

Show floor agog with new technologies in turfgrass care

By HAL PHILLIPS

DALLAS—Tradeshows are meant to generate consumer interest which, in turn, generates... well, trade. And nothing generates consumer interest like a new product.

The annual International Golf Course Conference and Show is the current venue of choice when it comes to launching a new product. A plethora of innovations made their debut in Dallas this year, but only a

handful made a stir.

For those who couldn't be in Dallas, a few of these "show-stoppers" are detailed below:

- The Ransomes E-Plex electric greens mower: This product and the competing Jake model (see below) dominated many a show floor conversation. The E-Plex sports a 48-volt industrial electric motor, powered by eight, six-volt, 244 AH golf cart-style batteries. While it stays charged for up to three hours, the quiet electric

motor drew equal oohs and ahhs. Superintendents tending to development courses are well familiar with cranky homeowners complaining about early-morning greens mowing. Ransomes officials said the E-Plex should be available by this summer (see related story).

- The Jacobsen electric Greensking: Though still a prototype, Jake's electric product was the subject of similar discussion. "We have been

working on and off for quite some time on alternative power sources," explained Eric Smitsdorff, vice president of marketing at Jacobsen. "This prototype was shown at the Dallas show to solicit input on where we should be going. We had hundreds and hundreds of superintendents take our survey and offer their ideas. We received some fantastic suggestions."

- The E-Z-GO Medalist Electric: As the only new golf car

introduced in Dallas, the Medalist — in one sense — had the stage all to itself. Completely redesigned inside and out, the Medalist even sports the new-fangled DuraShield powder coat paint process, which involves electronically charging the surface before painting it. Other newly designed aspects include the steering system, accelerator pedal and the PowerWise solid stage energy control (increased

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Electric mowers said to take golf industry to grand new era

By PETER BLAIS

"A quantum leap in technology that will change the industry for years to come," is how Ransomes America Corp.'s Doug McCormick described what his company is touting as the industry's first all-electric triplex greens mower.

While such hype is to be expected from a vice president of sales and marketing, superintendents seemed generally impressed with the potential of the E-Plex, unveiled at last month's International Conference and Show in Dallas and available for purchase by late summer.

"Not having to worry about homeowners complaining concerning noise if you start mowing at 4 a.m. would remove one of my major headaches," said Pat Lucas, superintendent at Innis Arden Golf Club in Old Greenwich, Conn.

Quieter operation is one of the riding mower's major selling points. The lack of fuel emissions should be another, especially in California, where the company anticipates E-Plex will meet all future state Air Resources Board and federal Environmental Protection Agency standards.

Its minimal maintenance requirements and pollution-free operation are additional benefits.

"Because it doesn't use gasoline or diesel fuel, that means no hydraulic oil leaks," said Turf Products Manager Peter Whurr. "Superintendents have gotten fired because of oil leaks on their greens."

Eight 6-volt, golf cart-style batteries power the E-Plex. The mower can operate for three hours on a single charge, long enough to do nine to 18 greens depending on terrain, temperature and distance between holes, Whurr said.

Oil and gas savings mean the batteries pay for themselves within 175 days, he added. A superintendent can expect to get between one and two years of use from a battery.

Jacobsen is reportedly working on a riding greens mower that could be available within two years.

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