

SPRAYERS

BY MARGARET HEPP

# Spray it right

Opening his fifth golf course, Danny Gwyn relies on two intelligent machines – a turf sprayer and the human brain

Danny Gwyn speaks about The Club at Twelve Oaks, just outside Raleigh, N.C., with an easy confidence, but it's not the course's longstanding tradition that gives Gwyn his self-assurance. Twelve Oaks is a new, 18-hole private golf club that opened this month. But Gwyn has 25 years in the industry under his belt. Currently, he's the course's superintendent and regional director of agronomy for ClubCorp, the company that manages Twelve Oaks. In true veteran fashion, he's about to deliver the club's inaugural golf season without a hitch.

There's a lot of pressure that's part of the grow-in process at a new course, but Gwyn kept a cool head when it was time to bring in equipment and supplies. For his sprayers, he went straight to Smith Turf and Irrigation, the Toro distributor that has served him for more than 20 years.

In June 2007, Gwyn purchased a four-year lease on two Toro sprayers – a Multi Pro 5700D for large turf areas and a Multi Pro 1250, which he uses predominately for greens. The leases cost about \$35,000 and \$25,000 respectively, and were part of a \$950,000 new equipment purchase to supply the course and crew.

The decision to lease was based on the developers' needs, not ClubCorp's needs, Gwyn says.

"It spreads out capital dollars further," he says.

The decision to invest in Toro was based on loyalty and past experience.

"In this region of the country, our Toro distributor is solid," Gwyn says. "I've been in the business for 25 years, and it seems like it's been this way for the most part. They're consistent."

With 15 golf courses under his direction, consistency is a crucial element of Gwyn's life and practice as a superintendent. His grow-in was regulated carefully.

In June 2007, Danny Gwyn purchased a four-year lease on two Toro sprayers – a Multi Pro 5700D and a Multi Pro 1250 (pictured). Photo: Toro



"We used the 5700 once a week for various growth regulation applications," he says. "A lot of herbicide sprays were conducted during the grow-in. The 1250 was used at least once a week."

Gwyn anticipates he'll continue to use his 1250 greens sprayer weekly during the rest of the year, but he'll use his 5700 less frequently, perhaps once every two weeks.

"Once we get a more established turf here, we'll probably be doing more growth regulations of the lower-cut grass than herbicide sprays with the 5700," he says. "We'll continue to spray herbicides, but growth regulation will be a big part of our practice."

Gwyn's crew sprayed three fungicide applications in the spring, about six months after the greens were established. Last fall, they sprayed for fall army worms. No insecticides have been applied in 2008. The 5700 was used for both the fungicide and insecticide applications.

The 5700 and 1250 are equipped with T-jet nozzles, each with a triple adapter on the nozzle station. With the help of a \$900,000 maintenance budget, Gwyn and his crew are prepared to troubleshoot any sprayer problems as they arise, but the equipment is so new they have yet to run into any malfunctions.

When the four-year leases on the sprayers end, Gwyn predicts he'll stay with Toro for his next sprayers.

"I've been a customer for 20 years, and I've been in the business for 25," he says. "Customer service, from my standpoint, is one of the most critical things when deciding on a piece of equipment. Obviously we want the best equipment, but we also want somebody to stand behind it. Toro, as well as our distributor, has always done an exceptional job in servicing its customers."

In addition to the Toro sprayers, Gwyn also uses four Shindaiwa SP415 backpack sprayers, as well as several hand sprayers from local hardware stores. During the grow-in process, Gwyn's team used the Shindaiwa sprayers frequently.

"If we have isolated areas for weed control, we'll actually spot spray," he says. "It's labor intensive, but it works well for us."

Even as Gwyn considers the future, he also takes time to appreciate – and apply – the skills he's learned along the way.

"People rely too much on the sprayers' computer technology to make some basic calibration decisions," he says. "To me, the old-fashioned way of calibrating a sprayer is still the most accurate and dependable. The computerized systems are good, but they're not foolproof. That's the biggest thing I tend to see."

Both Gwyn's sprayers have calibration systems, but, as with his course, he takes nothing for granted. He and his crew constantly double-check the computerized calibration against their own basic calibration techniques. But Gwyn will have to wait until he gets through his first season at Twelve Oaks to find out how well his team measured up. **GCI**