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ADAPT TO CHANGE ... OR FAIL

During the past several weeks, I've been thinking about life and how certain moments change people. Recently, I finished reading "Quiet Strength," a book written by Tony Dungy, the head football coach of the Indianapolis Colts. Early in the book, Dungy told stories about playing in the NFL during the late 1970s for the Pittsburgh Steelers.

One of Dungy's mentors, who he refers to many times in the book, was the Steelers Hall of Fame coach Chuck Noll. One of Noll's sayings was, "Those who fail to adapt to change are preparing to fail."

This isn't the first time I've heard this saying. I played football for more than 10 years, and I heard many of these types of motivational sayings. However, this one hit home the most for me because of recent changes in my life.

To begin with, my first child was born in July. Also, I turned 29 recently. My 30th birthday is getting closer each day, and I haven't met some of the goals I've set for myself. Suddenly, it hit me: Am I nearing the half-way point in my life and not accomplishing the goals I set for myself?

One goal I set for myself in college – 10 years ago – was that I'd be a head superintendent by the time I was 30. Now, with that magic number about 200 days away, I wonder where I'll be? Ten years ago, 30 was a long way off, and I figured it wouldn't be an issue. Now, with the big 3-0 looming, it's a thought that lingers in the back of my mind. I think about the quote from Noll: Do I need to change and adapt, or should I just stay the course?

There might be many assistants who have these same thoughts: Is it time to consider alternative occupations? Do I need to learn different skills? Has my well run dry for opportunities? These are all valid questions that run through assistants' minds as they approach a certain age and level of experience in life if they haven't accomplished their goals yet. Family, income and career goals are areas I think about – and

worry about – as time passes.

I'm fortunate to be married to a woman who I love with a passion and with whom I hope to grow old. Our three-week-old son is amazing. We're so blessed. My wife's parents and my mother grow older along with the rest of us. As we watch them take care of our grandparents who are in their mid-80s, we ask if we'll follow that road, too? We love our parents and family very much and would do anything necessary to help them. However, that's one more concern about the future I have to consider. Are you in the same boat?

Another question you might ask yourself when you reach a certain threshold is, "Am I achieving my career goals and doing all I can for my family?" With rising fuel and energy costs, a difficult housing market, insurance rates at an all-time high, Social Security in shambles and the largest budget deficit in U.S. history, you might think, "How do I prepare for the future?" That sounds daunting, but it raises concerns for me and my family and how I help prepare us for the future.

With a child, you no longer think of yourself first. My wife and I think of all the hopes and dreams we have for each

other as a family, professionally and in our Christian faiths. But, now that we have our son Aiden, we want to give him every opportunity and experience we never thought imaginable. There's nothing I wouldn't do for him ... and I'm sure you feel that way about your children. Which brings me back to that same question, "Am I doing all that I can to help my family?"

When answering the question, you have to ask: Is what I'm doing making a difference? Am I doing what's best for my family? Am I adapting to change? For me, the answer is yes. Does golf maintenance solve the problems of the world? Maybe not, but it provides millions of people worldwide enjoyment. Also, I'm working in a career that satisfies me and makes me happy, which, in turn, makes me a better husband and father. That's a good thing.

As my deadline approaches to reach my goal, I'm going to have to make some changes. I'm going to have to recognize the field is changing. It's taking longer to become a superintendent. As a result, I'm going to have to adapt my goal. The big 4-0 seems like a long way away.

