

On The Green

# Walking on water, golf-style — the mystery unveiled

BY TERRY BUCHEN

PALM DESERT, Calif. — Armchair golfers are perplexed at how superintendents get cars to float on lake surfaces during nationally televised golf tournaments. What is their secret and how do they defy gravity? And how do superintendents get the autos out on the course without doing any turf damage?

At the recently completed Bob Hope Chrysler Classic held here at Bermuda Dunes Country Club, superintendent Carl R. King had the answers.

"The local Chrysler distributor in Indio brings out the cars," King explained. "They have a rectangular float-type raft with pontoons that are literally filled with air from a portable, gasoline-powered air compressor. We bring the raft to the edge of the lake, put out same ramps, drive the car out onto the pontoon raft, and float it out into position. We then release the air so the autos tires are lowered two to three inches into the water to make them look like they're floating on the water. The raft is tied down with wires and boat anchors so it will stay in position during almost any type of weather."



A crane, with a sling attached, lowers the floating raft and car all at once into the water.

The raft is an off-white color to blend in with the surrounding lake bottom, said King adding, "It's a riot to watch those Chrysler guys put the cars out on our lakes!"

In the Los Angeles area, they have a slightly harder time of floating Lexus automobiles on the lakes at Sherwood Country Club in suburban Thousand Oaks during the Franklin Funds Shark Shoot-out tournament.

"Our lakes have many large boulders in

and around the edges, so we cannot drive the cars onto the floating rafts," said William F. Hamilton, director of golf & grounds maintenance at Sherwood Country Club.

"We bring in a rubber-tired crane, equipped with a sling, and literally lift the Lexus onto the floating pontoon raft that is plum full of air. We have a service road adjacent to our cart path near the lake on hole number 15, a beautiful 175-yard par-3, and we drive the crane very carefully onto our concrete cart paths over near

the lake's edge.

"Once the car is on the raft, the fellows from Lexus — in their outboard motor-powered row boat — guide the raft into position and then let the air out until the tires and raft are at least two to four inches below the water surface."

Once in position, the raft is similarly held in place with wire and boat anchors that are almost invisible to the naked eye, especially the television eye.

"During the pro-am tournament, we float the Lexus way to the left, away from the line of flight from the amateur contestants because of their sometimes-errant golf shots," Hamilton said with a laugh. "We do not want any golf ball damage to the car, so we take this added precaution and then move the car back toward the fairway just prior to when the pros-only play their appointed rounds."

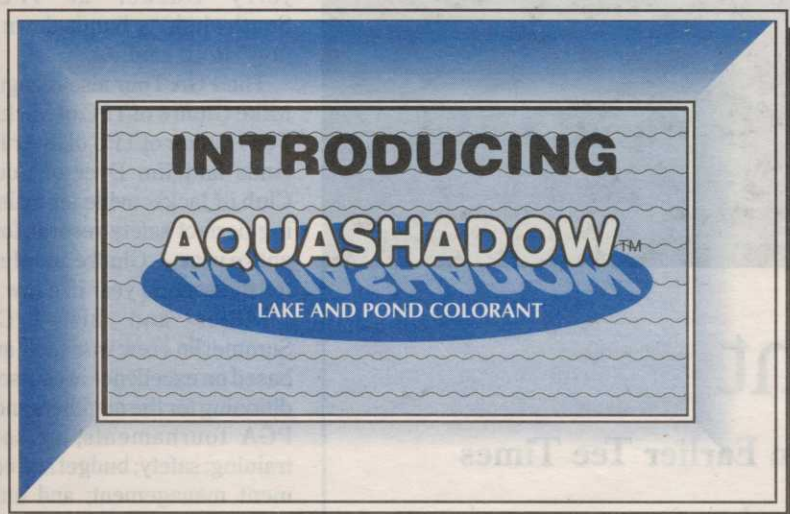
The Lexus and raft are put out the week before the tournament, during a less busy time for the maintenance staff.

"The people from Lexus take out their engine-powered row boat and wash the car each and every morning, especially after the many heavy dews and frosts that we have experienced each November," added Bob Marshall, assistant superintendent. "The car has enough wax on it to keep any auto parts store business manager happy."

"The George P. Johnson Co. does an excellent job of providing and installing the floating raft and coordinating the rest of the installation as well."

Photo courtesy of George P. Johnson Co.

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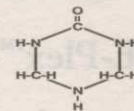
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