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Check it out

A checklist helps track equipment maintenance – fluid levels, tire conditions, fueling, washing and parking – before and after golf course maintenance employees use the equipment.

Angel Guzman, equipment manager, and Jeff Latka, golf course superintendent, at Champions Run Golf Club in Omaha, Neb. (the site of the annual Nationwide Tour's Cox Classic presented by Chevrolet), developed a checklist to track those maintenance items. The staff uses a recycled, parts bin metal cabinet with 36 spaces for clipboards to track each piece of motorized equipment. The name of each piece of equipment is written above each space in permanent-ink marker. Each employee fills out his own checklist after he checks the oil, fuel, coolant, air filter, hydraulic fluid and tires, and looks for any fluid leaks. When the equipment is returned to the maintenance building after being used on the golf course, it's fueled (with the number of gallons documented), cleaned and parked. The hour meter reading is documented with the employee's initials.

The metal cabinet cost about \$100 five years ago, and the clipboards cost \$2 each. It took Guzman about two hours to complete.



Marking the green

Marking a green's edge in relation to the desired collar width can be done easily with a modified paint-stripping machine.

Thomas Athy, CGCS, director of grounds at the Omaha (Neb.) Country Club, uses a stripe marking machine (\$250) fitted with an easy marker paint gun (\$15) and a 15-ounce aerosol paint can (\$3 each). Athy added a threaded, quarter-inch-diameter steel rod (\$2) that was bolted to the machine, which has a 24-inch handle. A rubber tip (\$1) was placed on the other end of the rod to keep the rod from digging into the grass. The rubber tip is held in place by a one-eighth-inch-diameter nylon rope (25 cents). The desired collar width can be made easily by making the rod the desired width, then painting the dotted lines on the greens' edges for the mower operator to follow.

It took about one hour to modify the paint-stripping machine. **GCI**



Travels With Terry

Globetrotting consulting agronomist Terry Buchen visits many golf courses annually with his digital camera in hand. He will share helpful ideas relating to maintenance equipment from the golf course superintendents he visits – as well as a few ideas of his own – with timely photos and captions that explore the changing world of golf course management.



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PLANNING A SMOOTH OPERATION

Q When televising a major golf championship, what are the concerns facing a golf course superintendent when interacting with the needs of the electronic media and requirements of the golf course operation?

A Major events are televised by networks that give significant revenues back to the sponsoring organization. Throughout the years, I've learned the televising network can't be successful without cooperation from the golf course superintendent and his staff.

The network compound location is important because it's where it all begins. Space requirements vary from 50,000 to 125,000 square feet, including space for trucks and their trailers, office trailers, golf carts, parking for hundreds of workers, food-and-beverage tents, restroom facili-

ties, and entrance/exit availability.

The ground selected should be firm and kept dry to handle heavy equipment and production trucks. This area usually requires a surface of crushed rock or concrete for parking in case rain makes the location swampy.

Communication requirements for the broadcast network should be established and cabling needs should be defined.

Potable water will be required for the catering operation. If water isn't available, chlorinated water tanks might be brought in. In extreme cases, wells might need to be sunk into the location.

Access to the site is vital. The site must be able to accommodate 250-plus vehicles and shuttles into and out of the compound.

Space for large generators is necessary in case of a power outage. Space needs to be allocated to support servicing needs.

Space should be available for vendors who set up all the towers throughout the golf course and their equipment.

If network affiliates are involved in cooperation with the major broadcasting team, space must be made for their needs, too. This can lead to the use of an inactive fairway in close proximity to the compound.

Finally, the space, equipment, personnel and materials must be secured and surrounded by a chain-link fence.

Q During the 1997 U.S. Open Championship at Congressional Country Club, golf course superintendent Paul R. Latshaw, in agreement with the USGA, chose to use walking mowers throughout the golf course. What were the needs of the maintenance area to accommodate this excessive amount of mowers?

A First, Latshaw must be commended for his effort coordinating this huge undertaking. While not recommended for daily play, the planning and execution were incredible. Latshaw's planning for the mechanical end of this program included accommodating space needs of mechanics and technicians to work comfortably without interfering with each other and allocating proper space to park and stage 150 walking mowers. An area for the mechanic staff to rest when not minding the mower fleet also was factored into the master plan.

Latshaw addressed the need for enough grinding units to quickly turn around any mower that needed attention and technicians who specialized in the grinding operation. The ability to move a large number of mower reels around without damaging the reel or hurting a staff member was paramount. It was essential to have enough electrical power from the correct source to accomplish any sharpening task.

There was a need for space to store extra equipment in case units on the golf course broke down. Additionally, the ability to transport replacement equipment onto the golf course was considered.

Latshaw also needed to preorder a sufficient supply of lapping compound.

The ease of fueling each mower, as well as the remainder of the equipment fleet, was factored into the operations equation.

