Road Moline, IL 61265 800-544-2122 Clair Peterson Circle #202	22	N/A	1987	7/64	34-5/8	209	.240
	22R	N/A	1989	7/64	34-5/8	180	.250
Jacobsen 1721 Packard Ave. Racine, WI 53403 414-637-6711 Jim Byrnes Circle #203	PGM 4-cycle	N/A	N/A	5/64	22	174	.250
	PGM 2-cycle	N/A	N/A	5/64	22	183	.250
	Greens King 422	N/A	1992	5/64	22	238	.169
	Greens King IV Triplex (Deisel)	N/A	N/A	5/64	62	1,170	.250
	Greens King IV Triplex (Gas)	N/A	N/A	5/64	62	1,150	.250
LESCO, Inc. 20005 Lake Road Rocky River, OH 44116 216-333-9250 Ned Beach Circle #204	300D (Deisel)	\$10,980-\$11,490	1989	3/32	60-3/4	1,200	.270
	300 (Gas)	\$8,750-\$9,190	1985	3/32	60-3/4	1,050	.270
Ransomes America P.O. Box 82409 Lincoln, NE 68501 800-228-4444 Sandi Gridley Circle #205	Greens 3000	N/A	1990	1/8	66	1,402	.180
Toro Co. 8111 Lyndale Ave. Bloomington, MN 55420 612-887-8805 Dennis Brown Circle #206	Greensmaster 3000	N/A	1988	1/8	59	1,233	.250
	Greensmaster 3100	N/A	1991	1/8	59	1,128	.250
	Greensmaster 500	N/A	1993	1/8	21	186	.197
	Greensmaster 1000	N/A	1990	5/64	21	208	.160



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standard of greens mower. We look at what features the individual wants."

The cuts of today's triplex mowers

rival that of walk-behind units just a couple of years ago.

"The distinction is that with the walker you can get that special look because you're doing 21-inch stripes versus rider's 60-inch stripes. Other than that, the riders can duplicate the walkers," said Hoffman.

Yet, ever improving, manufacturers will overlook no small advancement. John Deere, for instance, improved its triplex greens mower with "an offset cutting unit design," said senior copywriter Clair Peterson. "Understanding that in its cleanup cut around the green, a triplex mower's tires travel in the same

path day after day, we added offset cutting units. You can go clockwise one day and counterclockwise the next, and the tires are going over completely different ground, so your green has a chance to recover."

BLADES INCREASED

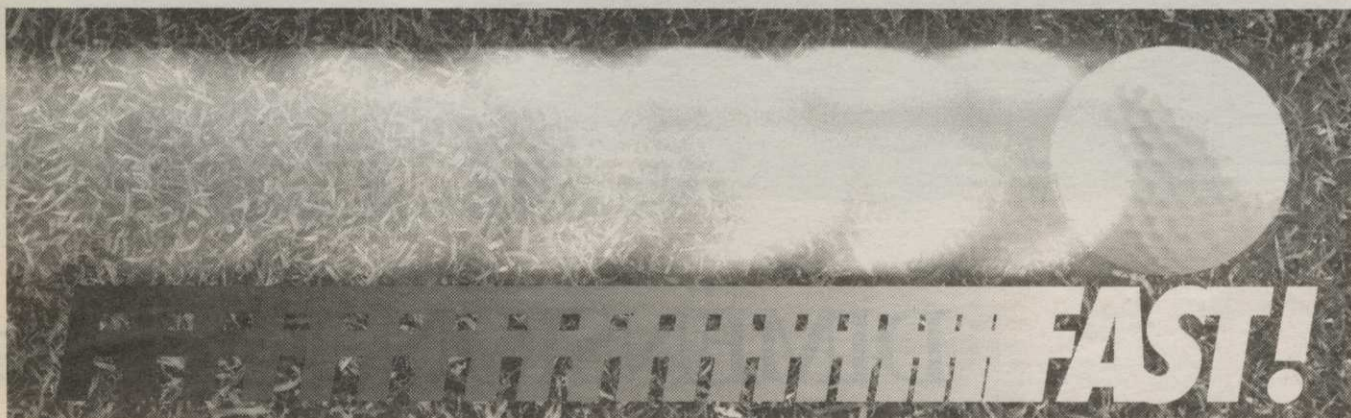
With cutting measurements done in 1,000ths of an inch, and greens "smoothness" an operative word, companies have added blades to the reels on their greens mowers to increase frequency of cut.

