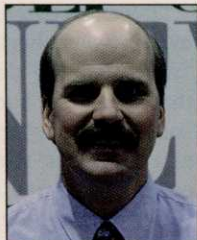


Kevin Ross selects top new products from GCSAA show

By KEVIN ROSS

ORLANDO, Fla. — While walking the trade show floor, there was a decidedly quieter buzz than usual surrounding new equipment debuts. Whether it was because of the events of Sept. 11 or company cutbacks and slowdowns, ground breaking new products were few and far between. However, some new products were hot topics of discussion on the show floor among superintendents.



Kevin Ross

NEW AND HOT

• My *Debut of the Show* goes to the **miniature foam marking kits**. These kits are designed for use with walking rotary or drop spreaders. Although foam



The foam marking kit on a Spyker spreader

kits have been around for years, and Salvarani North America displayed their prototype last year in Dallas, these have certainly been needed for years. Superintendents can now eliminate all those old marking tricks such as gloves, golf balls, flags, and paint.

• The **Super CourtMaster compact automatic leveling system** from Laser Leveling gets the *Runner-up Debut Award*. Sure these have also been around for a few years, but not in the correct size that



Laser level earns Runner-up Debut Award

would benefit many areas on the golf course. This new leveling system will come in two different configurations, in either an attachment directly mounted to a Smithco bunker rake (marketed with Smithco) or as an independent pull unit to use with other rake manufacturers. This is the ultimate in-house unit for grading tees.

• While on the subject of bunker rakes, one of the more interesting equipment debuts from a major manufacturer has to go to the folks at Smithco. The debut of their **E-Star Rake** gets my *Electric Award*.

Electric equipment has yet to hit a home run in the golf business, but an electric bunker rake just may have the potential to take off. Briggs and Stratton's revolu-

tionary new E-tek motor powers this rake, which is quieter, more powerful, and more efficient than its predecessors. An electric rake not only offers the benefit of earlier start times where noise ordinances



Smithco's E-Star bunker rake

are in place, but also offers greater versatility to work around golfers.

• My *Attachments Award* goes to all the companies that are trying to develop the perfect bunker machine rake attachment. Each year there are several new configurations in search of the best rak-



The Jacobsen LF 1880 fairway unit

ing pattern. This year again there was an array of **new brushes, fingers, rakes, and brooms** for different tastes.

• The most interesting *Reel Mower Concept Award* goes to the **Jacobsen LF**

1880 fairway unit. This new unit fits between a present day tri-plex and five-plex. Its design features 18-inch cutting units that are advertised to follow contours better than anything on the market. Its 80-inch cut also lends itself to an aesthetically pleasing mowing pattern along with very low compaction weight per square inch. Time will tell if this becomes an industry standard. On the surface, it sure seems interesting.

• Another mower which attracted attention and receives my *Rotary Mower Award* is the **Toro 4500D and the 4700D**. These machines are similar to



The Toro 4500 D gets the Rotary Mower Award

the old Ransomes AR250, which has made such a big splash over the last five years. The 4500D offers a 5-deck configuration, while the 4700D offers a 7-deck configuration. Toro certainly had ample time to learn from the faults of the AR250, and it appears they have addressed all the issues with their design.

• To all the topdressing unit manufacturers, I bestow the *Versatility Award*. When you browse through the different

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Wallace Q&A

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2003, and we'll be working hard to put that entire infrastructure in place this year. In addition, we'll continue to look at our government relations and move forward with research, scholarship, education and all the other programs the association offers. The association is a big operation. There's no one overarching goal except to continue moving the GCSAA and its many programs forward and serve our members.

GCN: What preparations are being made to implement member standards in July 2003?

Wallace: Building the infrastructure to track some 9,000 to 10,000 members, in particular their continuing education units, will need to be established. The GCSAA will be issuing credits to members for things like coaching, being volunteer fire fighters and being involved in other civic activities. Those tracking mechanisms need to be put in place and ready to go. We're looking at the entire individual. We recognize that a member is not just all about golf. Things like social business skills are also needed, and we view superintendents as not only being valuable to the industry but to society as a whole. It broadens way out beyond just our educational programs. We're also looking at individual chapters and their educational programs and working to integrate them into one system. It's all part of our affordable,

accessible goals for educating members.

GCN: What challenges do you anticipate the association encountering this year?

Wallace: I think the challenges we face are those that are going to be faced by most every other industry. We're not immune to the economy. We're also not immune to the continued consolidation within our industry. As a result, the GCSAA is an organization that's dependent on revenue streams such as advertising, the conference and show, and membership growth. The economy will play a large part in where we go. Our business is such that our members have to take a budget each year to their clubs and state their cases as to what the return on the investment is in belonging to the GCSAA. We have a marvelous case to state, but it's one of those things that every year we have to sell it.

