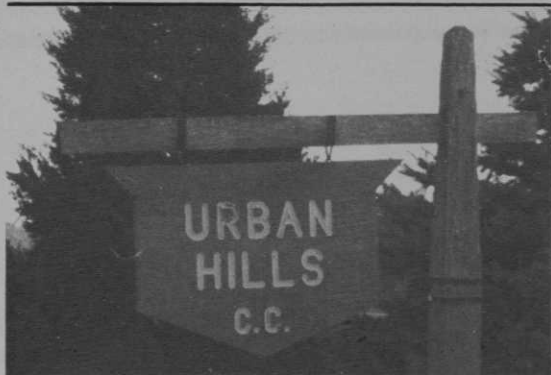


GOLF BUSINESS PROFILE

From farm to daily fee golf course

by David J. Slaybaugh, editor



The Richton Park area, about 30 miles south of downtown Chicago, is much like other suburban fringe areas all over the county: half of what was farmland 15 years ago is now covered by aluminum-sided housing developments and "natural wood" condominiums. In the middle of it all are two golf courses that were also farmland 15 years ago. The land belonged to John and Wilma Urban, then successful dairy owners in nearby Chicago Hts.

That 160 acres of land was farmed by a tenant who split the profit with the Urbans on a 50/50 basis. In 1961, the farm provided the Urban family with a home and all of \$200 in income. Naturally, Urban says, "We began to search for some use which would return a higher profit, since I had no illusions about being a gentleman farmer. As we walked over the eroded hilltops and through the low spots on the acreage, one of us made the comment that the only thing the land was good for was a golf course."

After pondering that comment for several weeks, Urban decided that perhaps it wasn't such a bad idea. He called in the National Golf Foundation, and the NGF representative said that the land was "a natural" for a golf course. Then a golf course architect was invited to inspect the site. He, too, said it was "a natural." Shortly thereafter, a construction firm was asked to estimate the cost of building a golf

course there, and the owner said the land and location made it — what else? — "a natural."

Urban still had some doubts, but, he says, "At least we had three expert opinions, so we felt more confident about the possibility of building a course. We looked over the literature we had gathered, talked to a lot of people, and finally decided to go into the golf business."

It was a good decision. The semi-private facility that the Urban family operates today had gross receipts of \$290,000 for fiscal year 1977-78, ending in September. The 18-hole layout averages 25,000 to 27,000 rounds of golf per year on a daily fee basis — which does not include rounds played by the 125 golfers and families who paid for an annual membership with unlimited play.

Both sides of the road

That success didn't come easily, however. The Urbans' land was divided into a 40-acre parcel on the east side of the road and a 120-acre parcel on the west side, so they decided to begin by building a 9-hole executive course, a 25-tee driving range, and an 18-hole miniature golf course on the 40-acre site.

Golf course architect Larry Packard designed both the 40-acre layout and a regulation 18 holes on the other side of the road. Construction of the short course was completed,

quickly, and the Urbans opened their first facility in May 1963.

They were "pleased with the operation of the facility," Urban says, and the 18-hole course across the road was opened in 1967.

"After the 18-hole course was opened," Urban adds, "we found that play increased each year at a gratifying rate." So much so, that when an adjacent town offered to buy the executive course, driving range, and miniature golf facility, the Urbans agreed. That facility is still operated today, directly across the street from Urban Hills Country Club, as the Park Forest Municipal Golf Center.

When the Urbans opened their 18-hole golf course, they were living in a 100-year-old farmhouse on the premises. They made the first floor of their home into a clubhouse which could seat 40 people inside and another 40 outside on the porch. They served only beer, soda, chips, candy, gum, and frozen sandwiches. The pro shop stocked balls, gloves, tees, and three sets of clubs "leaning against a wall." Even that seemed too much at first, but as play on the course increased, so did the need for a larger clubhouse.

Typical of everything John Urban does, the new clubhouse was designed not only to accommodate present needs, but also to be expanded at a future date with a minimum of expense and effort. This meant locating plumbing, electrical lines, and so on where they could be added to without having to be moved.

The wood and brick clubhouse, built in 1972, measured 40 by 70 feet and included basement storage for a dozen Harley-Davidson gas-powered golf cars, easily accessible by a ramp leading directly from outside.

