

Designer's forum

By Dr. Michael J. Hurdzan

The golf course contractor an unsung hero

There is a tendency for people to attempt to isolate the one person who seems the most responsible for something of note. Perhaps it is because we wish to have a solitary figure to focus on, for admittedly, it is much easier to praise a general than all the men of his army, a conductor instead of the orchestra, or the quarterback instead of the team. Although we know better, we sometimes forget that the person being singled out is tall only because he stands on the shoulders of people who helped him achieve his distinction. The world is filled with such unacknowledged people, whether it be the families who make personal sacrifices to permit our hero or heroine to rise, or it is the friends, associates, or subordinates who directly assist the effort. Similarly, in the field of golf course development, there is a tendency to focus on the architect instead of the unsung hero, namely the Golf Course Contractor.

In fact I believe that the term "contractor" or "builder" does not do these men justice, for they are artisans in the strictest sense. Their tools may be bulldozers, earthmovers, and tractors but their medium is the earth and the best of these craftsman can mold the landscape to produce earthsculptures of tees, greens, mounds and sandtraps. They understand the subtleties of nature, landforms and natural processes, and strive to blend the necessary artificiality of golf features imperceptibly into the surrounding environment. In addition these men know that fine turf must be grown and maintained on the soils and slopes that they leave, so much attention is given to agronomic matters such as the texture of the topsoil, drainage, seedbeds, fertilizers and seed or stolons. They work against unpredictable weather, unforeseen geological features, and competing weeds and animals to meet an unforgiving ideal planting time. Besides their natural opponents, there are delays caused by humans such as unresponsive suppliers, vandalism, or strikes by other trades or unions. Their equipment and crews are specialized for only golf course construction and thus can achieve a naturalness of contours that is uncharacteristic of road and/or sewer contractors. But the convention is to call these men contractors, and so I shall, but in your mind there should be a clear distinction between contractors and Golf Course Contractors.

Having established what they are, we should examine *who* they are and what they *do* to earn the title of hero. There are not many firms in the world who do only golf course construction. One reason is because the scope of the work is so varied and so complex that few companies can organize, equip and train themselves to handle the work. Not only must the Golf Course Contractor comply with all of the legalities attendant construction, but he must do clearing, grubbing, drainage, earthmoving, tile, amend soils for greens, irrigation, seedbed preparation, planting, mulching, watering, early establishment, erosion repair, sandtraps, tree planting, and sometimes, complete golf course maintenance.

Because there are fewer courses being built now than ten years ago, the competition during bidding can be fierce, thus requiring small profit margins. Once selected as the successful bidder, the contractor must execute all of this work in a tight time frame, hoping that delays and forced overtime wages will not eat up all of this profit. Most "contractors" find such bidding and working conditions intolerable and thus they do not enter golf course construction or they last a very short time. Further, since golf course projects are so scattered it means that these men must be apart from their families for long periods or they must develop an almost nomadic family experience.

The obvious question then, is why do they persist in golf course construction? The answer is because these people are artisans who find reward and take pride in the work they do. To remain in this business and to produce high quality golf courses requires that a Golf Course Contractor put a bit of himself into every roll, every mound, every green, every feature. He is creating as he constructs and he feels good about each days work. But if golf course construction is so creative then what is the function of the Golf Course Architect? He plans at a micro-scale and is concerned, while designing, about 150 or 200 acres, or more at a contour interval of perhaps one or two feet. The architect must plan the relationship or elements on a site that may be covered with jungle, below water level, or has problems not clearly discernible.

The Golf Course Contractor, on the other hand, works at the micro-scale of perhaps 1/4 of an acre at a time and contour changes of inches on a site

that is completely cleared. The Golf Course Architect may draw detailed features at a scale of 1" = 10 feet, but it is the contractor who must build that feature at 1" = 1". No matter how sophisticated the plans may be drawn there must always be field interpretation of those drawings; and it is this ability to field interpret that separates the great contractors from the others. This ability is learned from technical training, repeated experiences, and years of honest constructive criticism. But it is not born solely of intellect for the great contractor has a superb imagination, reliable intuition, and good eye-to-hand coordination. It is my personal feeling that any dummy can be taught to run a bulldozer but only a precious few can develop the skill to grade a green.