Bill Kinzer, a Jacobsen Textron Inc. product manager for turf, said the added blades "increase the clip." The difference from nine blades to 11 "closes down" the

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of the riding and walk-behind greens mowers

Mowing speed	Engine type	Fuel capacity	Traction drive	Reel drive	Attachments
3.5	3-cylinder diesel	8.3	Hydrostatic	Hydraulic	Conditioner, brushes, verticutter
3.5	4-cycle Kohler	8.3	Hydrostatic	Hydraulic	Conditioner, brush, verticutter
3.5	4-cycle Briggs Vanguard	8.3	Hydrostatic	Hydraulic	Conditioner, brush, verticutter
N/A	4-cycle Wisconsin Robin	N/A	Chain	Chain	Conditioner, brush
N/A	4-cycle Wisconsin Robin	N/A	Chain	Chain	Conditioner, brush
N/A	4-cycle Wisconsin Robin	N/A	Chain	Chain	Conditioner, brush
N/A	4-cycle	3.16	Dual aluminum drum	N/A	Brush, verticutter
N/A	4-cycle	3.16	Dual aluminum drum	N/A	Brush, verticutter
3.0	4-cycle	2.64	Chain	Chain	Groomer, rollers, brushes, vertical reel
3	2-cycle	4.24	Chain	Chain	Groomer, rollers, brushes, vertical reel
3.2	4-cycle	2.64	Belts/chord	Belts/chord	Groomer, rollers, brushes, vertical reel
3.7	4-cycle	32	Hydraulic	Hydraulic	Groomer, rollers, brush, performance monitor
3.7	4-cycle	32	Hydraulic	Hydraulic	Groomer, rollers, brush, performance monitor
4.25	4-cycle, 3-cylinder, 16HP	40	Hydraulic	Hydraulic	Thin-cut, verticutter, scrapers, brushes, rollers
3.75	4-cycle, twin cylinder, 18HP	40	Hydraulic	Hydraulic	Thin-cut, verticutter, scrapers, brushes, rollers
5	2-cylinder	32	Hydrostatic	Hydraulic	Verticutter, groomer, greens and tees reels
3.8	4-cycle 16 hp	30	Hydraulic	Gear-type	Groomer, scrapers, rollers
3.8	4-cycle 16 hp	30	Hydraulic	Gear-type	Groomer, scrapers, rollers
4.6	4-cycle 3.7 hp	2.64	Friction disc	Universal shaft	Rollers, brush, bedknife
3.5	4-cycle 3.7 hp	2.64	V Belts	Drum & reel	Groomer, rollers, scrapers, bedknives



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Weight distribution, cutting width, other factors enter greens mower equation

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cut from 1/4 inch to 3/16 per clip, he said, "reducing the 'marseilling' on the green."

The result is a smoother roll of the ball.

Today's riding greens mower sometimes has 11 blades, the resulting .18 frequency of clip being an improvement over some walk-behind units.

WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION

Saying that the "cleanliness of cut" of different brands of mowers are "pretty much equal," Shampeny said, "The big difference in walkers is in the weight and weight distribution."

He said the trend is to heavier mowers.

Heavier units tend to result in quicker greens.

Hoffman said more weight on the front of the mower results in better tracking and "takes the operator influence out of the unit."

The Toro riding mower, he said, has full floating cutting units not influenced by the weight of the grass in the basket.

"You could stand on it and it would cut the same," he said.

Kinzer said Jacobsen is attempting to better control the weight of the front of their greens mower.

The new model has a weight bar that allows the operator to increase or reduce 10 pounds on the machine.

"If you have a wet or dry condition, you can go either way," Kinzer said. "If you have a wet or very soft type of green, but the guy across the street has a firm green, both can use our mowers."

"The guy on the soft course likes to run 25 pounds on the front roller. He can run an aluminum roller on and cut half the weight. The other guy may want 35 pounds on the front roller. He can leave all the weights on, leave the aluminum roller on and still have 35 pounds."

Jacobsen is modifying more rollers, increasing the choice in rollers from two to five, he Kinzer said.

"Compaction is a non-issue among walkers," said Shampeny. "In addition to the weight, how do you distribute the weight? There is much more front weight distribution on the front roller on the Toro and Bunton versus the Jacobsen."

"Is that good or bad? It's bad if you're trying to keep your greens firm, because you can get the front end of your mower floating all the time. But if you have undulating greens, it's probably desirable because the front end of the mower will come up easier as it comes up to those undulations."

WIDTH OF CUT, ETC.

While Jacobsen has decided not to make a 19-inch-wide cut available any more, Bunton has stepped into that niche, according to Shampeny.

"We are the only company offering a 19-inch walking greens mower... The 19 performs better on undulating greens at the lower cut. It doesn't scalp," he said.

Superintendents choosing the wider cuts may have their eye

on the increased productivity of wider units.

Manufacturers are keeping a continual eye to making service and operation easier.

John Deere, for instance, added dual traction drive rollers to its walkers, making tracking uniform and straight by eliminating operator error, Peterson said.

Whatever a superintendent's particular and unique situation, a greens mower exists that will

do the job.

"The requirements are established by the membership and the superintendent can select what fits his needs," Shampeny said.

Koffman echoed that sentiment, saying superintendents make their decisions based on "what the members expect, what they're willing to pay for."

"We try to find a way to give them a wide array of

choices and let them decide which will work best for them," he added.

"We understand the greens are the most precious ground on a golf course and a superintendent is many times judged by how his greens are taken care of," Peterson said. "We are probably judged as well by how we mow a green and so we have put a lot of time and money into developing a top-of-the-line mower."



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