Another ramp enables suppliers to back their trucks right to the basement unloading area and put merchandise directly in the walk-in cooler and freezer. Tanks of mix and beer are also located in the basement, and the beverages piped upstairs via a mixing system.

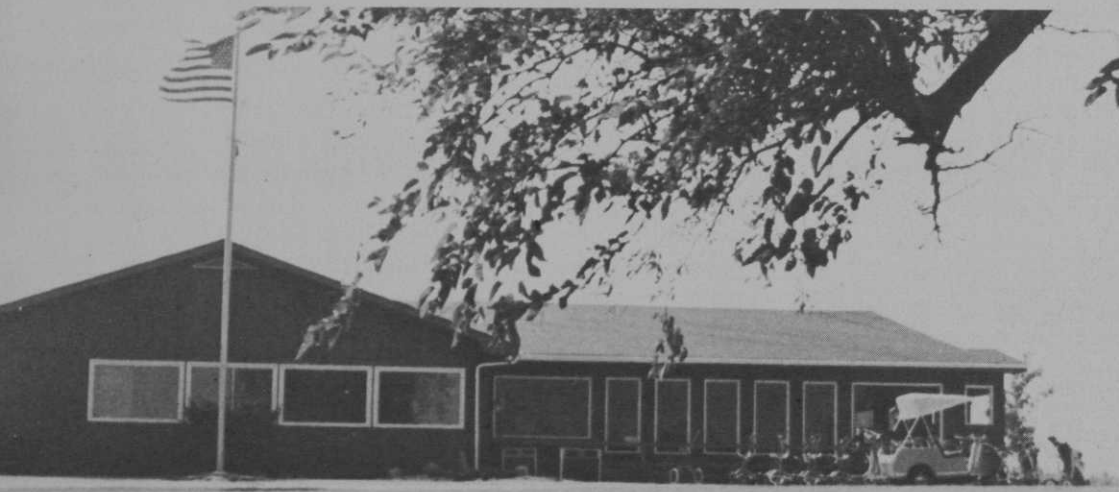
An addition to the clubhouse was



Urban Hills golf professional Bruce Meyer practices on the putting green outside the clubhouse. The large mulberry tree on the right was the only tree on the property when the course was built.



LEFT: Ramp next to pro shop leads to basement of clubhouse, where golf cars are stored and maintained.



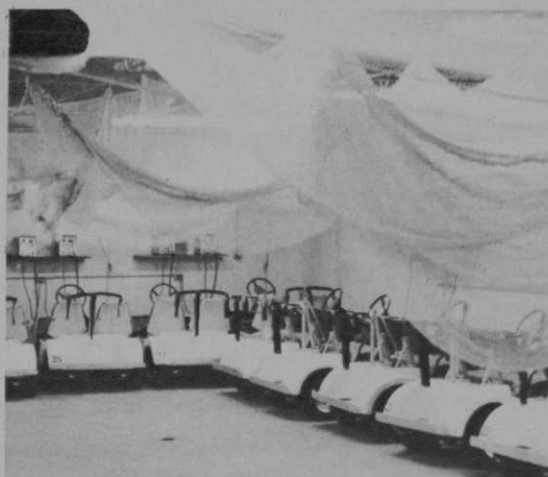
ABOVE: Left half of clubhouse, built in 1972, now contains bar and dining area. Wing on right was added in 1974 to provide more dining area, bigger pro shop.

RIGHT: Owner John Urban at work in the office. Records for every aspect of the business are at his fingertips, giving him complete control over his operation.



ABOVE: Metal building houses course maintenance equipment and supplies. Garages on the side are for members' personal golf cars.

RIGHT: Part of Urban Hills' golf car fleet recharging in the basement of the clubhouse.



completed in April 1974 and doubled the size of the original building. This doubled the capacity of the bar, provided a full-size pro shop for the first time, and included a fairly spacious office. The addition's basement was dug deep enough to hang four driving range nets above the 16 Club Car electric golf cars which are hooked to their Lester battery chargers there.

