

Briddle borrowed vacuum idea from water-line equipment

By MARK LESLIE

GREELEY, Colo. — The mother of invention can sometimes be someone else's invention. And that is how a new super-powered vacuum that removes sand from bunkers without disturbing the subsurface or edges entered the golf world. The invention was birthed when Tom Briddle, director of golf services at Hall-Irwin Cos. in Greeley, happened upon a street

worksite in Las Vegas, Nev., where a crew was using a vacuum-type machine to suck big rocks out of a water-line trench.

"It enabled them to do a lot of water-line excavation and not destroy gas mains, electric lines, that sort of thing," said Briddle. "I saw that and immediately thought about sand traps."

Briddle contacted the manufacturer of the machine and work started on a ver-

sion that could handle golf course bunkers. It needed to be lighter and have a longer hose, so that surrounding turf would not be damaged.

The initial bunker vacuum was too powerful for a man to hold on to. So Scott Masi of Hall-Irwin thought of using a snowblower whose weight could hold the hose in place.

"The snowblower is simply mechanical

transport back and forth to hold the hose," Briddle said. "The snowblower kicks the sand loose with the auger whether it's wet or dry. It works very well."

Briddle said Hall-Irwin expects a four-to five-month wait on its application for a patent.

The machine's name?

"We don't have one yet," Briddle said. "Got any ideas?"

Sand-trap vac

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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."

"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, 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

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