

Club in Scottsdale, Ariz., was on hand at the event to see the latest that John Deere had to offer. Emerson believes there will be some big changes in mowing equipment in five years, including more affordable electric technology. Emerson said the sudden increase in fuel prices is pushing the automotive industry to move faster toward electric technology, which might quicken a trickle-down effect to the specialty equipment industry, including golf course maintenance.

Increased fuel prices, by the way, have forced Emerson to reduce fairway mowings this year. His crew normally uses about 12,000 gallons of fuel a year; the crew will use 10,000 gallons this year.

George Calabro, director of golf maintenance for El Conquistador Country Club in Tucson, Ariz., has also reduced mowing to save fuel. "We're a 45-hole facility, and we average between \$6,500 and \$7,000 a month in fuel costs," he says. "We have to do what we can to save."

Hence, Calabro said more alternative-fuel equipment, such as biodiesel, is needed. "It's the wave of the future."

Being in the desert, improved irrigation technology is also a must for this golf course, Calabro said. "Almost every dollar I spend goes to improving the efficiency of my irrigation system," he added.

Greg Moore, a superintendent and golf construction specialist for On Course Construction in Hamden, Conn., said he wants equipment manufacturers like Deere to eliminate potential small maintenance problems that can snowball into catastrophic costs. That might mean making sure a \$13 bearing on a mower doesn't go bad, which could lead to other more-expensive components getting damaged.

Moore, whose company operates five courses, also said he wants and needs more-versatile equipment.

"If I'm going to spend \$25,000 on [a piece of equipment], I need it to be

versatile," he says. "I can't stand to see equipment just sitting around during the off months."

At John Deere Feedback, there was a mutual sense of respect between the creator of the equipment and its users. While superintendents can go on for hours to talk about what they need in new technology, they appreciate what people like Link are doing to appease their needs.

Link, on the other hand, says he and other John Deere engineers couldn't do what they do without superintendents' feedback.

"We can't figure out what a golf course needs by sitting behind a desk," Link said. "We need to pick superintendents' brains." ■

Going for the Gusto

ILLINOIS SUPERINTENDENT TESTS HIS GAME AGAINST SOME OF GOLF'S GREATEST PLAYERS

By David Frabotta, Senior Editor

I'm a one-time trunk slammer on the Senior Tour, but I was there," says a proud Tom Robinson, superintendent at Ravinia Green Country Club in Riverwoods, Ill.

Trunk slamming is a touring professional's way of saying he didn't make the cut, but for Robinson, just playing in the U.S. Senior Open was a thrill that won't fade any time soon.

"I'm blessed to have gone through that event," he says. "It was unbelievable to hang out with golf's greats, like (Tom) Watson, (Tom) Kite and (Hale) Irwin. I walked to the range with Fuzzy (Zoeller). It's like every kid's dream."

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Off The Fringe

Business briefs

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an innovative, high-tech presentation theater that will open up to an outdoor research and demonstration area. The theater can also transform into focus group rooms that will provide a ready-made setting for gathering information from golf course superintendents and other visiting groups.

"This is a very exciting time for us," said David Pursell, CEO of FarmLinks. "The new pavilion will be a great addition to our educational programming. ... The facility will also provide our partners with exhibit space and an ideal research and testing ground for obtaining consistent, immediate feedback while developing long-lasting relationships with end users."

Under construction alongside the education pavilion is FarmLinks' new headquarters, which will contain offices and conference rooms. ■

"Gusto" — *Continued from page 15*

Robinson, who has played in four other USGA events as an amateur in the past, qualified for the 2008 U.S. Senior Open by winning the sectional qualifier at Strawberry Creek in Kenosha, Wis., on July 1. The Senior Open took place at The Broadmoor Club in Colorado Springs, Colo., from July 28 through Aug. 3.

The 32-year golf course maintenance veteran says his putting inevitably led to his demise.

"The setup was as hard as it gets, and it really magnifies the flaws in your game, mine being putting. I was tied for 14th in drives and 144th in putting," he says with a chuckle.

Robinson is a scratch golfer who considered becoming a touring professional on the Champions Tour when he turned 50 five years ago, but

then he decided spending 28 weeks on the road each year wasn't the kind of lifestyle he wanted to live.

"I figured I had a real job maintaining 150 acres," he says.

But that real job won't stop him from pursuing more competitive golf tournaments. Now that he's 55 years old, he can qualify for U.S. Senior Amateur events, and he plans to try to qualify for next year's Senior Open, which will be held at Crooked Stick Golf Club in Carmel, Ind.

But regardless of his outcome, Robinson will cherish rubbing elbows with some of golf's greatest players.

"The aura of it all, seeing the leader board and having my name up with all the greats, it was quite an accomplishment, and I'm going to play more tournament golf." ■

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