GCN: Last year, the GCSAA launched a pilot program for its e-commerce initiative. What role do you see the Internet taking with the association this year and in the near future?

Wallace: The focus needs to be on making continuous improvements and staying engaged and looking at different avenues. We must be willing to look outside what exists and say, 'Are there other ways of

doing business?' That's been critical in our Web strategy. Seven years ago when I joined the board, our Web strategy committee didn't even exist. We try to do things in a planned, methodical manner, but we also recognize that things move fairly quickly in the e-world. We've adapted to that, and we're working our way through that process. The way we look at it is not necessarily doing e-business but business-e. In other words, in what ways can we do our business electronically and will it work in other areas.

GCN: What potential benefits to the association and its members do you see available with the Internet, and are there any obstacles?

Wallace: It's certainly an educational resource and a communication tool. Reaching out to international members is a tremendous benefit. It allows us to communicate with them in a more time relevant format. However, the Internet does present a generation challenge. For younger superintendents and individuals just coming out of college, they've cut their teeth on computers and been involved with them ongoing. For gentlemen like myself, who may be getting toward the latter end of their careers as time goes on, computers weren't available when we entered the profession.

It's not like we're antiques, but it is a function we've had to go back and learn. But we recognize that the future is in computers and electronics, and that's where future superintendents need to be and feel comfortable.

GCN: Your contract with the Hop Meadow CC was not renewed this year. I imagine that a leadership role with the association and a leadership role at a golf club can prove challenging. Have you found any difficulties in trying to balance those two commitments?

Wallace: In taking my new position at Fairview Farm, one of my main concerns was my commitment to the GCSAA. The owner is very comfortable with that and encourages me to continue with it. That was one of my main criteria for taking the position. Balancing the two leadership roles is challenging. You just need to look for facilities where owners or boards understand that what we're doing — the mission of the GCSAA — is trying to provide the best educated and best superintendents available and continue to advance the profession. What we're trying to accomplish at the GCSAA is help make golf a better, more enjoyable and efficient game through education. Supporting the GCSAA is a function of the golf clubs giving back to the industry as a whole. Thankfully, there are some clubs out there that see that value. ■

— Joel Joyner

Kevin Ross' new product awards

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booths, you can't help but think where we were ten years ago with these units. Fairway topdressers were almost nonexistent, and now every manufacturer has their own model. Turfco introduced new refinements with the **WideSpin 1530**. This unit is being advertised as the dual-purpose machine, to address both super light topdressings and heavier applications for aerification purposes.



Turfco's WideSpin 1530

day turf management. This unit has gathered some amazing steam since its debut. So much so that it receives my *Imitation is the Best Form of Flattery Award*. At least three other companies have put their Graden version on the market. All the credit should not solely go to Graden, however. The development of the "Superbents" and "Ultradwarfs" certainly has given this machine an assist in its popularity.

• The **Toro Flex 21** gets the *Hottest Mowing Unit Award*. After its debut in Dallas last year, this mower is riding a wave of incredible popularity. It far exceeded its sales projections for 2001, and Toro is looking forward to an even bigger



Toro's Flex 21 gets Hottest Mowing Unit Award

year in 2002. This year Toro has added a **groomer and two different brush attachments** as options for the Flex unit.

These are all the items that caught my eye at "The Big Show" in Orlando. I can't wait to see what Atlanta 2003 can deliver. ■

Musick and Quinn buy Florida's LaCita CC

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"We thought a private club was the best market to get into for our first club," he explained. "The daily-fee market, especially here in Florida, is such a price conscious market. There are a lot of golf courses in the state and a lot of competition. We felt a private club would give us an edge up on service and the quality of the facility would enhance the membership. It was a good fit."

The club was previously owned and operated by ClubCorp (CCA). The purchase price was more than two million, according to Musick. "There are four of us as partners," he said. "Dale and myself are the managing partners. There's an attorney, Kenneth Senn, in Colorado who also holds a real estate license and helped out with the legal aspects of the acquisition, and Louis Reeder, a businessman in Texas, who brought a great deal of business experience with him. We each own a 25 percent interest in the club."

WINNING BACK MEMBERSHIP

The initial goal for the two managing partners is to boost the membership numbers. The club once had over 1,800 members, and currently has just over 900 members with about 245 full golf members. The other memberships include pool and fitness, tennis and social memberships.