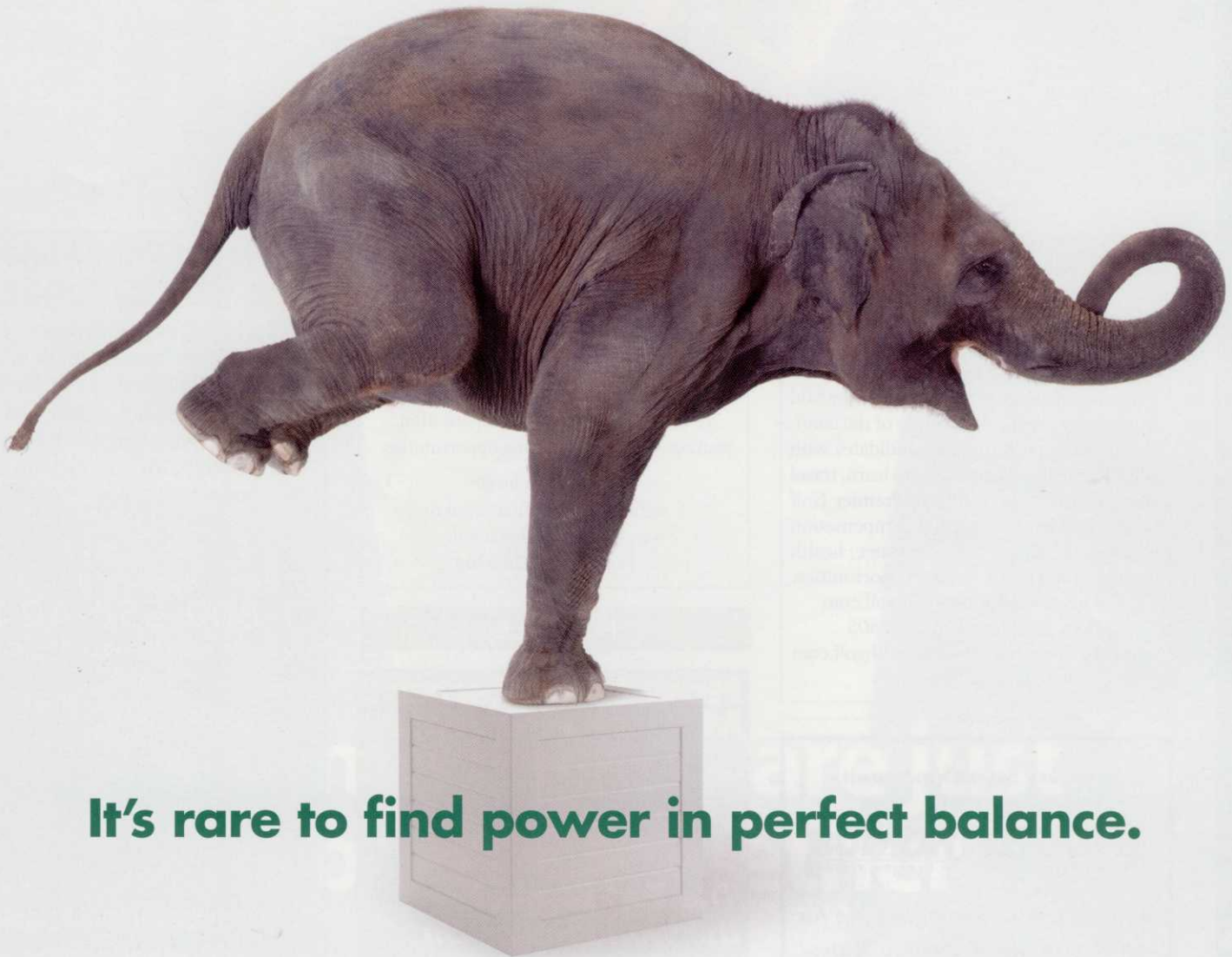
Other considerations: What did the wash-off area consist of? Will water be used, or will it be a "blow off" area? Can more than one mower be washed at one time? Where does the rinsed product go without impacting the flow of the maintenance area and flooding a traffic alley? Can all this equipment leave and be transported onto the golf course in a seamless fashion?

As you can see, this activity – although invisible to golf fans – required time, effort and complete planning of every detail to be effective and functional. **GCI**

Editor's note: If you have any questions about course set-up or maintenance related to golf tournaments or events, e-mail Tim Moraghan at tmoraghan11@comcast.net.



If hosting a televised tournament, space needs to be allocated for such things as scaffolding for the broadcast team. Photo: John Walsh



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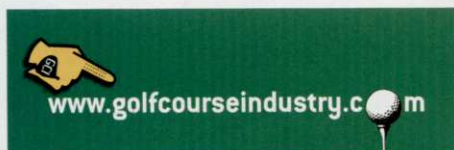
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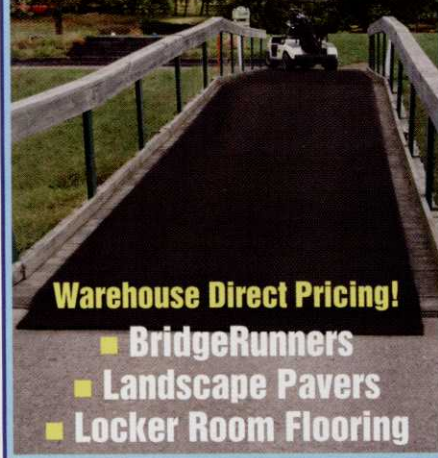
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EXCELLENT ORLANDO ADVENTURE

A few weeks ago, I was standing in line at the Orlando Convention Center waiting to pick up my GIS media badge when I felt a tap on my shoulder and was a bit shocked to find my old friend Bubba standing there with a silly grin on his face.