I don't believe that any Golf Course Architect would disagree with me when I say that a great contractor can make your work look outstandingly good, and a poor contractor can butcher the greatest design in the world. In fact, there are some Golf Course Contractors who have taken bad golf course plans, and made enough field adjustments to fashion a good golf course, only to have the designer get all of the credit.

These are hard times for Golf Course Contractors for fewer courses are being built, and inflation, interest rates and rising wages make it difficult to make a profit. This may be good for it will force those shady types to leave the field but in the meantime it does work hardships on the good contractors. This is not just a personal problem for it affects every golfer who appreciates a fine golf course. Each time we lose one of these artisans, the evolution of golf course design is set back for we lose the subtleties of interpretation so necessary to produce a great golf course. An analogy would be if a gifted composer wrote an imaginative and inspired piece of music, but if the only musicians around to play it were a street corner band, you can imagine the result. This is humorous perhaps, but the same results might be expected if you gave a super golf course plan to a road builder.

Now even I am not so naive as to think that human nature will change and we will acknowledge all of our unsung heros, but the next time you are impressed by a great golf course, don't just think of the designer, remember the Golf Course Contractor.

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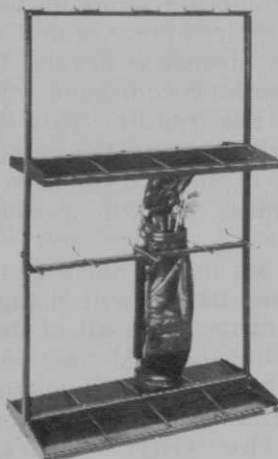
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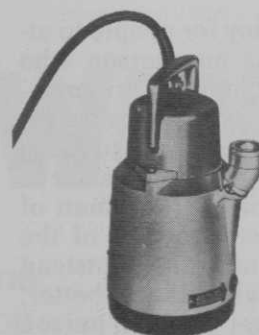
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Products

PORTABLE PUMP

Weda has corrosion - resistant unit



Weda Pump, Inc. has introduced the Model S150 corrosion-resistant pump. The S150 is capable of pumping out sumps and other messy chemical

solutions whether acidic or alkaline. Weighing only 62 pounds, the S150 can easily handle temperatures up to 104 F; heads to 50 feet at capacities up to 140 gpm.

Buna AP rubber-covered diffuser and adjustable wearplate are one of maintenance saving features of the S150. A chromium steel impeller and corrosion-resistant inner casing, outer parts and bearing bracket make this portable ideal for quick pumpouts. No permanent mounting brackets or cabling is required. The pump utilizes a 1 or 3 phase 1.3 hp motor. No external control box is required. Controls are built into a sealed unit in the top of the pump.

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DIESEL WALK BEHIND

Bunton claims first for standard model



Buntons' Diesel-Powered, 36-inch and 52-inch rotary mowers are claimed to be the first walk or ride behind, offered as standard models in the

U.S.A. The 8 H.P. diesel engine is a 4 stroke Acme, with direct Bosch System fuel injection, air-cooled by flywheel fan, force feed lubrication, oil filter, remote control governor and rope start. The crankcase is high resistance alloy, diecast aluminum; the single cylinder is special pearlitic iron with deep fins; cylinder head is also pearlitic finned iron. The crankshaft is hardened-tempered forged steel, supported on anti-function bearings. Oil bath air cleaner is standard equipment.

Bunton is also introduced diesel engines on their 61-inch and 71-inch front-mounted-tractor-mowers with 19 H.P., 2 Cylinder, Air-Cooler Wisconsin or 30 H.P., 2 Cylinder, Air-Cooled Deutz.

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NEW CHEMICAL HOSE

Co-extrusion for high performance



Flexitube Int. Corp. has pioneered the development of a new spray hose called "SUPERTREL". Pro-

duced by a process called "Co-extrusion", SUPERTREL combines different plastics with different properties into one type of high performance hose.

