

## Distributor Perspectives

Several of our Wisconsin distributors have been kind enough to offer their viewpoints and reflections on the golf course business — reflecting on the just completed season and even back beyond that. Their sense of the business from “across the fence” is refreshing and the lessons they’ve learned are certainly valuable to us.

### THE TURFGRASS INDUSTRY — NOW & THEN

*By Ed Devinger  
Turf Division Manager  
Reinders Brothers*

The industry is changing more rapidly each year. It appears that it is like a rolling snowball.

What has happened? This is the easy part. 1984 was an excellent year for the turfgrass industry and golf courses in particular. Most everyone agrees that the number of rounds of golf played are up, and on the whole, Mother Nature was more cooperative than in 1983.

The demands on the Golf Course superintendent are ever increasing — faster greens, shorter fairways, more aesthetic appearance, etc., and constant pressure to reduce costs! It is becoming necessary to have accurate cost accounting on each job done (i.e. how much to mow fairways, change cups, mow greens, trim around trees, etc.). When a reduction in costs is requested, let the greens committee or membership decide how much is to be cut and in what areas! It is their golf course!

Over the past few years, there has been a leveling off of the constant price increase of the late 70's. The price changes in the last two or three years, and again in 1985, are in the 4-7% range; and there is now normally only one price change per year. This makes it easier to budget and forecast expenditures. That is the good news! The bad news is that the

equipment manufacturers have much lower inventories than in years past. This leads to a longer wait for orders! **PLAN AHEAD!** Give your suppliers ample time to serve you. **ORDER EARLY!**

### Impressions from 1984

#### Equipment:

The Superintendent has more to choose from than ever before. Many foreign manufacturers are trying to find a place in the industry. It will be very difficult for **all** manufacturers to survive! The time of “light-weight” fairway mowing has arrived for the Superintendent and Golf Course who demands the ultimate in quality turf and whose budget will allow the additional cost. Fairway aerification with the Ryan Greensaire II is worth the additional time required for the most thorough job available.

#### Chemicals:

1. After waiting patiently for a few years, Oftanol has finally arrived. Those who used it in 1984 can attest to the value of this insecticide.
2. Embark PGR gained acceptance for seed head suppression on Poa.
3. Registration of new products continues to be a lengthy and costly ordeal! Unless agriculturally related, new turfgrass pesticides will become a thing of the past.
4. Increasing pressure from environmentalists, labor unions, and the general public are making it extremely difficult to use chemicals — especially in the Lawn Care Industry. Everyone in the industry must be aware of these situations at all levels of government and be prepared to resist with factual data.

#### Grass Seed:

1. Unlike 1984, there appears to be enough Penncross and Penneagle Bent Seed for 1985, as long as everyone doesn't hoard it. Buy what you anticipate you will need.
2. Bluegrass — most of the hybrid varieties are available in ample supply for Spring, but may become less available as 1985 wears on. **BUY EARLY.**

#### One Last Point:

The future of the Turfgrass Industry is extremely bright. It will

be necessary to keep up with the changing times.

Wisconsin now has a badly needed Turfgrass Association. Three years ago, a group of turfgrass managers formed this organization and while still in its infancy, it is getting the job done. This past year, saw the acceptance of its annual Summer Field Day in August and a September Golf Outing. Both events were successful in raising research funds for Wisconsin.

If you are not yet a member, let 1985 be the year you join and become involved in an organization that will improve your profession. **THEY NEED YOU!**

### THE NEW KID ON THE BLOCK

*By Neil Richter  
General Manager  
Hanley Implement*

1984 was a pleasant surprise for Hanley Implement. Our equipment sales were above our targeted figure, and that is always a good situation to be in. We did experience some start up parts struggles, some equipment modifications to contend with, and we had to adjust to a new customer and his needs. We are, in retrospect, very satisfied with the outcome of these challenges.

One of the very real rewards of the year was the excellent cooperation of the Golf Course Superintendents in Wisconsin. We couldn't be any happier than we are with the new friends we've made in this industry.

Our sales staff has grown to two very excellent people, and we have made plans to add another person in the immediate future. We have added some new products to our turf line and we are looking at some others. We recognize that we need to be selective and choose only those manufacturers that will meet our demands for product and parts availability.

Many questions are still unanswered as to what our position will be in the Wisconsin turfgrass industry. The final answer to this question will ultimately be decided by our



customers. However, there is **no** question about whether or not we will be in the business of turf — the answer is a resounding YES. We are committed to it over the long haul, for years to come. Our investment and support is such that we will be a supplier for the future.

In the final analysis, 1984 was a good year for us. We have gained some valuable experience and, more importantly, we have gained the friendship of our customers.

## CHANGES IN THE TURF INDUSTRY

By Ronald W. Schumacher  
Horst Distributing, Inc.

I started in this business in 1962. At that time, most golf courses cut

their greens at 3/16" to 5/16", three or four times a week. (It was only the daring Superintendent that would cut at 3/16"). The greens were cut with walking Greens-mowers.

Mostly, the greens were aerified twice a year; in the spring and in the fall — sometimes in the summer with smaller tines. Some golf courses had the Ryan Greensaire, but many of them used the old West Point aerifier (Similar to a Fairway Aerifier only smaller).

Verticutting was done generally twice a year. At that time they would verticut deeply and really try to remove a lot of thatch and mat all at once.

Some Superintendents believed in Top Dressing and some didn't. The top dressing that was used varied, from soil, to a mixture of

soil, sand and peat. There were no powered top dressers. The men would use shovels to spread the top dressing over the green and then mat it in with a walking drag mat. (Big machines were not allowed on the green, such as a Cushman or a Golf Car).

Sometime about 1963 or 1964, Sod-Master developed the Top Dresser and then Ryan came out with theirs. I sold the first Sod Master to Jack Frahm at Oshkosh Country Club and then, as I recall, Bob Musbach at North Shore Golf Club in Menasha bought one and Irv Johnson of Butte Des Morts Country Club in Appleton bought one. As time went by, top dressing became very common. I should say that before World War II, top dressing was common, but because of gasoline rationing many superintendents couldn't get soil and sand delivered to their clubs, so they didn't top dress.

Fairways were mostly common Kentucky Bluegrass and Poa Annua. They were cut maybe twice a week and almost always over an inch height of cut.

Tees were cut with 22" greens-mowers or 26" or 30" walk-behind reel mowers.

The transition from minimal maintenance to the very intense maintenance that we have now, came about gradually over the years as golfers began demanding better and better playing conditions. It is my opinion that the T.V. coverage of Pro Tournaments was very influential in bringing this about.

Now lets talk about equipment and its development. In 1962 a walking greensmower cost about \$400.00. Today, because of inflation, it costs about \$2800.00.

Triplex Greensmowers were developed first in 1969 at a cost of \$3200.00. They are now over \$10,000.00.

Other Triplex Mowers such as the Jacobsen Turf King and the Toro 76" Pro sold for \$1200.00. They are now from \$6000.00 to \$9000.00.

In 1962 golf courses were being maintained with walking mowers (other than fairways) as labor became more expensive riding mowers became more popular. When it was realized that much more work could be accomplished with less man hours, the maintenance level gradually intensified. Now we have reached the



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