Income and expense

Unlike many golf courses today, Urban Hills Country Club doesn't depend heavily on those golf cars for income. According to the club's golf professional, Bruce Meyer, the cars average two rounds apiece on Saturday and Sunday, plus a round every other day on weekdays. Their rental accounts for about 7½ percent of the total revenue at Urban Hills — about half the national average for daily fee courses. Rental fees are \$6 for 9 holes, \$11 for 18. In addition, 22 members pay \$115 (for gas-powered) or 135 (for electric) to keep their own golf cars at the course; these are stored in garages along the sides of the maintenance building.

Unlike many golf course owners today, John Urban readily disclosed his facility's income and expense figures. "People are reluctant to talk about it," he says, "but we're damn fools. We in the golf business don't exchange enough information."

Urban Hills Country Club's revenue, however, is nothing to be ashamed of — especially considering the negative effect Chicago's "spring" weather had on play this year. Income at Urban Hills in the first 6 months of 1978 was only 73 percent of what it was last year. "We really didn't get any good play until the end of May," he explains.

Increasing play to increase revenue is the name of the game at Urban Hills. "Our thought is to get a lot of golfers out here," Urban says. "To that end, we've gone after leagues: ladies, industrial, and also junior golf."

Four high schools use Urban Hills as their home course, getting as many as 74 junior golfers on the course at a time. They play at a reduced rate, of course. "We're going to get a juniors league going next year for sure," Urban says. "We in the golf business have been remiss about promoting junior golf. We need to get students from different schools to play together on a friendly competitive basis.

"If they find their way here to play when they're in school, we hope they

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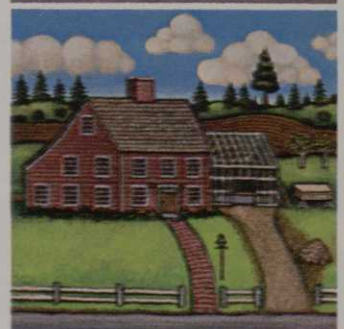
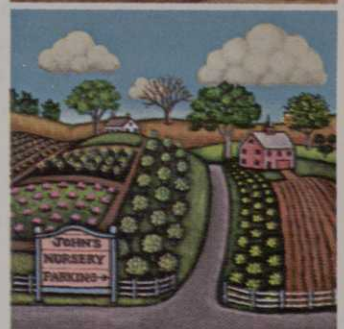
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will find their way here to play when they're older, too."

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Expenses, Urban says, are "about the same as income." About 49 percent of expenses is directly attributable to golf course maintenance at Urban Hills. About 21 percent is attributable to course maintenance labor.

Superintendent Jack Urban, John's son and part of the operation "since the beginning," keeps a crew of five or six full-time workers and one part-time worker during the summer months. He employs "as many good ones as I can hang onto" during the remainder of the year. Jack does his own night watering, his own golf car maintenance, and minor repairs on maintenance equipment. If major repairs are needed, the equipment is sent back to the dealer who sold it, or he is asked to come out and repair it.

A look around the course and in the maintenance building reveals two Toro Greensmaster 3 triplex riding mowers, a nine-gang Toro Parkmaster mowing tractor, a Ford tractor pulling a Roseman nine-gang unit, and a Roseman five-gang mower used for rough and around trees. Urban has three Ford LCG tractors in all, one of which is a diesel that has proven to be "much more economical" than those with normal gasoline engines. In addition, another Ford diesel tractor is equipped with a frontloader and a backhoe.

A Myers pump is used for spraying on the course, while a Cushman Truckster with a Dedoes aerator on the back is "a great timesaver." In fact, Urban has begun doing aerating for other golf courses with the

Cushman/Dedoes combination unit. Other vehicles include a Ford F-350 dump truck and four-wheel-drive International Scout. A Dobbins Turf Dresser has just been purchased; Jack Urban says it will spread topdressing materials "all the way from fine sand to black dirt."

Urban has ordered a new trencher, which he will use in modernizing the irrigation system during the "off" season (the course is actually open year-round, despite the Chicago weather). The irrigation system is now a manual one, with heads on tees and greens and every 90 feet on fairways. Water is collected in a man-made lake on the golf course.

