
LATHAM'S LONG AND PRODUCTIVE CAREER IN WISCONSIN COMES TO AN END: *Some Reminiscing By A Few Of His Friends*

GOOD FRIENDS TO ALL

By Danny Quast

Jim and Lois Latham—good friends to all. We're going to miss them, and Lois' cornbread (the best!).

I've had sweet memories this morning thinking about my friendship with Jim and Lois over the past twenty-five years. It brought a smile to my face and laughter to us as I was telling some of the many stories to my wife Beverly. Let me share a few with you.

We need to establish the fact that Jim is the best "soils" person in the business. His knowledge of soil and soil conditions helped to bring Dr. James Madison, who spoke on sand topdressing, to our Symposium years ago. Jim had advocated this program and helped establish the technique. He worked closely with superintendents in finding the right material and, through his efforts, had a big part in establishing the best putting surfaces in the country.

Most stories stem from a trio—Jim, Wayne Otto, and myself... "The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly!"

Many years ago, while I was at Milwaukee Country Club, Jim was working for the Skunk Works (MMSD). The only fertilizer that had ever been used on Milwaukee Country Club fairways was Milorganite. I decided to supplement the Milorganite with potash. Discussing this with Wayne, I told him not to tell Latham - "it would break his heart." You guessed it. Otto spilled the beans. The next time I saw Wayne "The Squealer" Otto, he told me that Latham would probably never speak to me again and I should consider getting out of town until things cooled down!

Every time anyone of us got into trouble, Jim was the first person we called. Come to think of it, he still is! If he didn't know the answers, he knew where to find them.

I can remember being at the Country Club softball games (I think it was the year Milwaukee CC won). I had just installed my new irrigation



Danny Quast and Jim Latham at the 1994 Wisconsin Field Day.

system and the central didn't work. I had one, two, maybe three beers and was complaining to Jim about it. He went home so fired up he called friends in higher places. The next day I had not only one, but two centrals in my office. I still don't know, to this day, how he did that. He's an amazing guy!

There was a sign in my room at college that read "YOU HERE AGAIN? ANOTHER HOUR SHOT TO HELL." Usually on Saturday mornings, but anytime I wanted to find out what was happening, I would stop by Jim's office in Brown Deer. We would hash and rehash the world of turfgrass for the week or for however long I hadn't seen him. Until Lois showed up. I can still hear her... "Quast, OUT, OUT, OUT. Jim has to get some work done." I never did like that office; there wasn't even a back door!

When I came to Medinah, much work needed to be done and programs needed to be changed. We were getting ready for the U.S. Open. Jim was there for me with recommendations and support. He helped me

sell programs that were necessary for the betterment of Medinah. Jim has also helped many of my assistants obtain jobs which better their careers. I, like many, will be forever in his debt.

I know Jim and Lois will enjoy their retirement. If Beverly and I are among the missing and can't be found, we might just be down Texas way, visiting good friends and eating hot cornbread.

A TIRELESS PROFESSIONAL

By Wayne Otto

Yes, there was a day when Jim Latham was young and not so well known as he is today. It was in Omaha, I believe in 1961, when I received a soil analysis report from the Milwaukee Sewerage Commission (that's where Milorganite came from in those days), and it was signed by Jim Latham. I knew O.J. Noer and Charley Wilson, but where did this Latham character come from? Back then I believed that everyone was immortal,

and that nobody would ever retire from anything.

It didn't take long to get to know Jim Latham. He spoke at our Nebraska conference and Harold Glissmann, whom I worked for during a very learned internship in Omaha, was the Milorganite distributor for that area. Harold would bring Latham to town to "ramrod" roundtable discussions with groups of area superintendents. Jim also came to town when we had turf problems during the "dreaded hot and humid" Nebraska summers.

After moving to Wisconsin in 1967, I really got to know Jim. We spent many hours talking about "grass" over a lot of beers, pizza and even "Black-Eyed Peas." We would always end up talking turf no matter what or where the event.

Jim was in charge of putting the Wisconsin Golf Turf Symposium together for many years. One of the all time great ones was in 1974 when he got Dr. John Madison from the University of California-Davis to give a presentation. He devoted the entire morning session of the first day of the Symposium to a discussion about using straight 100% sand for topdressing putting greens. That did much to change not only the lives of superintendents but the playability of a whole lot of golf courses. Other than some golf courses in California, no one in the northern tier of the U.S. was using straight sand for topdressing, so a few of us right here in southeastern Wisconsin were really the "guinea pigs" about 20 years ago. Consequently, good or bad or whatever, Jim had much to do with this pivotal event.

In September 1984, Steve Blendell and I were sitting in a hotel room eating pizza and listening to Stanley Zontek, our USGA agronomist, tell us that he was leaving the Great Lakes Region and moving to Philadelphia in the Mid-Atlantic Region. He said "you'll never guess who is going to take over this area after I leave." After a brief silence, as "Blender" and I were swallowing, Stanley told us that it was to be Jim Latham. We were both surprised and shocked at the same time. The decision was, in my estimation, an excellent one. I am firmly convinced that it would have been a huge mistake if the USGA had hired a "green horn" to replace Zontek. Jim was a first-class agronomist with a distinguished

career. So after taking a 25 year sabbatical to work with the city of Milwaukee—Milorganite Division—Jim Latham went back to work for the United States Golf Association. He has since done a tremendous job for the USGA.

