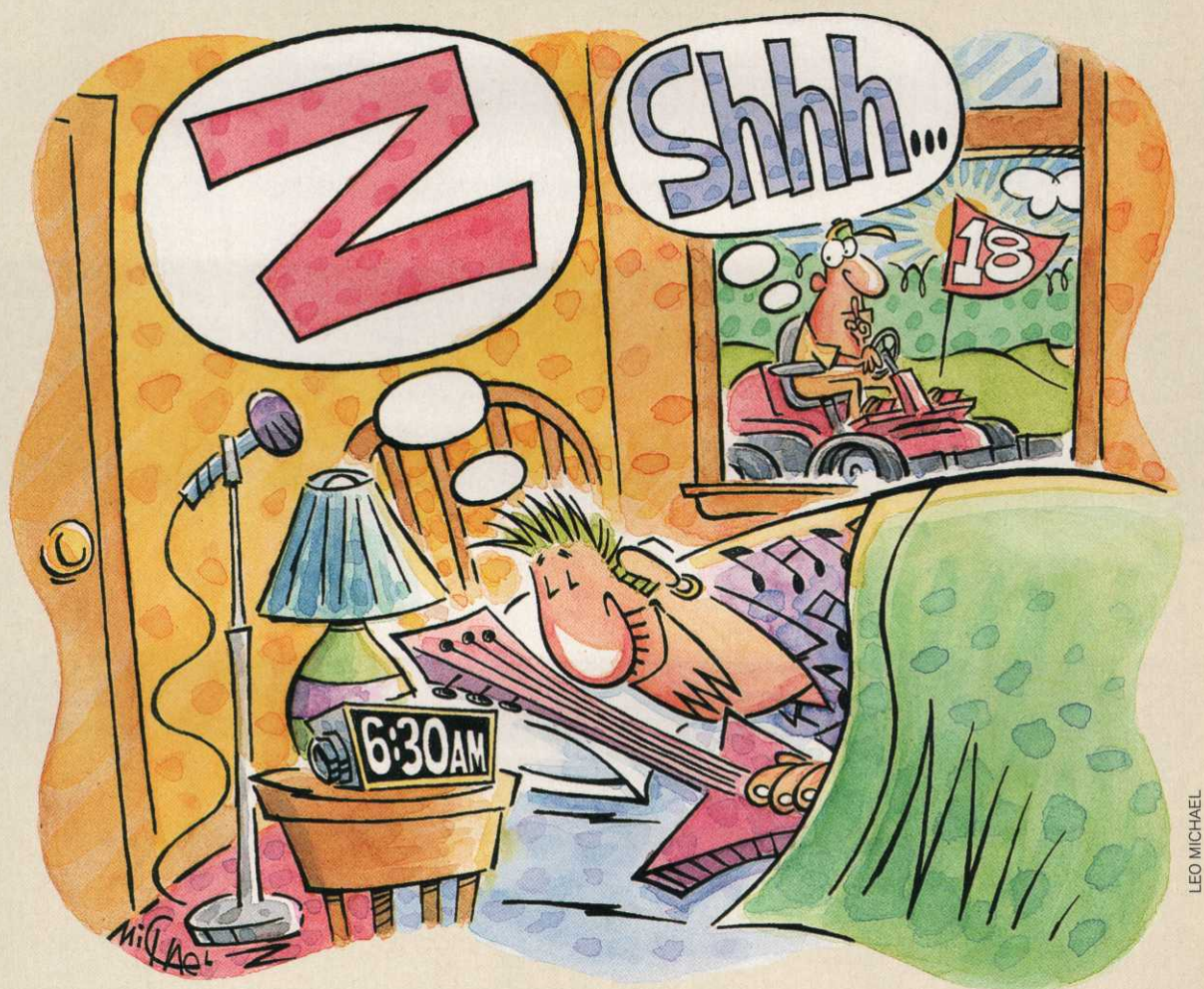


Rock Stars Can Sleep Late

Thanks to 'Vrrummless' Electric Greens Mower



Jacobsen E-Walk
helps superintendent
out of a “quiet”
predicament

BY LARRY AYLWARD, EDITOR

Paul Stroman considered it pretty cool when he learned that the celebrated and chock-full-of-smash-hits rock 'n' roll band that was coming to town had booked three nights at his resort's posh hotel. After all, it wasn't often that the _____ came to town. (Editor's note: The resort asked us not to name the rock band in print. While we respect the resort's request, we will tell you that the band's name has six letters in it — and it's killing us to keep a secret.)