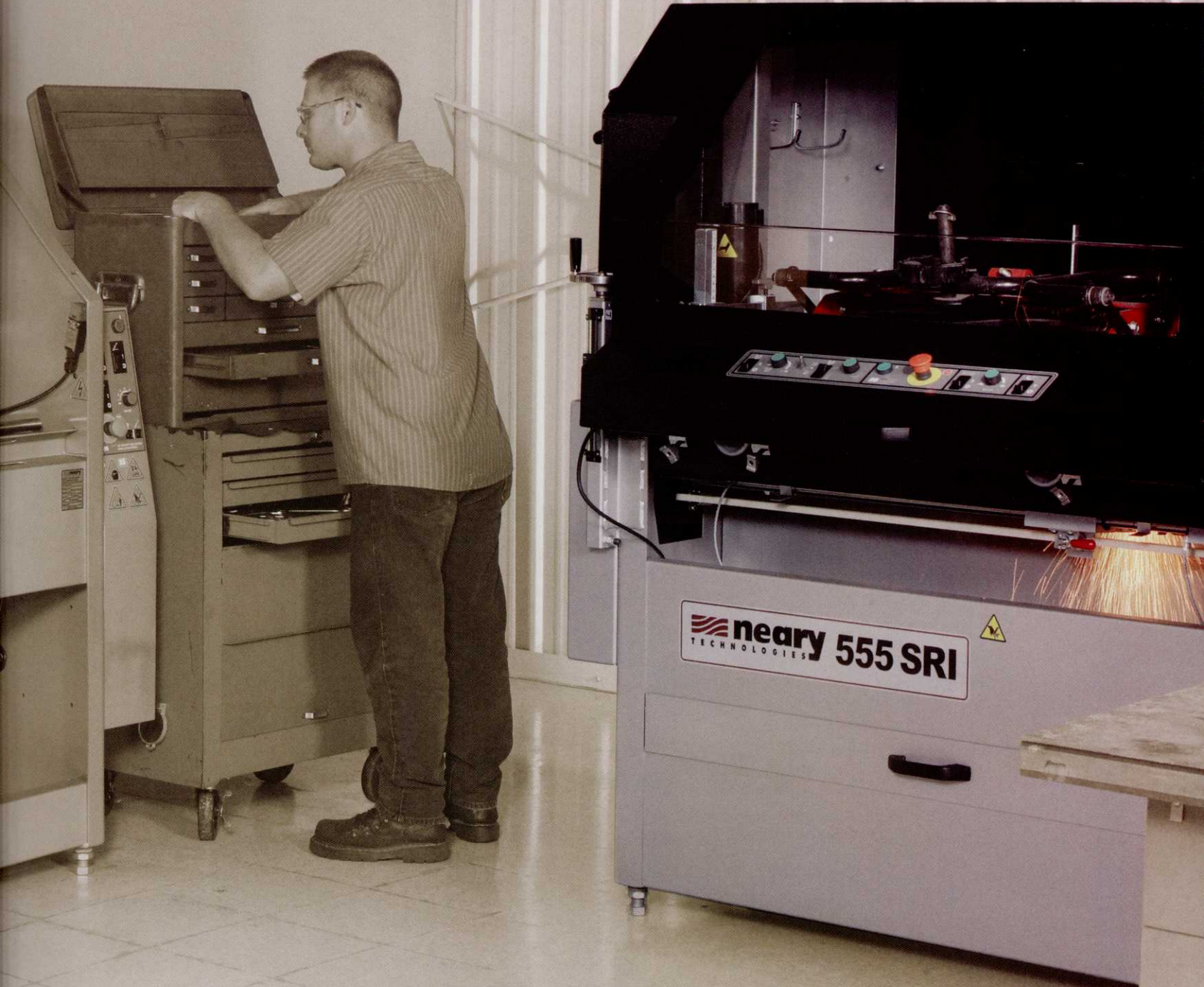
Like Dungy and Noll, I'm going to do my best to change with the new demands of our profession. Anyway, it's time for that 3:00 a.m. feeding for the baby before work. Good morning, Aiden. **GCI**

"Am I achieving my career goals and doing all I can for my family?"

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BUNKER DESIGN CHANGES

Last month, I vented about the trend toward perfect playing conditions in sand hazards. Regardless of my opinion, it's a trend that's here to stay. So, providing consistent bunkers is one of any good superintendent's biggest concerns.

There's little doubt the recent downturn in golf, combined with golfers' expectations of bunker consistency (perfect lies and easy and predictable playing characteristics every day, even after heavy rains) and white sand use is causing golf course architects, builders, superintendents and suppliers to seek new bunker construction technologies.

It's really a continuation of a long-standing trend of technology affecting design. It happens in all design professions. In building architecture, for example, steel beams allowed for taller skyscrapers. In golf course design, technology changed almost every era whenever advances in earthmoving, irrigation and drainage were incorporated into cost-efficient designs.

When scrapers and bulldozers replaced horses for earthmoving, architects initially just completed work more quickly. Eventually, they used increased earthmoving capacity for new design concepts, often enlarging the scale of golf greens and tees and adding more features such as fairway mounding and large lakes, which stored enough water to allow larger irrigation systems, which contributed to advances in automatic irrigation.

With drainage, technological advances in plastic drain pipe during the 1980s reduced costs, which allowed architects to experiment with creative earthmoving, rather than accepting nature's contours.