Urban Hills Country Club represents, in a way, an American dream come true: a family business that has become successful through the perseverance and hard work of the people in it. Jack helped create a fine golf course, and he keeps it that way, actually making it better every year. Wilma oversees the dining room and kitchen, but also puts in her time in the pro shop or the office or wherever else she's needed. Bruce is a nephew, and one senses that he is an integral part of the Urban Hills family; he runs the pro shop and gives lessons, but he also knows just about everything else that goes on and how to manage it. And John Urban pulls the whole thing together; his grasp of the golf business and the record-keeping aids he has developed have created mini-businesses in themselves: he sells forms to other golf courses and does consulting work as well. Now he has an idea about creating a purchasing pool with other golf courses to buy big pieces of equipment that they couldn't afford to purchase individually ... but that's another story. □

Urban Hills Superintendent Jack Urban about to cross bridge for golf cars; it looks like culvert pipe, but is actually an old railroad tank car with the ends cut off before being sunk in the creek. This is one of two such bridges on the course; they will never wash away.



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| | D | G | 3 | W/T | 91 | 45.25 | 693 (w/o fuel) | S | F | W | B,G,Y |
| | DE-3 | E | 3 | W/T | 91 | 45.25 | 960 | S | F | W | B,G,Y |
| American Continental, Inc. Box G, Industrial Park Willmar, MN 56201 612/235-1752 or 235-1753 | | G | 4 | W | 91 | 47.5 | 760 | S | F | W,Y | R,G,B, gold, apricot |
| | | E | 4 | W | 91 | 47.5 | 900 | S | F | W,Y | R,G,B gold, apricot |
| | | G | 3 | W/T | 91 | 47.5 | 760 | S | F | W,Y | R,G,B gold, apricot |
| | | E | 3 | W/T | 91 | 47.5 | 900 | S | F | W,Y | R,G,B gold, apricot |
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| | X-440 | E | 3 | W | 88.5 | 48 | *545 *w/o batteries or fuel | S | S | W,B,G | nearly all at extra cost |
| Electric Carrier Corp. 8603 Crownhill, Suite 8 San Antonio, TX 78209 512/826-8694 | Electric Caddy | E | 4 | W | 94 | 41 | 950 | S | S | customer choice | customer choice |
| Elmco, Inc. P.O. Box 176 Cooksville, IL 61730 309/725-3533 | 11E Royal Ride | E | 4 | W | 111 | 45.2 | 994 | A | F | gray | W,Y,G,B, gold, tan, brown, tangerine |
| | 21E Royal Ride | E | 4 | W | 130 | 48 | 1138 | A | F | gray | |
| Go-Fore, Inc. 8228 Goldie St. Walled Lake, MI 48088 313/363-4175 | 410 | G | 4 | W | 96 | 48 | 745 | S | S | W | all available at extra cost |
| | 310 | G | 3 | W | 96 | 48 | 745 | S | S | W | |
| Huber, Inc. U.S. Route 34, Box 17 Galva, IL 61434 309/932-2067 | Flagmaster 1000 | E | 4 | W | 96 | 48 | 590 (w/o batteries) | S | F | gold | W,R,B,G (\$100 extra) |
| | 500 | E | 4 | W | 94 | 48 | 990 | S | F | gold | W,R,B,G (\$100 extra) |
| Laher Spring & Electric Car Corp. 2615 Magnolia St. Oakland, CA 94607 415/444-1350 (in Mississippi: 601/534-4783) | Imperial Masterpiece MG 470 | E | 4 | W | 100 | 44 | 1095 | S | S + F | G | any |
| | Masterpiece MP 370 | E | 3 | W | 100 | 44 | 1050 | S | S + F | G | any |
| | Fleetmaster FM 274 | E | 4 | W | 94 | 44 | 1000 | S | S | G | any |
| | Fleetmaster FM 270 | E | 3 | W | 96 | 44 | 1025 | S | S + F | G | any |
| Melex USA, Inc. 1201 Front St., Suite 210 Raleigh, NC 27609 919/828-7645 | 212 | E | 4 | W | 95 | 48 | *715 | S | S | W | G |
| | 112 | E | 3 | W | 91 | 48 | *670 *w/o batteries | S | S | W | G |
| Nordco Marketeer 26701 Redlands Blvd. Redlands, CA 92373 714/793-2891 | VIP | E | 4 | W | 94 | 47.5 | 990 | S | S | R,S,gold bronze | any automotive color |
| | 438 | E | 4 | W | 94 | 47.5 | 980 | S | S | ivory | all |
| | 439 | E | 3 | W | 91 | 47.5 | 915 | S | S | ivory | all |
| Taylor-Dunn Mfg. Co. 2114 W. Ball Rd. Anaheim, CA 92803 714/956-4040 | Tee-Bird GT 3700 Fleet Model | E | 4 | W | 89.75 | 45.25 | 1145 | S | S | choice of 6 | \$40 charge |
| | Tee-Bird GT 371 Custom | E | 4 | W | 95.75 | 45.25 | 1125 | S | S | choice of 6 | \$40 charge |
| Yamaha Motor Corp., U.S. P.O. Box 6620 Buena Park, CA 90622 714/522-9321 | G1-A | G | 4 | W | 94.6 | 44.9 | 670 | S | F | W | none |