Later, Stroman, superintendent of the golf

course at the Ballantyne Resort in Charlotte, N.C., heard about the band members' special requests during their stay. The band's requests, while certainly not outlandish, threw a guitar-sized monkey wrench into Stroman's normal plans for morning mowing.

The band's singers don't like to sleep with the air conditioning running — the cool air apparently wreaks havoc on their vocal chords — and they prefer to snooze with the windows open. Nothing wrong with that — except the band also requested that noise be kept to a minimum until noon. (Now before

LEO MICHAEL

you go on about how pampered these guys are, consider that rock stars have *always* slept late. It's part of the culture, man.)

Stroman had no problem with them sleeping late. Heck, they could sleep until mid-afternoon if they wanted. But because the band's rooms abutted the 18th green of the resort's golf course, Stroman and his maintenance crew found themselves in what you could call a "quiet" predicament. The 18th green was normally mown at 6:30 a.m. Since the maintenance crew's gasoline greens mower would "vrrumm" as loud as feedback from Jimi Hendrix's guitar, the sleeping rock stars would surely wake up. (Now that would be karma at work. How many times have you been awakened by neighbors playing loud music into the wee hours of the morning?)

Stroman wondered what to do. He couldn't leave the green unmowed because golfers would groan about the slow green speed. If he mowed it and awoke the rock stars, well, let's just say he might be going his own way, as the song says. (No, the unidentified band in question is *not* Fleetwood Mac.)

"We knew we had to use an alternative means to mow the green," Stroman says.

So Stroman called his pal, Russell Spangler, who operates G&S Turf Equipment, a distributor in nearby Greensboro. Stroman had heard about Jacobsen's E-Walk Greens Mower, which runs off two 48-volt DC electric motors and, more importantly, is as quiet as a rabbit hippity-hoppiting across a dew-soaked fairway at sunrise.

"It's *really* quiet," Spangler says of the E-Walk, the only electric walking greens mower on the market. "You can carry on a conversation with someone while you're using it."

Stroman asked Spangler if he could borrow the E-Walk for a few days, and Spangler delivered it to the course. The 22-inch mower, introduced last year after two years of development and testing, uses no oil or hydraulic fluids and spews no emissions. It features an 11-blade reel that delivers an adjustable height of cut down to three-sixty-fourths of an inch.

"E-Walk fills a clear need in the golf market for quiet and environmentally friendly greens mowers," says Ralph Nicotera, Jacobsen's vice president of product management.

Stroman won't argue. The mower's silence impressed him. "If you were standing off the green, it looked like someone was just walking behind the mower because you couldn't hear it," he says.

The only sound was the slight "clip" of the reel, Stroman says. Otherwise, "you'd think the mower wasn't even operating," he adds.

Stroman was also pleased with the E-Walk's cutting performance and noted that it provided a good quality of cut.

"A major selling point for this machine is the quality of the cut," Spangler says, noting that one electric motor allows the operator to set the ground speed while the other electric motor allows adjustment of the clip frequency.

Stroman didn't purchase an E-Walk after using it, but he may add an electric greens mower to his fleet in the future. "It fit the need in which we used it," he says.

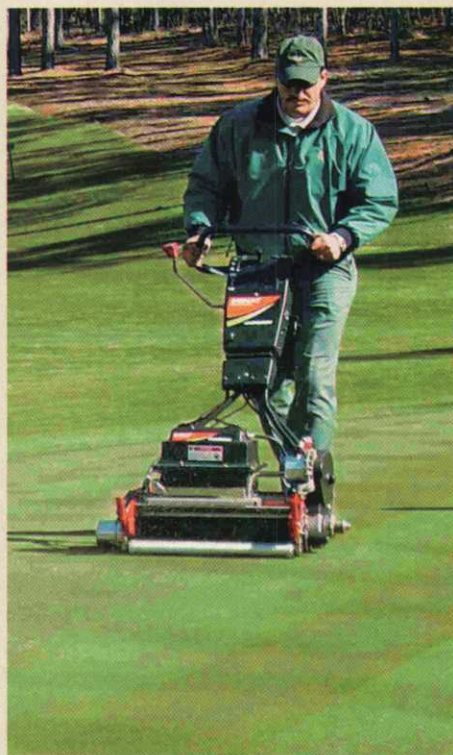
Spangler says E-Walk hasn't taken the industry by an electrical storm, so to speak. He says superintendents are nervous to switch from gas to electric versions. They're concerned about how long an electric mower will last on a course before pooping out. For the record, Spangler says the E-Walk can mow an average of 25,000 square feet on one battery or about 90 minutes.

