

GREEN MAINTENANCE GUIDE

the machine down approaching the edge of the green and minimize the effect on the clip rate and make your turns under control at a much slower speed," Buchko says. "Once you're lined up again, you can accelerate through the cut."

Two other elements of the InCommand control system are upgraded handles and clutch systems. The D-handle series serves as a common operating platform for all the company's walking greens mowers while improving operator comfort. The new clutch provides a smoother, more controlled en-

THE Green Mile

Mower manufacturers go the extra distance to enhance product lines

By Thomas Skernivitz MANAGING EDITOR

The quest to build the perfect greens mower is much like the quest to build the perfect green: It never ends.

Jacobsen and The Toro Co., two of the three major players in the equipment arena, announced upgrades in February at the annual Golf Industry Show. John Deere, meanwhile, continues to ride the year-old wave created by its release of the industry's first hybrid greens mower.

"They can get a whole lot better," Jeff Buchko, a product manager with Jacobsen, says of greens mowers. "From a cut perspective, there are lots of things we can do. But from an operator perspective,

(mower manufacturers) really have not addressed the needs of the operator for a long time."

Jacobsen intends to fulfill some of those operational needs with the addition of a speed control feature — the first of its kind, the company reports — on its PGM 22 and GK 500 greens mowers. The InCommand control system allows the operator, via a speed paddle on the handle, to increase and decrease the forward speed of the machine with minimal effect on clip rate.

"If you're cutting greens that have a very tight distance between the edge of the green and an obstruction like water or some sort of wall or tree, you can slow

gement of the cutting and traction system, the company says.

"The purpose of those three components is to give the superintendent more control of the machine as well as lending itself to make it easier to operate," Buchko says.

Toro has integrated the technology behind its Greensmaster Flex 21 greens mower into its Flex 18 model, available in July. A narrower 18-inch cutting unit, in combination with the Flex head technology, allows the Flex 18 to better follow contours, especially concave contours, than its predecessor.

Continued on page 42



Jacobsen is adding a speed control system, with a speed paddle on the handle, to its greens mowers.

The Green Mile

Continued from page 41

In turn, the bed knife position on the Flex 18 has been made less aggressive than the Flex 21 to reduce the bruising that could occur in severe undulation conditions. However, an optional bed knife is available to customers who still prefer the aggressiveness of the Flex 21.

Thus far, superintendents privy to use of the Flex 18 "love" the concept, Toro marketing manager Greg Janey says.

"They like the fact that it cuts, feels and operates similar to the Flex 21," he says. "They have reported less marking with the Flex 18 when compared to other mowers on the same green."

Toro has also added the Dual Precision Adjustment (DPA) cutting unit technology to the Flex 18 while eliminating the rear roller leveling adjustment.

Janey says the operation, control and maintenance of the Flex 18 are the same as the Flex 21. Meanwhile, the turf will

need a minimal amount of time to be trained to the new cut.

"When mowing in severe undulations, the Flex 18 will cut in areas that have previously been uncut," Janey says. "The result is a more consistent height of cut across your green, but because these areas have in the past been maintained at a higher effective height of cut — due to the inability of traditional mowers to get into and cut undulations — it will take a week or so to train the turf."

While the Jacobsen and Toro products are just reaching market, John Deere's 2500E hybrid greens mower has already

Toro's Flex 18 mower features a narrower cutting unit.




won over many superintendents during the last year. Todd Kauffman, the superintendent at Bay Harbor (Mich.) Golf Club, replaced his fleet of greens mowers last summer with six new 2500E machines; three for greens and three for tees.

"They've been great.

What I really like is that they eliminate the 102 hydraulic leak points, which is a major thing you worry about," Kauffman says. "They're quieter, which is nice, too, because we have a lot of homes by our green sites. (Noise) was a big complaint we heard, but you can actually run these at half throttle and mow your greens and still have the same reel speed." ■

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