

PART OF THE PLAN

A solid set of grinders keeps maintenance costs in check at Stone Creek Golf Club.

BY ALYSE LAMPARYK

It has been a smooth ride for superintendent David Phipps ever since he purchased grinders for his course a decade ago. A 20-year golf industry veteran, Phipps knows how important a clean cut is for his course.

Phipps first encountered Bernhard & Co. grinders while working as an assistant superintendent at Oregon Golf Club. The course hired a new superintendent and with him he brought Bernhard Express Duals to replace another brand of grinders. Interested, Phipps and the course's mechanic fiddled around with the machine and were pleased with its ease and design.

When Phipps was hired as superintendent at Stone Creek Golf Club in Oregon City, Ore., he remembered how pleased he had been with the Bernhard product and purchased the first grinders for Stone Creek from the company. He chose the Express Dual 3000 and Anglemaster 3000 Bedknife Grinder for about \$35,000.

"It's all pros," says Phipps of the tool's versatility and reliability. "I have no problems with it at all."

Bernhard supplies are sold at a nearby location, so any repairs have been a quick fix. Not that there are many service calls to speak of at Stone Creek.

When Phipps was in need of a new vacuum cleaner for the unit, Bernhard sent it for free, as it was covered by the warranty. Other than that, Phipps has simply had to replace the grinding stone every once in a while. In the long run he has not had to put much money into the machinery.

Results of the Bernhard grinders are not just noticed by Phipps. "We're always being told what a great condition the golf course is in," Phipps says.

He attributes much of that to his equipment manager, Steve Mathre, who Phipps says is a fanatic about keeping the reels sharp so they get a quality cut and a good roll on the green. The mechanic takes conditions on the golf course seriously as they reflect his work, something he takes quite personally.

In addition to the equipment manager, Phipps has eight other employees. The annual maintenance budget of about \$627,000, allows for 12 or 13 employees during Stone Creek's peak season. While only the mechanic works with the grinders, Phipps feels that the learning



Equipment manager Steve Mathre takes a lot of pride keeping the mower reels sharp so they get a quality cut and a good roll on the green.

curve for the machinery is quite easy and his assistant could probably easily do it.

The frequency of use for the grinders depends on what type of projects are taking place on the course.

"Sometimes it's for all day and sometimes it's for two straight days," Phipps says. At the very least, the mechanic uses the grinders once a week and most frequently on the fairway or trim mowers.

Recently, Phipps and his employees began trying a new mowing pattern for their course in an effort to save time.

"We don't get a lot of growth this time of year, but we like to keep it low so we're not overtaken with growth during spring," Phipps says. For now the grounds are still working off the slow-release fertilizer and the grass is growing in slowly. Through it all, the grinders are still playing the same role: maintaining a crisp, clean cut.

Phipps acknowledges that a critical part in maintaining a golf course is having sharp reels. He finds it important to keep the turf clean because then less water is necessary, saving money and alleviating a lot of frayed edges.

Ultimately, Phipps says, "Keeping sharp equipment is all part of the plan." **GCI**

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