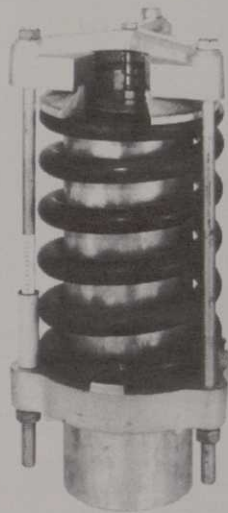
The inner core is manufactured with a very thin layer of Dupont's Hytel, polyester that fills the gap between the contrasting yielding nature of rubber and the rigidity of plastics. Hytel has better high temperature properties than the polyurethanes, and can be used satisfactorily at higher temperatures in the same fluids. Hytel is not susceptible to solvent extraction or heat volatilization either. Hytel has excellent resistance to hot, moist environments.

Flexitube Int. Corp. has taken all the properties of Hytel for the inner bore of the spray hose, welded it to a double layer of braid for a good PSI, and surrounded the thread with an abrasion-resistant cover of corrugated PVC.

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TRI-ACTION VALVE

Provides less restriction



A valve that provides less restriction in water flow and works on both plastic and asbestos cement water lines is being marketed by Hydro Engineering, Inc. Called the Tri-Action Irrigation Valve, it provides pressure relief, vacuum relief and positive air relief at pump head and at end of line. The Tri-Action Valve can be pre-set in plant or field, and does not require factory pre-set PSI setting. It is necessary to stock only one size for all systems, up to and including 12-inch IPS and PIP. It is also available in low pressure ranges. Hydro Engineering also markets a Dual-Action Valve for air and vacuum relief, and specifically engineered for use with the Tri-Action Valve.

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21 HORSEPOWER ENGINE

Kohler introduces second of series

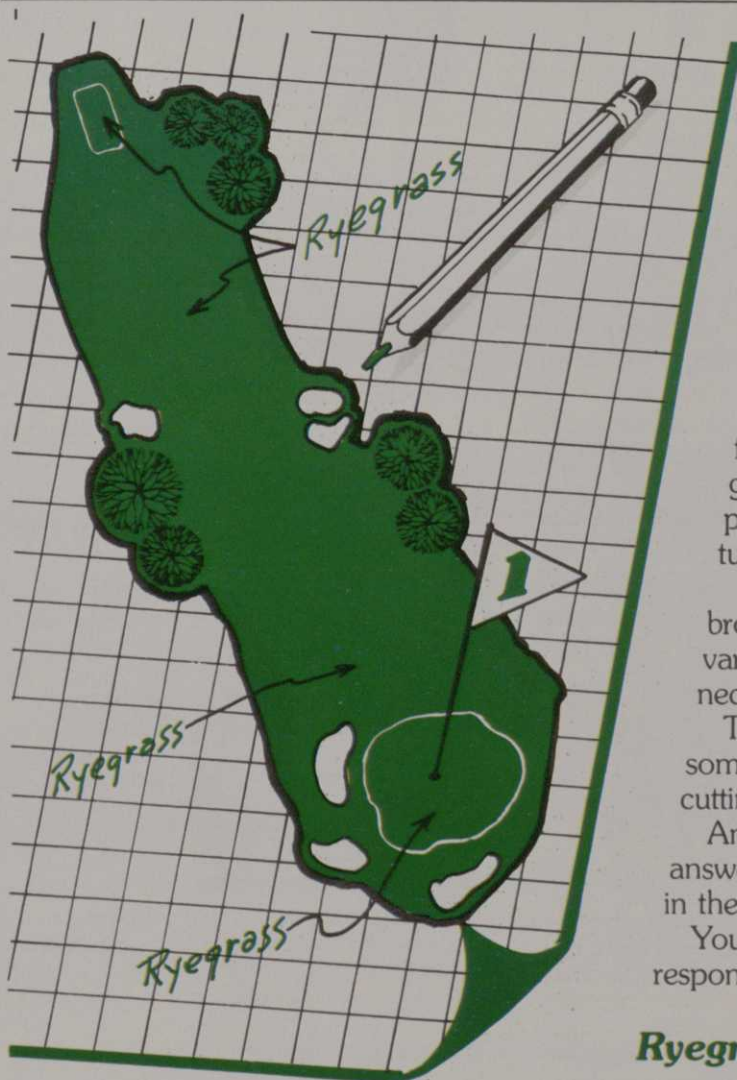


Kohler Co. has introduced a 21-HP engine, model KT21, the second in a series of air cooled, four cycle, twin cylinder engines.