The E-Walk was developed for situations like the one in which Stroman found himself. It's a good bet that similar situations, as well as new local sound ordinances, will continue to affect how the golf course maintenance industry operates — literally.

Although not electric, John Deere introduced three walk-behind greens mowers a few years ago to combat the noise issue. The mowers — named the 180-B, 220-B and 260-B — feature larger mufflers and composite side covers that minimize noise.

The electric surge has also hit the triplex greens mower segment, where Jacobsen and

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How quiet is Jacobsen's E-Walk? It's so quiet that you can carry on a conversation with someone while you're using it.

Problem

The rock stars were staying at the resort's hotel. Their rooms abutted the 18th green. They requested to sleep with the windows open and for no noise to be made before noon. What's a superintendent, who must mow the golf course's greens at 6:30 a.m., to do?

Solution

The superintendent used a walking electric greens mower to mow the 18th green. It provided a quality cut and didn't wake the "special guests."

Electric Greens Mower

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John Deere have developed mowers, but their mowers are distinctly different, however.

In developing its new 2500E Tri-Plex Electric Reel Greens Mower, Deere focused strictly on eliminating hydraulic leaks that can burn and damage turf, not reducing noise, says Jon Gorman, group brand marketing manager for John Deere Golf & Turf One Source.

Gorman says it has eliminated more than 100 leak points at the reel circuit of the mower, which recently started production and has limited distribution this year. While it's partially electric, it still whirrs because it runs on a gas or diesel engine. The only sound that has been eliminated is that of the hydrostatic pump noise, Gorman points out.

"The engine still runs at the same revolutions per minute (RPM)," Gor-

man says, noting that Deere didn't want to sacrifice the power of a gas or diesel engine for an electric engine. "In theory, this machine isn't driven to be quiet. It's about elimination of the hydraulics."

As expected, superintendents who have experienced turf damage caused by mowers' leaking hydraulic fluid on greens are the people likely to be most

interested in Deere's 2500E, Gorman says.

Like the E-Walk, Jacobsen's E-Plex is entirely electric. Jacobsen bills it as: "No fluids to spill. No oil to change. No emissions. No noise."

We think rock 'n' roll stars would like it and any greens mower that's quiet — especially if it lets them sleep late. ■



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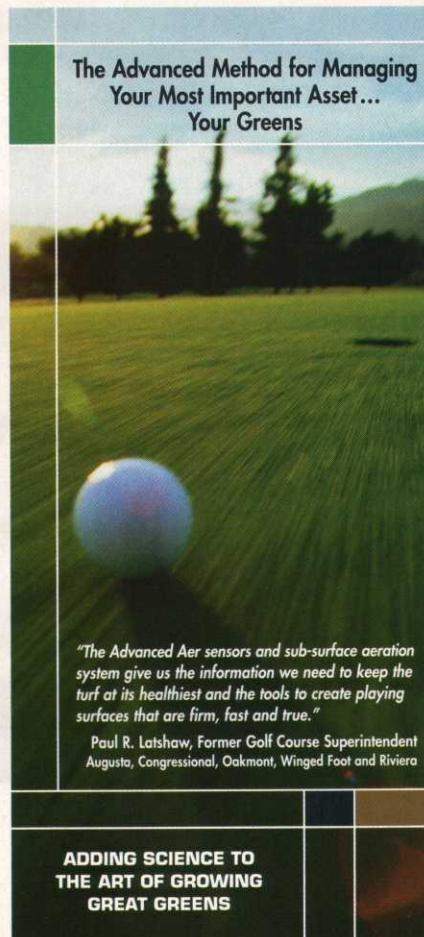


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