

Air power takes on Jordanesque task, replacing H₂O

By PETER BLAIS

INDIAN WELLS, Calif. — Using air rather than water to clean turf equipment is an environmentally friendly idea that has caught on in the Palm Springs area and will likely spread elsewhere, according to U.S. Golf Association Green Section agronomist Paul Vermeulen.

Superintendent Doug Anderson and Maintenance Supervisor Luciano "Chito" Velasquez of The Vintage Club

were among the first to see the need for an alternative to watering down mowers and golf carts.

The wet grass clippings not only offended the olfactories of golfers, but the runoff also provided nutrients for plants that were choking a nearby stream, Vermeulen said. Mechanically spraying cold water on machinery damaged greased bearings and corroded engines.

"Replacing bearings is one

of those pesky jobs that takes a lot of time," Vermeulen said.

Working together, Anderson and Velasquez hit on the idea of replacing the water hoses in their wash area with eight dry-cleaning stations equipped with air hoses set at 125 pounds pressure per square inch. A blast of air removes most of the clippings and loose soil from equipment, even under engine shrouds where spraying water can damage the machinery, Vermeulen said.

Having eight stations allows eight employees to work at once, reducing the backup and inefficiency associated with a single water-wash station. Dry clippings can be swept up, shoveled into trash cans and hauled to a special-waste recycling area, Vermeulen said.

"Environmentally, it's much friendlier than a traditional water-wash station," the USGA agronomist said. "You catch the clippings before they wash down the drain. And you're not



ON THE GREEN

mixing water and oil, so there's no need to send rinsate through a separator."

Dry cleaning doesn't totally eliminate the need for water. After being blown dry, each machine is rinsed, then parked in the maintenance building to dry. Machinery must also be steam-cleaned on a regular schedule. Velasquez routinely steam cleans mowers every three weeks.

"Chito is the best-organized equipment manager I've ever been around in my career," Vermeulen said.

To ensure worker safety, goggles must be worn at all times in the cleaning area, Vermeulen said. A small hole drilled through the tip of each brass nozzle relieves the pressure in the event workers hold the hose too close to their bodies, he added. The hoses are also mounted on automatic-recoil reels to protect the nozzles from being run over as vehicles leave the cleaning area, Vermeulen explained.

The only significant costs are the air compressor and brass nozzles, he said.

"This system is new to me and to most of the country, I believe," said Vermeulen, who recently transferred from the Green Section's Western Region to its Mid-Continent office. "It started in the Palm Springs area. The courses are close together and a number of them are now using air hoses. A good idea spreads quickly there."

PEST HANDBOOK OFFERED

The University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service is offering its free 1995 Illinois Urban Pest Management Handbook. Developed for golf course superintendents, nursery managers, park managers and others, the handbook covers insects, weeds and diseases, and changes in the laws and regulations regarding pesticide use in Illinois. It is available by calling 217-333-2007.

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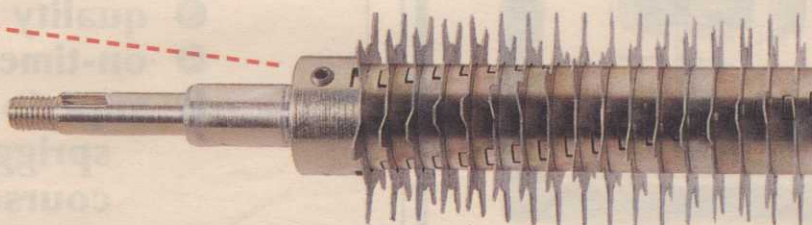
EAST BRUNSWICK, N.J. — The 6th annual Rutgers Professional Golf Turf Management School and Alumni Awards Banquet will be held at the Ramada Inn here, Nov. 4. The evening will include certificate awards and scholarship presentations, guest speakers and an alumni reunion. A cocktail hour begins at 5 p.m. More information is available from Missy Marciante at 908-932-9271.

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