Similarly, recent technological advances in bunker liners have changed the way bunkers are built and maintained. To facilitate desired conditions, bunkers have evolved into complex construction projects with standard construction that includes liners, fully tamped subsoils, carefully selected sand and full herringbone tile with cleanout boxes. Some have experimented with other

techniques, including gravel sublayers.

After decades of trying to create better bunkers by replacing superintendents, most green committees now realize superintendents can't provide perfect conditions with imperfectly constructed bunkers. Bunker consistency is important enough to them to justify spending money to build or rebuild bunkers correctly.

But there's no correct technique for creating perpetually perfect bunkers – and one single method might not exist. For starters, golfers can't agree on what constitutes a good bunker. Typically, good players, who often have more pull at a club, like them firmer than average ones. Inevitably, some golfers aren't happy with bunker conditions, despite spending more on construction and maintenance.

Greater costs, a desire for consistency and better maintenance (sometimes on tight budgets) affects the way golf course architects design bunkers.

As a result, the combination of greater costs, a desire for consistency and better maintenance (sometimes on tight budgets) affects the way golf course architects design bunkers. Design responses to current conditions include:

Reducing the number of bunkers.

During the 1990s, golf course architects probably used too many bunkers for visual drama and design "signatures." Their justification was they looked good. Recently, I've consulted with several course managers, including those who manage some courses that I designed earlier in my career, who wish to remove bunkers that are margin-

ally necessary. With new course design or complete renovations, I'm replacing their hazard value with features such as fairway slopes, chipping areas, grass bunkers, mounds and steep banks. My budget plug-in number for bunkers used to be 100,000 square feet; now it's half that. It's a design challenge, but using different hazards allows each hole to be more unique. Aren't there already too many greens with bunkers on either side?

Reducing bunker size. Before liners, maintenance-friendly bunkers had large (16 to 20 feet in diameter) sand lobes to accommodate the turning radius of mechanical bunker rakes. The result was large bunkers. Bunker liners require hand-raking, unless you opt for careful mechanical raking with only leaf-rake attachments. Smaller bunkers that require less time to rake, in concert with quicker travel time because of utility vehicles, help balance the total labor requirement for bunker raking. Smaller bunkers often look much better, so design challenges are nil.

Reducing bunker shape. Many designers still use extravagant cape and bay shapes and rugged bunker edges. At lower-budget courses, fancy bunker shapes might soon give way to simpler ones closely tuned to the mowing radii of bank mowers.

Reducing bunker-face slope. Maximum practical bunker-face slope varies with local rainfall, sand quality and bunker drainage. Sharp angular sands hold well on slopes. Many courses import sand with these characteristics rather than using local sand, figuring that labor savings eventually offset higher initial cost.

For any sand, flatter bunker slopes generally reduce washing. Reducing maximum slope from 25 to 30 percent to 15 percent or less reduces hand-shoveling. The challenge with flatter bunkers is making the sand visible. Visibility usually requires a simple front edge, no little mounds in front that block views, a 3- to 5-percent base slope throughout the bunker to reduce steeper slopes near the top, and sometimes, giving bunkers more length along the line of play to achieve visibility. **GC**

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MUTUAL-GAINS NEGOTIATING

Do you have productive, synergistic relationships with the other professionals at your facility that benefit the whole organization? Or, instead, are the relationships contentious?

As the economic pressures on golf courses continue to intensify, effective collaboration among facility leadership is essential.

Mutual-gains negotiating is an effective tool that enhances collaboration. The traditional paradigm of negotiating focuses on winning and is, consequently, typically win-lose. Mutual-gains negotiating, on the other hand, is an attempt to get people to synthesize their aims rather than enter into win-lose competitiveness. There are four principles of mutual-gains negotiation.

1. Focus on interests, not positions. A position is a single answer or solution to a problem, one the other party frequently can't accept. An interest is a fear, a need, a worry, a concern, a hope, an aspiration that can be solved or resolved by numerous outcomes, some of which both parties can accept.

The idea behind focusing on interests is to clarify what's important to each party and find areas of common ground. The negotiator – you – must understand the other party's interests. Effective listening and empathy should replace hard negotiating skills. It's also important to discuss your own interests openly and candidly. Don't be misled by the lack of focus on competing. Mutual-gains negotiating also doesn't focus on accommodating. You must be open to the other party's interests and insistent the other party understands yours. Stephen Covey's habit of "seek first to understand then to be understood" is crucial.