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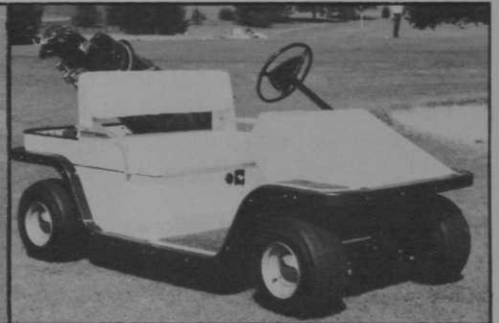
COLOR CODES: W=white

1979 GOLF CAR GUIDE

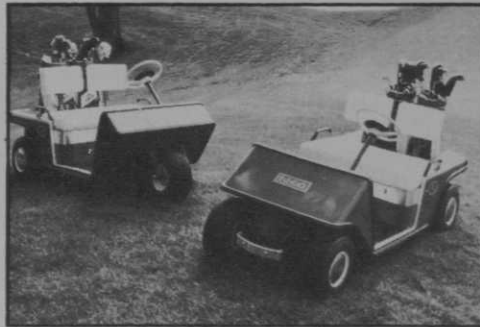
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| suntop, windshield, hub caps | \$2200 | 204 |
| surrey top, hardtop + windshields, metallic colors | | 205 |
| seat brake, hub caps, lights, horn, spike rail, cooler box | | 206 |
| " | | 207 |
| " | | 208 |
| " | | 209 |
| canopy top, weather cover, lights, horn, sweater basket, windshield, extra bag carrier, tow bar | \$2494 | 209 |
| built-in bag rack, short & long top, windshield, caps, rear seat, others | \$2227 | 210 |
| " | \$2077 | 211 |
| " | | 212 |
| plastic canopy top, windshield, hub caps, rear hitch, towbar, four-bag attachment, rake | \$2540 | 212 |
| lights, horn, seat brake, scuff plates, vinyl rear fenders | \$2500 | 213 |
| " | \$2460 | 214 |
| " | \$2420 | 215 |
| " | | 216 |
| canopies, lights, horns, windshield | \$1850 | 216 |
| 35 luxury options | \$3560 | 217 |
| 35 luxury options | \$4375 | 218 |
| sunroof, windshield, utility box, light kit | \$2350 | 219 |
| " | \$2250 | 220 |
| fiberglass surrey top, storage compartment, beverage holder | \$2750 | 221 |
| " | \$1875 | 222 |
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| sun top, hub caps, windshield | \$2059.75 | 226 |
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| choice of upholstery colors | \$3595 | 229 |
| sun top | \$2395 | 230 |
| sun top | \$2295 | 231 |
| 2 top styles, bag racks, others | \$2490 | 232 |
| 2 top styles, bag racks, others | \$2490 | 233 |
| sun roof, sweater basket, hub caps | \$2495 | 234 |



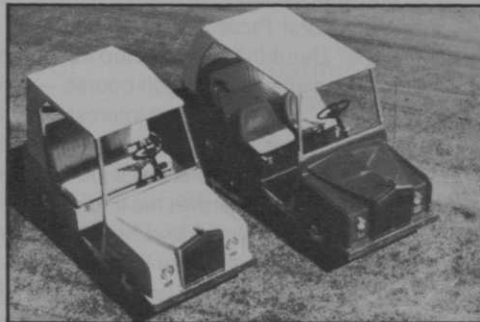
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Reader forum

More on certification

Hats off to Dave Harmon, golf course superintendent, and the expressive article "Should certified golf course superintendents get job preference and better pay?" (GB, August, "Viewpoint," p. 26). Let me be the first to congratulate Dave for this fine article and the outspoken manner in which he expressed himself and the mutual feelings among many superintendents about the GCSAA certification program.

