

## Hoover, move over

By MARK LESLIE

**C**ASTLE PINES, Colo. — Colorado superintendents are endorsing a new machine that removes sand from bunkers without damaging the subsurface and does it twice as fast as other methods.

"The great thing is, after you get done you haven't disturbed the subsurface of the bunker," said Marshall Fearing, superintendent at Castle Pines Golf Club here.

"It's not damaging any turf. It's pretty slick," said superintendent Alan Ogren, who was just finishing work on the first of 32 traps he intended to refurbish at Snowmass Golf Course in Snowmass Village.

Custom-made for Hall-Irwin by a company that manufactures a huge vacuum for cleaning up during water-line excavation, the machine includes a 4-inch suction hose fastened to the expulsion chute of a snowblower. As the operator walks the snowblower back and forth in the trap, the diesel motor-powered auger kicks up the sand through the hose to a hopper on a trailer that can be stationed 15 to 20 feet away.

"We just wanted to remove the sand, redo the faces and not mess with reshaping and regrading the subsurface," said Fearing, who refurbished about 20 bunkers during the winter and intends to do the rest next year.

"You can take the sand out of the trap without damaging the trap," said Tom Briddle, director of golf services at Hall-Irwin Construction Co. "After you get the sand out, if the superintendent wants to rebuild the trap or do the edges, he can do so without causing any damage.



Sand is vacuumed from a bunker at Snowmass Golf Course.

"When we did the traps at Keystone Resort we used the backhoe, and that wrecked a lot of the edges. Prior to that, we did the Sheridan with a Bobcat, and that ripped the bottom apart."

The machine, as yet unnamed but with patent pending, "amazed us when we first tried it," Briddle said.

Superintendent Kevin Ross, who is waiting his turn at using the bunker vacuum at Country Club of the Rockies in Edmond, said his crews normally remove sand from small bunkers by hand shovel and larger ones using a mini-excavator. The excavator can complete three small bunkers in a day, or a large

bunker in one or two days, he said.

Fearing said the savings in man-hours is "a tremendous amount of time. It was a real efficient way to redo a bunker. I would say we were able to accomplish this twice as fast."

While Castle Pines Golf Club re-did its bunkers during the winter when the course was closed, Fearing said that "especially in season, this is the way to go."

Subsurface damage is a key issue in bunker restoration, Fearing said. "One thing that happens with a big piece of equipment is, you destroy the subsurface and that's just getting the sand out. Then you spend a lot of time putting it back together.

"With this, there is no mess."

Fearing said the machine would work "perfectly" in removing just the top couple of inches. The hopper will hold a couple of tons of sand, he said.

At Snowmass, Ogren encountered slow going in a bunker filled with masonry sand. "It's like concrete," he said, deciding to use a small excavator to break through the hard top layer. "But as long as the sand is fluffed up and dry it works well."

"Anybody who does renovation work should have these," Briddle said. "They have the same problem I had when we did Keystone."

Once the sand is removed, another machine pours in new sand. The Vancouver-made Ty-crop machine, whose hopper holds 4 cubic yards "works very well," Fearing said. Dakota Peat of Grand Forks, N.D., is also making two machines called Turf Tenders 420 and 440, carrying 2 or 4 cubic yards of sand.

The sand is delivered from hopper to trap by a conveyor belt, getting the job done without damaging the edges of the bunker.

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