When working with club leadership, there are many common interests: the facility's success, the enjoyment and well-being of golfers, the long-term health of the course, the community in which the course is located, and the personal and career development of the entire work force. This

principle places the focus on these common interests rather than personal positions.

To accomplish this principle, people must change the way they behave while negotiating. While power is the key to resolving traditional negotiations, empathy is the key to mutual-gains negotiations.

2. Separate the people issues from the contextual issues. I've struggled to understand this principle because at first it seems inconsistent with the key role negotiators play in mutual-gains negotiating. The importance of this principle emanates from the key role of people. If you're about to ne-



gotiate with someone with whom you have unresolved interpersonal issues unrelated to the negotiation, you must resolve those issues or agree to set them aside or they will tarnish the negotiation easily and perhaps make mutual-gains negotiation impossible.

My discussions with superintendents often include questions or complaints about ongoing conflicts with the golf pro or green committee members that began with a dispute about course layout, green speed, tee times, etc. Proactively confronting these people issues will enhance the effectiveness of superintendents collaborating on course leadership issues. What are the people issues that are reducing your effectiveness as a club leader?

3. Invent options for mutual gain. Focusing on interests makes it possible to identify numerous alternative solutions. The negotiators then can work together to

identify solutions that meet the interests of both parties. At golf facilities, the positions often relate to the course/superintendent versus the pro shop/pro versus the club manager. Creativity, collaboration and a focus on common interests often can invent options that meet the interests of all three. Brainstorming and identifying alternatives focused on common interests is the key.

4. Insist on using objective criteria. The reality is that interests will conflict. Through the first three principles, we almost always can fulfill the interests of each party better than through traditional negotiation or compromising. It is, however, easy to revert back to using power when negotiating the remaining conflicting interests.

The alternative is to resolve the remaining issues using objective criteria instead of power to preserve the benefits of mutual-gain bargaining. A common example of this principle is a negotiation between employees (or a union) and management. Let's say all issues have been resolved based on mutual-gains principles except the increase of wages. Instead of allowing the entire negotiation to fail, peg the percentage increase to an objective measure – the Consumer Price Index, average wage increase of other companies in the industry, etc.

When using mutual gains, you need not adhere exactly to each of the four principles to improve collaboration among course leaders, maintenance staff and in your personal life. Try using one or more – especially focusing on interest rather than positions – to enhance your collaborations and relationships. **GCI**

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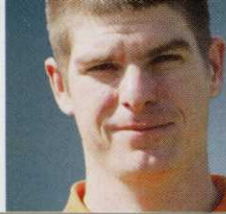
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MOVING FORWARD

During the last two years, the International Golf Course Equipment Managers Association has been moving quickly to build an association on a worldwide scale for equipment technicians. During those two years, we've overcome many obstacles, and now we can say, formally, the IGCEMA is here to stay. Most recently, we've established our 501(c)(6) nonprofit designation and built a strong foundation to help bring us into the future.

Since our inception, we've also seen our membership increase from a handful of members to more than 500 throughout the world. Our membership consists of a wide cross section of the industry, including talented technicians setting up equipment for The Ryder Cup, turf equipment engineers and golf course owners in Europe.

The biggest reason we've been successful so far is technicians' drive to make a statement in our industry. For many years, technicians have been the behind-the-scenes heroes who help produce the smooth playing surfaces so many golfers enjoy. Now the tides are beginning to turn, and many are being looked at as professionals, and more importantly, equals.

The IGCEMA has achieved other goals as well. With the help of sponsors, we've sent seven equipment managers to the Golf Industry Show to experience the event and have the opportunity to discuss equipment with engineers and fellow technicians. Sponsors also have allowed us to send technicians to NASCAR races and manufacturing facility tours.

This year, we hosted a booth at the GIS in Orlando, and we will host a booth at the BTME conference, a turf management trade show in Harrogate, England, in January. In 2007, we put on presentations in South Africa as we traveled with the Federation of European Golf Greenkeepers Association on its road show. We also attended the FEGGA annual conference in Belgium, where we learned about the ever-changing environmental regulations

in Europe and the challenges technicians face there.