Dave has put in straightforward words that the certification program is surely a step in the right direction but is not the answer for a qualified superintendent. Surely the golf professional has to pass a test and attend school, but he has to score in the game of golf to secure his "A" card. The superintendent should pass a written test and also score in the merited system of a committee or person visiting the applicant and grading the course condition, employee relations, maintenance facility, and evaluation of the man.

I know of many qualified superintendents who came up through the ranks that could not finish high school due to family finances and had to go to work on golf courses in their teens. An inspection of their courses and facilities would be convincing of their qualifications to be a true golf course superintendent and not a paper mind.

I have been informed that one of the first superintendents to become certified works as a druggist, and his sideline is maintaining a nine-hole course. Now here's the question: Who would you hire — the certified druggist/superintendent or the fellow with no formal education and the area's outstanding and best-conditioned golf course, who shakes with fright when it comes to exams?

More emphasis should be placed on reaching out for better public relations among the golfing public, enhancing the image of the golf course superintendent and the vital role he plays every day, and not just for tournaments and awards for a few superintendents whose clubs host the big ones. Some of the finances can be obtained by ceasing the free rides by the education committee of college professors air freighting around the country when this could be handled by the mails.

I have worked for the Golf Course Superintendents Association programs, promoted certification and everything that GCSAA stands for, recruited many members by organizing new chapters, and promoted the golf course superintendent. I have discussed the article by Dave Harmon with many superintendents who are in complete agreement that the certification program has got to reach out further to certify others to reach a majority.

So write to GOLF BUSINESS and give your views on improving a certification program for the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

William P. Mooney
Superintendent
Green Springs Golf Course
Myrtle Beach, S.C.

I agree with David Harmon's "Viewpoint." He failed to point out, however, that a superintendent may be certified in one area and not know how to maintain a golf course in another area of the country. Climate, soil, and other conditions are different in all areas.

Irwin L. Hearsh
Owner
Rancho California Golf Resort
Temecula, Calif.

Mr. Harmon has the attitude of many so-called self-educated people — negative toward university professors — and yet the source of much of the research and information upon which he became self-educated came from and was through the efforts of these very same professors! Professors hiding behind "ivy walls" shouldn't be expected to "handle the frontline attack" on a golf course — that's not their job. If they had that interest, they would be golf superintendents, not professors.

A university professor's job is to perform research and interpret his findings in a way useful to the layman and field people. Also he should and does act as liaison with the field people, learning their problems and taking them inside the "ivy walls" to study on a scientific basis — not a hit and miss basis — with results being returned to the field in the form of short courses, seminars, and turf conferences.

Mr. Harmon should set up a research project on his course in cooperation with a university professor and find out first hand how these people tick. They're really not all that bad!

G. D. Chaster
Assistant Parks Administrator
& Landscape Architect
Victoria, B.C., Canada

To voice your opinion on the above and other issues, please use the Reader Forum Card bound into the back of this magazine or write to Editor, GOLF BUSINESS, 9800 Detroit Ave., Cleveland, OH 44102.

Idea file

Water and air clean pull carts and shoes

Greenacres Golf Course in Richmond, B.C., Canada, has a unique system for cleaning leaves and grass off pull carts and golfers' shoes.

"To clean carts," says president Jack Bell, "we pull them through a water bath which is



simply a concave depression in concrete with water in it (shallow enough that it does not wet the golf bag).

"To clean shoes we use air guns. The golfer stands over a grill, below which is water, and most of the debris falls into this water."

Water from both basins is pumped out at intervals set on a timer, usually every ½ hour, and taps are automatically opened to let fresh water in. Dirty water is pumped into a steel mesh box which traps all the debris and allows the water to drain.

Bell adds: "With all the rain we get in Vancouver, it makes a big difference in keeping our premises clean."

