



“From a distance I couldn’t tell exactly what he was doing. But as I got closer, what I saw was truly amazing.”

MARK WOODWARD, *Contributing Editor*

This month, Woodward gets an assist from Kirby Putt, director of grounds at Arizona Country Club.

‘Grassroots’ ideas are among the best

Every once in a while you run across something that makes you say “Wow, isn’t that cool?” or “Why didn’t I think of that?”

I’ve been in the golf business for more than 40 years now, and I’ve seen a lot of changes and innovations. As my friend Shawn Emerson from Desert Mountain once told me, “The only thing that hasn’t changed over the years in the golf industry is the golfer’s ability.” If you really think about it, everything related to golf course maintenance and management has changed, and for the most part, the changes have been positive.

Recently, while completing a bunker renovation project at the Arizona Country Club in Phoenix, I was introduced to a grassroots idea called the F1 core collector by the director of grounds, Kirby Putt. He was waving me over and laughing as he pulled cores off his greens with this bunker rake attachment. From a distance I couldn’t tell exactly

what he was doing. But as I got closer, what I saw was truly amazing.

Kirby by nature is a funny guy, but what I witnessed when I pulled up to the green was a superintendent who was downright giddy. He was quickly and efficiently removing the cores from the greens in a matter of minutes, piling them off to the side of the collars for pickup. Kirby explained, “I have one of three made by James Hill, and I love this machine.”

He also advised me that the F1 will be on the market very soon. In simple terms, Kirby was sitting on a bunker rake with the F1 core collector attached, virtually removing all of the aerification plugs on the entire green in seven to eight minutes. This tool is an incredible time-saving device for what is often a tedious and

labor-intensive job.

Later that evening, I paused for a moment and reflected on how many cores I’ve pushed off greens.

I also thought about the other innovations great minds have come up with that helped me in my career as a superintendent. I sat down that evening and quickly listed 10 inventions that came to mind:

- 1 **Rolling machines for smoothing greens** Prior to these techniques, we put bricks in the baskets of our walking greens mowers.
- 2 **Brushing, verticutting and groomer attachments** We all know how much better our turf is since these came along.
- 3 **Lightweight fairway mowers** In my day, a Jacobsen F10 and Toro Parkmaster ruled the earth.

- 4 **Bunker machines for raking** It was common to hand-rake bunkers. Another time-saving gem.
 - 5 **Deeptine aerifiers** And how about this tool? Ten-inch holes that have cured many a green or fairway problem, saving many a superintendent’s job.
 - 6 **Growth regulators** Considered the “extra employee” on many grounds crews, these create labor savings and enhance turf.
 - 7 **Wetting agents** Making water wetter for much improved infiltration.
 - 8 **Mechanics lift** You want to make a best friend, buy your mechanic a lift. How many of you laid on the ground, and maybe still do, to repair equipment. Shame on the course who doesn’t own one of these.
 - 9 **Spin grinders** The days of backlapping are over (I know some of you still prefer the old way.)
 - 10 **Hydraulics** Where would we be without hydraulics? There are so many more great inventions and ideas waiting to spring into action. I witnessed one recently that I’m sure will have a place in many a maintenance facility across the country. The F1 core collector might just go on my list of creative innovations to expedite the aerification process and get golfers back onto our courses sooner.
- Mark Woodward is president of Mark Woodward and Associates, principal of Damarco Golf, CEO of MasterStep Golf Group and a contributing editor for *Golfdom*.