The new model is almost identical in size and configuration to the 17-HP KT17 which is already in use by major equipment manufacturers. Both are designed to power a variety of equipment — lawn and garden, construction, industrial, and agricultural.

The KT21 features long-life demountable cast iron cylinder for heavy-duty use. Crankshafts are made of forged steel and camshafts of durable cast iron. Combustion air is drawn from within the cooling fan housing, thus substantially reducing air intake noise. The engine is designed for easy installation in an enclosure for further noise reduction. Breaker points, condenser, spark plugs, oil fill, dipstick, air cleaner, and carburetor are all conveniently accessible for ease of service. Other features include: Automotive type oil pump; High clearance

Continues on page 44



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Emergence of the highly successful, exceptionally handsome turf-type perennial ryegrasses lends further credence to the age-old claim that "ryegrass is the world's most widely used grass."

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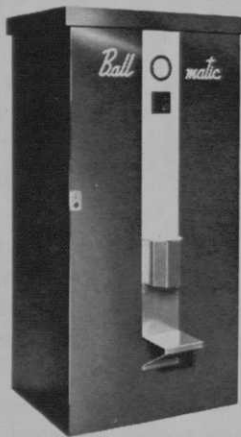
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Products from page 43

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CHAIN SAWS

Echo offers new brochure



Gasoline powered chain saws available from Echo, Inc., Northbrook, Illinois. The brochure details the company's full line of heavy-duty chain saws.

Individual

model highlights, special features, specifications and in-use applications are included in the brochure. Color photographs show each model, identifying their specific features.

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BOB-CAT MOWERS

Wisconsin has new brochure



Wisconsin Marine, Inc., manufacturer of Bob-Cat

Mowers, has developed a new brochure covering their riding and intermediate lawn-

mowers. The 8 page, 4-color brochure shows the 48, 61, and 74-inch mowers with the choice of a Briggs and Stratton 18 HP engine or an Onan 19-9 HP engine. Accessories include a snow blower, snow blade, vee plow, vacuum and road broom which operate off the hydraulic/PTO systems of the tractor. A winterized cab is also available. The intermediate line of Bob-Cats, powered by a Briggs and Stratton 11 HP engine, is available in 32", 36" and 48" cutting widths. Accessories for the intermediates include a riding sulky, an all metal dump catcher and a rear door dumping large capacity wire catcher.

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UTILITY SEED MIXTURE

Scotts' mixture for quick establishment

A new grass seed product, called ProTurf Utility Mixture, has been introduced by Scotts®. It is designed for areas that need quick establishment, wear tolerance, and grass coverage throughout the year. The mixture contains Victa Kentucky bluegrass, Scotts exclusive perennial ryegrass, plus two others, and creeping red fescue. Features of the new

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NEW TURF FUNGICIDE

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O.M. Scott & Sons has introduced a new fungicide designed to prevent and control dollar spot, brown patch, leaf spot and red leaf spot. ProTurf Fungicide VI also controls Fusarium patch in Washington, Oregon and California. This new fungicide product is even effective on the benzimidazole-tolerant strain of dollar spot. It will prevent the development and spread of the above listed fungus diseases as well as the thinning of turf which is frequently connected with these diseases, according to Scotts® researchers.

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Two new RoZol (chlorophacinone) baits are now available for ground squirrel and pocket gopher control, and do not cause bait shyness, according to Chempar Chemical Co., the manufacturer. RoZol ground squirrel bait is a paraffinized pellet formulation. It has a California label for special applications also. RoZol pocket gopher bait is a coarse grain bait for use where holes made by burrowing gophers can be hazardous. Bait is placed in gopher tunnels with probes.

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