First aid for turf herbicide burns

If any of your course workers over-apply herbicides to your turfgrass, do these steps in order and as rapidly as possible:

1. Apply activated charcoal (200 pounds per acre) to the surface.
2. Irrigate heavily (2 inches) to leach out free herbicide.
3. Hole-punch if possible.
4. Topdress heavily (¼ inch).
5. Stop mowing and fertilizing.
6. Apply fungicide at regular intervals.
7. Mow new growth only when necessary.

Begin fertilizing lightly at this time. If step 3 was not done, aerify now and follow with a light topdressing.

8. Keep traffic off until recovery is assured.

(Courtesy of Heart Beat, newsletter of the Heart of America GCSA.)

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terrain. Add the luxury of relaxed seating plus convenient, stand-up bag racks and you've gained a steady, enthusiastic customer. Other owner/rider features include: 4-speed—forward or reverse, automatic seat brake, reverse safety warning buzzer. Also, heavy duty batteries, automatic charger, extra strong tubular steel frame, automatic hill holder, automotive baked enamel paint, rib-traction tires for better traction and minimal turf wear, protective

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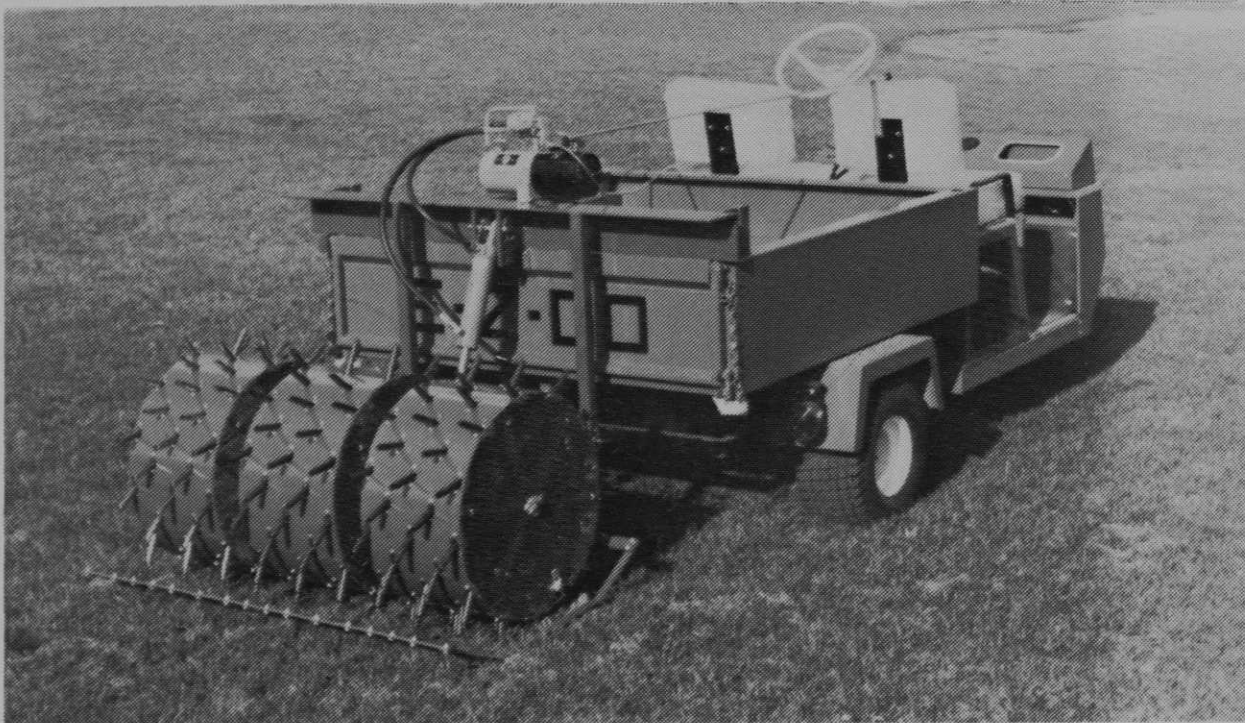
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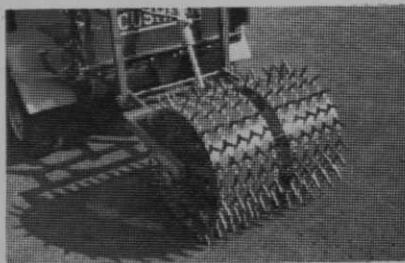
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