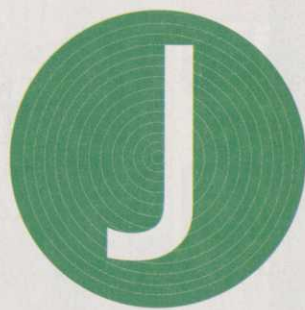


DOES THE TRUCK

Superintendents ponder the previously unthinkable — dumping their gas-guzzling 4x4's in exchange for more miles per gallon



By Thomas Skernivitz
Managing Editor

Joe Boe likes to announce his presence with authority. So, too, does Todd Allen. At that point, the two superintendents reach a fork in the road.

Boe goes one way in a 2001 Dodge Ram pickup that, he boasts, has the “whole nine yards” — Magnum V-8 engine, supercharger headers, dual exhaust and a “monster” decal of a Florida Gator on the back window.

“You hear me coming about a mile before you see me,” he says with a laugh.

Allen, meanwhile, floors it in the opposite direction. The muscle is missing from his Toyota Prius hybrid, but the message roars, pipes or no pipes.

“Our license plate,” he proclaims, “says it all — USUKGAS.”

Despite their differing routes, both men reach their destinations quite content in how they got there.

Like much of America, superintendents

such as Boe and Allen are dealing with the ramifications of owning a gas-guzzling truck during times of unprecedented fuel prices. Practical or not, theirs is an automotive bond — Allen calls it “huge truck syndrome” — that’s not easily broken. Nor explainable sometimes.

“Unless you’re doing golf course construction ... how many of us nowadays actually go and pick up anything that you need to have the bed of a truck for?” Boe asks. “I mean, you might have to pick up a couple of cases of Roundup or something.”

That said, Boe, the assistant superintendent at Windermere (Fla.) Country Club, west of Orlando, is convinced he did the right thing when he bought his Dodge Ram in July, well after gas prices had started to increase. A resident of St. Cloud, along an inland lake loaded with bass, crappie and catfish, and 30 miles off the Atlantic coast, he owns a boat that needs to be hauled. And his previous truck, a 7-year-old, paid-off Nissan short-bed, had been totaled a month earlier.

“That was my little baby,” he says of the Nissan. “(But) it was like a toy truck up against regular-sized trucks. This (Dodge Ram) is more of a manly truck.”

Boe loves the new kid in his driveway despite its hellacious thirst. Whereas the Nissan got 27 miles to the gallon, the Dodge Ram gets 19, he says. Compounding matters, Boe switched to Windermere in September after serving in the same capacity at Eagle Creek Golf Club in Orlando. What was once a 6-mile roundtrip drive now measures 70 miles.

STOP HERE



Which means that the “manly truck” is more often than not in the hands of the woman of the house, Boe’s wife, Shannon, who works at Eagle Creek.

“She loves driving it. ... She calls it a ‘hoo-hah’ truck,” says Boe, who in return, commutes in Shannon’s 2004 Hyundai Elantra. “That was a tough pill for me to swallow there.”

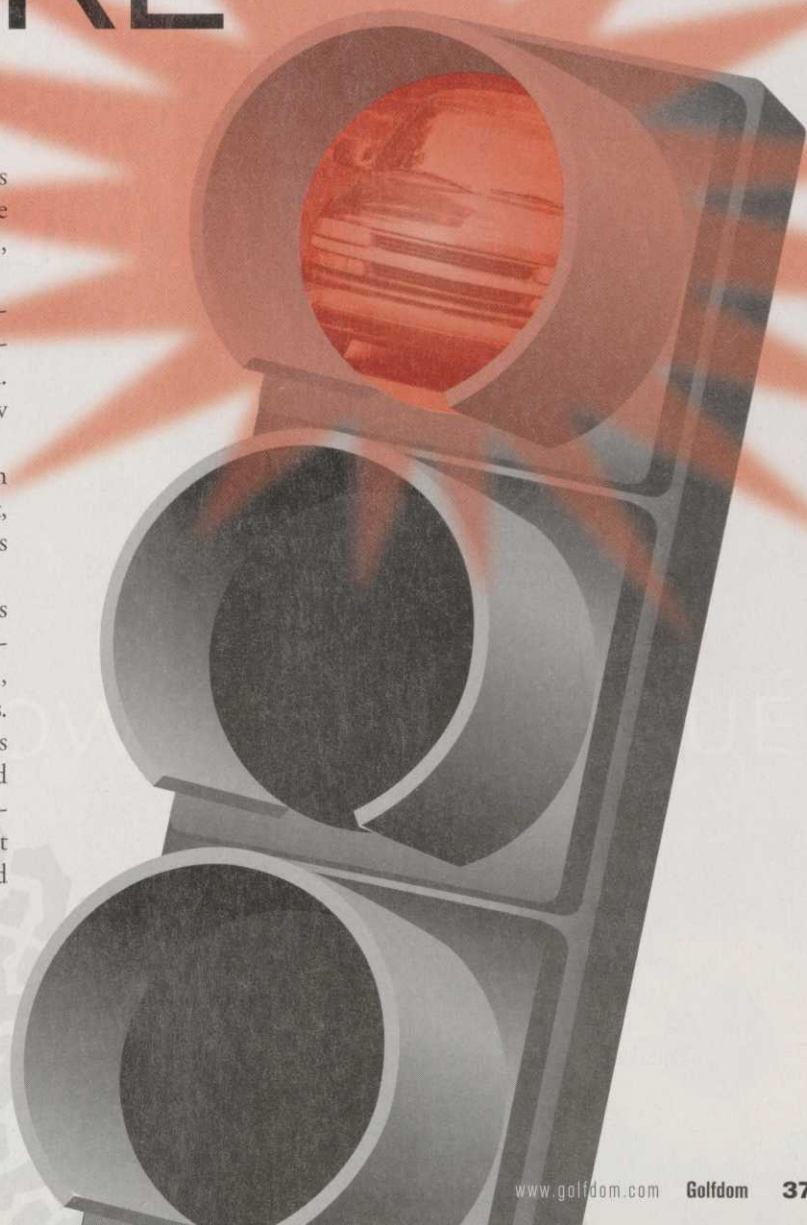
Of course, paybacks come when Shannon stops to fill the tank. “Her first time doing that, she had quite the shock,” Boe says. “It takes 60 bucks to fill it up.”

