

## Off The Fringe

# Jumping Into the Fray

HUSTLER TURF'S PAUL MULLET  
DISCUSSES HIS COMPANY'S ENTRY  
INTO THE GOLF MARKET

**T**here was a new mower manufacturer — and a new color — on the Orange County Convention Center exhibit floor at the Golf Industry Show in February.

Hustler Turf Equipment, a Hesston, Kan.-based company that has made a name for itself in the lawn care market, recently announced a partner-

ship with Japan's IHI Shibaura Machinery to develop mowing products for the golf market.

*Golfdom* caught up with Hustler President Paul Mullet recently to discuss the company's entry into the golf market.



Paul Mullet



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**While business is not bad in the golf market, some people will tell you it's a challenging time, with course construction down and rounds being flat. That said, why did Hustler decide to get into the golf market?**

Mullet: About 15 months ago, IHI Shibaura came to us. IHI Shibaura has been manufacturing golf course equipment in Japan for close to 30 years. The company was looking for somebody in the United States to help market its products. IHI Shibaura has the reel technology, the four-wheel drive technology and the experience. So it was an opportunity for us, since we were in that market (about 30 years ago), to get back into it.

**Let's talk about your audience — golf course superintendents. What do you know about their needs when it comes to mowing?**

Mullet: We have a lot of rotary mower experience for the roughs and those applications. And now with our relationship with IHI Shibaura, which brings the reel-mowing segment to greens and fairways, we have a combination to make products we hope will help superintendents.

**Hustler Turf Equipment will face some stiff competition from some reputable mower manufacturers — Toro, Jacobsen and John Deere. How do you plan to distinguish itself?**

Mullet: We've competed before with John Deere, Toro and Jacobsen. They do a great job, but we think we can do some things [to distinguish ourselves]. We're a smaller company, and we're more responsive. We're also open to learning what we need to do. ■