"We'd like to get the golf membership numbers up to around the 325 to 350 mark," said Musick. "In a five year period, CCA had seven general managers here at the club. It was basically a revolving door. Our objective is to win over the support of our current members and begin to grow the membership through word of mouth. Members have told us that having two of the owners available here on location is a big benefit."

Musick and Quinn closed the deal Nov. 30, on a Friday, and were out on the course making changes the following Monday. "It was a little wet in some areas, and we put in a considerable amount of drainage," said Quinn.

Drainage was installed on holes five, eight, 12, 13, 14, and 15. "The project was

well received by the members. On the fifth hole, members had never been able to take their carts out into the fairway. After the work, they were in the fairway within less than four weeks," said Quinn.

The club is situated on 150 acres of property. "We've also done some landscaping around the clubhouse, and we've recently established an 'adopt-a-hole' program here," said Quinn. "Groups of members have been interested in enhancing the landscape on the course. We'll have four or five families for each hole, and we'll focus on things like beautifying the tee

boxes. They are certainly enthusiastic and want to participate, so they can help out by donating some of their time and dollars. They also can go out in the evenings to fill divots and repair ball marks on their adopted holes."

The club is also creating a memorial for those members who have passed on, according to Quinn. "They approached us about establishing a memorial," he said. "We've already cleared a visible area on the course where members will be able to purchase commemorative bricks. There will be about 900 bricks made available to them, and we expect that they'll sell out rather quickly."

LOCAL BUSINESS, GROWING MEMBERSHIP

The club is targeting corporate events and building a strong connection with the community. "We've tried to keep a lot of our business local," said Musick. "We do business right across the street at the bank, we have our lease vehicles from the Ford dealership in town, and our carrier for all of our property and liability insurance is just across the street. We're working to remain community focused. They

help make up our membership, so it's a two-way street."

Though private, the club does host outside events like corporate outings and charitable fund-raisers on the agenda. "There's a Hospice fund-raiser coming up, and we've got the fifth an-



The ninth green at LaCita Country Club

nual Space Coast Junior Golf tournament in April during the weekend of the Masters," said Quinn. "David Leadbetter brings his top 20 students to the club, and the field is limited to 84 players." The club is supportive of local junior golfers by inviting young players and high school students to play the course free of charge.

The club has implemented a membership incentive plan that will carry through until the middle of March. "We've sent letters to our members to invite their friends and associates to join the club," said Musick. "By helping us sign up new members, they'll receive a reduction on their monthly bill.

"After the middle of March, we'll be looking at some outside advertising," he added. "In addition, from CCA files, we sent about 200 letters to previous members offering them a 50 percent reduction on their initiation fee if they wish to return to the club. Right now, we think that word-of-mouth will be a key factor for us. Once previous members hear that the service, quality of the course, and consis-

ProSource One eyes growth

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ProSource One covers the United States from the upper Midwest to the Southeast and has a small presence in New England and the Southwest that may soon be expanded.

According to Lee, the company has already added two members to the sales team in the Carolinas and has bolstered its staff in Florida.

Hiring will be key to the company's short-term growth, Lee said. "We want to hire people who can bring business with them," he said. "We are getting new, experienced people on board and we are improving our business in the markets we are already in. We also will be looking at some small acquisitions."

The uncertainty surrounding ProSource One has afforded the company some advantages, said Lee.

"We have been through the hardest part," he said. "I think we have taken out most of our weak spots, and now we just need to work on growing the business."

While he admitted that the turf business was going to be difficult going forward, Lee said he is confident that they can grow the business.

"The market itself is not growing and [superintendent's] budgets are going to be conservative," said Lee. "Our sales staff has to be more of a consultant and help customers solve problems. We can't just be coming in and selling on price." ■

— Andrew Overbeck

Golf Ventures

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Nipper said the site will eventually serve up online parts information, technical tips and support.

OTHER AGREEMENTS

Although Golf Ventures works exclusively with Meadowbrook, that association does not preclude it from offering its services to other management companies.

"We offer management companies an opportunity to control prices," said Nipper. "We see the opportunity there and want to provide them with quality products as well. We are working with other major golf course owners, and we have several national accounts pending."

In addition, Nipper said the company is pursuing an agreement with the National Golf Course Owners Association and is exploring ways it could work with the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's Golf Super-Market. ■

tency is back at the club, we believe a lot of members will return."

The club projects anywhere from 35,000 to 37,000 rounds of golf this year, according to Musick. The facility also features a swimming pool with a cabana and Jacuzzi, a fitness center with state-of-the-art equipment, a tennis facility across the street with six courts and a separate building with two racquetball courts. ■