Allen knows the feeling. Such shock is exactly why the former superintendent at Trilogy Golf Club at Vistancia, in Peoria, Ariz., switched from a Ford F150 crew cab to his Prius.

“I’ve owned a few big gas-guzzling trucks since 1996,” he says. “Once gas prices started going up, my wife and I decided to stop spending \$500 to \$650 in gas every month just for me to get back and forth to work. I decided to break the superintendent mold.”

Just like that, Allen, who now works for Water Resource Management, a lake management company, went from 14 miles per gallon to 55 miles per gallon. “My second month of proudly owning our new purchase, I had the average up to 63 miles per

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Does the Truck Stop Here?

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gallon, which exceeds Toyota's specs," he says. "This cut our gas bill almost to a third of what we had been spending, allowing my family to enjoy the fruits of my labor just a little bit more."

Much like Boe, Mark Lombardo, the assistant superintendent at Ridgewood Country Club, in Danbury Conn., recently had his daily commute change from two miles to 31

miles. He immediately thought about ditching his 1995 GMC pickup — the first truck that he had ever purchased — in favor of a Honda or some other economically viable option. But that's as far as he ever got.

"The numbers just didn't work for me," Lombardo says. "If I had sold my truck, I could only have gotten a few thousand for it. Then I would have had a monthly car payment, one that I haven't had since 2001, and I'd be paying more taxes because it's a newer car. So I don't think I could give up my truck, and if I had the chance to buy a new car, I would probably opt for another truck."

Mike Archer, on the other hand, took the road less traveled five years ago. The market development and distribution manager for Milorganite bought a 2001 Prius just a year after hybrids had been introduced in the states.

"Early on, we were definitely the anomaly," Archer says. "But we tend to be people who try things. We've had Internet access since the mid-1980s."

The Archer family's Prius now has more than 70,000 miles to its credit, including vacations from the family's home outside Milwaukee to destinations such as Montreal and the Badlands of South Dakota.

"We love it. It's a small car, but it can haul four people. And our idea of performance isn't zero to 60 in 4.5 seconds," Archer says. "When we replace our 1997 Honda minivan, it will be with a hybrid — a (Toyota) RAV4, Honda or something similar — because of the mileage."

Archer realizes with regret that the landscaper crowd cruises to the creed that the bigger the tire and bigger the hood, the better the vehicle. But he sees hope in superintendents.

"I think superintendents, when you see some of the e-mowers that are coming out and things along that line, they're already leaning toward environmental issues," Archer says. "They're managing their pesticide use, fertilizer use and water use, and they're setting up wildlife areas. So I think golf's going to be an easy catch."

Until that day arrives, a gathering of superintendents will remain a pretty conspicuous sight.

"You go to any superintendents meeting, and it's trucks or SUVs from one end of the parking lot to the other," Boe says. ■

FUEL ECONOMY LEADERS

MIDSIZE CARS

	TRANSMISSION TYPE	MPG CITY/HWY
Toyota Prius (hybrid)	automatic	60/51
Hyundai Elantra	manual	27/34

STANDARD PICKUP TRUCKS

Ford Ranger Pickup 2WD	manual	24/29
	automatic	21/26
Mazda B2300 2WD	manual	24/29
	automatic	21/26
Toyota Tacoma 2WD	automatic	21/26

SPORT UTILITY VEHICLES

Ford Escape Hybrid FWD	automatic	36/31
Ford Escape FWD	manual	24/29
Mazda Tribute 2WD	manual	24/29

GAS-GUZZLIN' TRUCKS

STANDARD PICKUP TRUCKS 2WD

	TRANSMISSION TYPE	MPG CITY/HWY
Dodge Ram 1500 Pickup	automatic	9/12
Nissan Titan	automatic	14/18
Chevy C1500 Silverado	automatic	14/19
Ford F150 Pickup	automatic	14/19
GMC C1500 Sierra	automatic	14/19

SPORT UTILITY VEHICLES 2WD

Dodge Durango	automatic	12/15
Lincoln Navigator	automatic	13/18
Infiniti QX56	automatic	13/19
Nissan Armada	automatic	13/19
Chevy C1500 Avalanche	automatic	14/19
Cadillac Escalade	automatic	14/18
Ford Expedition	automatic	14/19
GMC C1500 Yukon XL	automatic	14/19

For more information, visit www.fueleconomy.gov

Sources: U.S. Department of Energy; Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency