

Suppliers set to attack growing renovation marketplace

By ANDREW OVERBECK

As new courses continue to flood the market, perhaps to the point of saturation, older courses are starting to revamp and renovate existing layouts to keep up with the increasing competition. Renovation efforts, more often than not, start with improving and upgrading the course's irrigation system.

"There are a lot of things that a course can do to improve playing conditions," said Mike Donoghue, division director for Rain Bird Golf. "But irrigation is one of the most important. In addition to having more control, they will also save money on energy and water use, and by having a more reliable and maintenance free system, they will save money on labor."

The new three- and four-row systems offer better coverage of traditionally hard to reach areas such as roughs, green surrounds and areas around tee boxes. When adding new heads, however, increased pump station capacity is another need that must be addressed.

"Designs have changed drastically from 90-foot spacing down to 60-foot spacing and three rows around greens," said James Simonini, market manager for golf and irrigation at SyncroFlo. "All of a sud-

den the [existing] pump station cannot meet the new demand."

Old age is also a culprit.

"As courses age, even if they are not adding capacity in new heads, the pump stations will need to flat out be replaced due to being worn out," said Jeff Nelson, sales manager for Watertronix.

With needs and requirements changing, thousands of courses are changing out pump stations, upgrading controls and software, and adding more heads to irrigation systems.

Industry experts foresee the retrofit and renovation market exploding in the coming years.

"Retrofit is huge in golf," said Simonini. "The market is easily three times the number of new courses coming online and probably more."

As a result the industry is gearing up to attack the retrofit and renovation market with new products and services.

FINANCING

Many companies have created leasing programs through outside vendors to help courses bear the brunt of an irrigation renovation.

"The key to this market is financing,"

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The irrigation upgrade at Pueblo de Cochiti GC helped the course keep up with the local market.

Pueblo de Cochiti GC keeps up with the Jones'

By ANDREW OVERBECK

COCHITI, N.M. — In a move to improve playability and reposition the course against new competition, Pueblo de Cochiti Golf Course recently finished a complete irrigation renovation.

"The system that was in the ground was 20 years old," said superintendent Pat Brockwell. "It was a two-row system and had an undersized main line. We were fixing leaks at least once a week. It was just time."

The course was also losing business to newer facilities in the area.

"They were able to put a better product out there," said Brockwell. "We knew that we had to upgrade to keep up with the local market."

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said Toro's Steve Snow. "A lot of superintendents want a new system but the difficult thing is convincing club owners that it is a worthwhile investment. Through financing, you can minimize up-front expenses and spread them over a number of years."

Many courses are using these options due to financial benefits, said

Flowtronex's Willie Slingerland. "With little money down, they get the equipment in there and they don't tie up capital."

Another way to spread renovation costs is to do the work in phases.

"Some courses don't have the funding to do it all in one year," said Scott Macintyre, national golf sales manager and vice president of Century Rain Aid, an exclusive Hunter Irrigation distributor. "Instead they are

putting together master plans and doing them six holes at a time." To serve this need, Century Rain Aid and others offer control systems that can be installed in phases.

Providing superintendents with information and familiarizing them with the products and choices is another important step.

To this end, Toro has created an informational Internet site for superintendents and has set up a

service to help them find irrigation consultants and architects.

"Superintendents have a tough task because they are going to their ownership and asking for a million dollars or more and we need to make sure that they have the tools and information they need to make a good case to the ownership," said Snow.

NEW PRODUCTS

To help superintendents further justify their irrigation renovation



Flowtronex's new Retro-Oasis

needs, Metron, Inc., has developed a new panel that monitors the electrical consumption of an existing system and produces documentation of system failures.

"This enables them to document what the existing system is doing and have results to show the board or greens committee," said Metron's David Haynes.

Other products are now on the market that allow for the retrofitting of existing equipment.

Flowtronex will soon be introducing its Retro-Oasis control panel to retrofit fixed-speed pump stations and bring them up to current technology. "It is a small computer controller that can be interfaced with existing motor starters and controls and take over the pump station," said Slingerland. "It provides the same control as a brand-new fixed system would and buys a course time before it needs to upgrade fully."

As long as the existing pumps



Toro's short-radius 720 head

are in good condition, the system can be installed in four hours and costs around \$6,000 he said.

In addition to expanding into the pump station business, Rain Bird has also developed a retrofit-specific product called the Eagle's Nest which is designed to replace the inner workings of existing Impact sprinkler heads. "It allows the course to convert to a plastic gear drive model with Eagle rotor technology without having to dig up heads," said Donoghue.

Toro's new E-OSMAC wireless control system is also ideally suited to the retrofit market, said Snow. "Since it is wireless there is no need to put in underground cable, and it can now handle 64 stations, allowing for expansion," he said.

Also new from Toro is the 720 sprinkler which has an adjustable short-radius head designed for hard to irrigate places like tee box surrounds, mounds and approaches.

According to Snow, products specific to the renovation market will continue to grow.

"The existing golf course market for renovation is going to get much more attention as new golf construction slows," he said. ▶

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