Bubba, as you may recall, is a down-to-earth, grass-growin', tractor-hat wearin', tobacky-chewin' throw-back superintendent. He's the kind of guy who's happier tearing apart a Cushman engine or back-lapping reels than donning his clip-on tie and going to a bunch of seminars at the big show. Bubba is, in a word, a caveman. But he's a world-class caveman with a Midas touch when it comes to turf.

"What the heck are you doing here?" I asked incredulously. I knew he'd never been to a national show before.

"Gotta get my certification," he replied while fumbling with his clip-on tie. "The new wife thinks I'd be more respectable with them extra letters behind my name."

"How many 'new wives' is that now?" I asked.

"She's number four, but I think she's really the one this time. She wants to get herself ... er, enhanced ... and the procedure ain't cheap. The club said they'd bump my pay if I got certified, so I'm one certification-motivated sumbitch."

Bubba looked me over, and I could see the gears turning in his head. "Jonesy, what the heck do you do at these GIS shows?" he asked warily. "You probably go to all sorts of press conferences the companies hold and try to dig up stories to write for those magazines, right?"

"Well, not quite," I replied.

"So you're exhibiting in one of the booths?"

"Not exactly."

"Oh, then you're attending a bunch of seminars to learn more about agronomy, right?"

"I gave up on trying to pretend I was a turfhead years ago, Bubba."

"OK, so what the heck are you doing here?"

"Observing," I proclaimed.

"So you aren't really doing anything except hanging out, talking to people and waiting for someone to buy drinks?"

"Correct," I replied. "Care to join me?"

Thus, Bubba decided to blow off all his seminars and became my first-ever show intern, essentially observing how I observe. Here are a few things we observed together as we wandered around the 2008 GIS in Orlando:

Within minutes of leaving the registration area, we bumped into Steve Mona, the soon-to-be-former c.e.o. of the GCSAA. Steve and I had a nice chat, and Bubba awkwardly shook his hand. Once Steve excused himself, Bubba asked me why a great guy like Steve was leaving the national.

"Because he's done what he can in Lawrence, and it's time for him to move on," I said.

Bubba looked puzzled: "Why would he give up a cool job like that?"

"Because 14 years as the head of a national association is like 28 years as the superintendent at the same facility," I replied. "You run out of ideas and, more importantly, you run out of political capital. When the board members who hired you are all gone, it's time to think about moving on. Oh, and the PGA Tour is going to pay him a heckuva lot of money to run this World Golf Foundation thing."

Bubba smiled and nodded, definitely understanding that last part.

Next, my new intern and I wandered onto the show floor. Bubba immediately started collecting his stuff – little green basketballs, orange and green golf caps and booth swag of every imaginable sort. Once we'd walked around for a while, I asked him how many of these companies he actually bought things from for his golf course.

"A few," he said. "Mostly I buy stuff from local people my area that I know and trust. If they recommend it, I'll usually try it."

Hmmm ... I thought as I looked around at the hundreds of booths staffed by hopeful but often clueless salespeople ... maybe the intern can teach the jaded old veteran something after all.

As we walked, I asked Bubba what he thought about Orlando. "Nice weather, plenty of stuff for families, but kinda hard to get around," he said. I told him the show was in New Orleans next year. "Isn't the city still underwater?" he asked with concern. "Parts are still pretty screwed up, but the French Quarter and Bourbon Street are back and better than even," I said. "Count me in, then," Bubba said. "It'll be my contribution to the city's recovery. So, is there anything fun to do in New Orleans?" I just smiled and told him to meet me at the intersection of Bourbon and Bienville a year from now, and I might be able to show him a few interesting places.

After a long day of "observing" and meandering around the trade show, we decided it was time to relax and visit a few of the evening hospitality events. There were plenty of corporate parties to go to – mostly sort of stuffy affairs held in hotel ballrooms – but the real fun was at the big chapter receptions. After taking a series of trains, taxis, helicopters, monorails and ox carts, Bubba and I successfully managed to find and crash parties for the California, Florida, Ohio, Carolinas and Wisconsin chapters.

As we sat at our last event of the night, I decided to test my not-so-young intern: "Bubba, why do these chapter events feel different than all the other ones we've been to tonight?"

The big man pondered for a minute. Then, as if a sunbeam had broken through the clouds, he cracked a broad smile, yanked off his clip-on tie and threw it high in the air before exclaiming, "Because it's like being in their family, Jonesy!"

I realized my intern had become wise beyond his experience. "You've passed the test, grasshopper. Get yourself another beer, and tell them it's on your wife's plastic surgeon." **GCI**

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