This year, IGCEMA has many new goals, one of which is to develop an industry-standard technician certification program. This topic has arisen many times during the past few years, and it's one that we, as an association, have struggled with. Certification is an important part of a profession; however, it's only as good as the people who take it. We have spent the past two years looking at different ways to approach this subject, and quite honestly, we always come back to the start. Developing a certification program isn't an easy task. The IGCEMA recently hired a consultant who specializes in certification programs, and we'll be putting together surveys and models of different programs to solicit input from technicians, manufacturers and superintendents.

The IGCEMA isn't interested in telling

technicians what they have to do. We want technicians to tell us what standards they want. With good feedback we'll be able to build an effective certification program. We're also working on completing job descriptions. There are many titles for technicians – from head mechanic to equipment manager to technician. While it might seem like they're all the same, they're really not. It's important potential employers be able to identify what type of candidates they're looking for by knowing what those individuals are capable of doing or can be responsible for. We hope this will clear up any confusion about the many different job titles floating around for technicians.

Finally, we'd like to thank all of our supporters, including superintendents, manufacturers and publications. Without all of you, technicians wouldn't be where they are today. The IGCEMA will continue to educate technicians for the future, and we hope all of you will join us as we move forward. **GCI**

The biggest reason we've been successful so far is **technicians' drive to make a statement in our industry ... many are being looked at as professionals ...**



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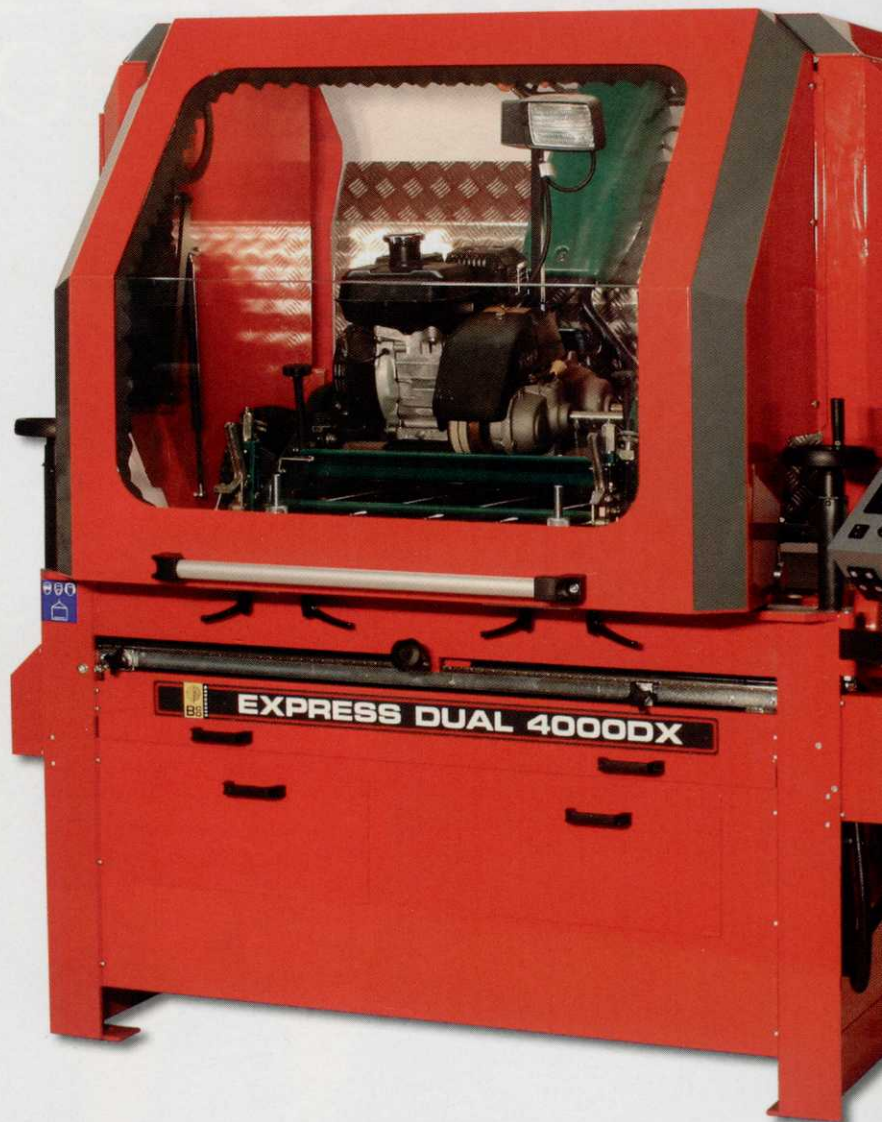
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