We will all miss Jim, but we know that he will never retire from something that he loves so much.

THE ROAD WARRIOR

By Jim Snow

From both a personal and professional standpoint, I'm awfully sorry to see Jim retire from the USGA Green Section. During the past ten years, Jim has brought a perspective to our staff that only 40 years of experience in the turf industry could build. From his days as a Green Section agronomist in the 1950s to his years with O.J. Noer and Charlie Wilson at the Milwaukee Sewerage Commission to the past decade as the Green Section's regional director in the Great Lakes, there isn't much that Jim hasn't seen. Most of our current staff are a generation younger than Jim, so that alone should indicate what a loss his retirement is to us.

One of the things that has kept our staff in awe of Jim is his attitude toward work and travel—he's an extremely hard worker and seems to thrive on travel. We kiddingly refer to him as our Road Warrior for his frequent journeys through the hinterlands of Minnesota, the Dakotas, Montana and Wyoming, visiting golf courses with nothing between them but hundreds of miles of pavement and lots of interesting scenery ("for the most part," he says). I think he enjoys it because it gives him lots of time to think about his favorite subject—TURF!

That's what is most remarkable about Jim Latham. After nearly 40 years of roaming the world looking at it and talking about it, there's nothing he'd rather do than get into a good discussion about turf. Of course, he knows a lot about it and has seen it in just about every condition imaginable, so he has lots to offer the conversation. And his enthusiasm is catching, too. The agronomists on our staff who have been fortunate enough to travel with Jim really appreciate the breadth of his knowledge and the enthusiasm with which he shares it.

You might ask how we can let someone with Jim's talent slip away when he clearly has so much yet to offer. Well, we're not! I'm pleased to say that Jim has accepted a seat on the USGA's Turfgrass Research Committee. So, although our staff is losing a highly respected associate with Jim's retirement, the Research Committee is gaining a seasoned veteran whose knowledge of the industry is matched only by his enthusiasm for the potential of the research program. How's that for a nice ending to the story!

A STERLING CAREER

By Monroe S. Miller

It won't be the same in the golf turf business in Wisconsin next year. Jim Latham will retire at this year's end. Come January 1995, he and Lois will be relaxing in their retirement in Texas, not far from where they grew up.

Today, Jim Latham may well be the most savvy, experienced and well trained turf expert in the country. By way of his education at Texas A & M, training under O.J. Noer, and experience of 25 years with MMSD and more than a decade with the USGA, no one rivals this man's background. Therefore, who else could rightly claim the title?

I've enjoyed Jim's USGA Green Section visits to my course over the years and prospered from them. The scores of talks and lectures, from the Symposium to the Green Section regional conferences to our WGCSA monthly meetings, proved time and again that he is an articulate and accomplished speaker.

Despite being so close to retirement, there was Jim at our summer Field Day, taking pages of notes during the research tour and kicking tires during the morning hours. That tells a lot about this dedicated turf man.

And for an editor, there's nothing like a straight up, tell-it-like-it-is article from Jim Latham's pen. His writing for *The Green Section Record* and *The Grass Roots* were always the best.

It is pretty easy to answer the question "does Latham pass the Miller 'did he make a difference' test?" For everyone I have talked with, the answer is a loud and bold **YES.**

This is a guy we will solely miss. 🌿



THE DOCTOR'S REQUEST: *DISCLOSURE VS. EXPOSURE*

By Pat Jones

Director of Communications

Golf Course Superintendents Association of America

Consider this not-so-hypothetical situation:

A physician buys a home next to a golf course. Drinking water for her new home is supplied by a well. She has young children and is mildly concerned about the quality of the water in the well and wants to have it tested. She contacts a local laboratory and they tell her that she will need to provide them with a list of potential contaminants to help narrow their analysis of her well water. She calls the golf course and reaches the clubhouse manager. She explains her situation in reasonable terms and asks for a list of the pesticides commonly used by the golf course. The clubhouse manager promptly turns the request over to the club's attorney who decides not to divulge the information. The doctor is not amused.

Thus, a simple question asked by a golf course neighbor has escalated into a legal/liability exposure issue—not to mention a potential public relations nightmare. How should the course handle the question of disclosure vs. exposure? Although there is no simple answer, a quick review of the options is enlightening.

Does the golf course have a common law legal duty to disclose the list of pesticides? Probably not, unless the

homeowner files suit and asks for the list as part of the legal discovery process.

Does the golf course have a statutory or regulatory duty to disclose the list? Probably. The laws governing "community right-to-know" require golf courses to provide a list of hazardous materials to local officials (and therefore the public), so it is likely that "RTK" could mean that someone who lives near the golf course would be entitled to a list of hazardous materials and/or MSDS (the answer may actually vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction).

The last, and most important, question is: Does the golf course have a vested interest in making sure that it maintains a good relationship with its neighbors? The answer here is a definitive "yes." By deciding not to cooperate with the homeowner, the club has potentially become the "bad guy." The perception is that they have something to hide—even from those who live along its fairways. It is exactly the type of incident that provides fodder for the Paul Harveys and Jay Feldmans of the world.

Think of the headline: "Concerned Mother Challenges Powerful Golf Club Over Pesticides."

So, the club may win the legal bat-

ter, but it will certainly lose the public relations war.

This is not to suggest that clubs shouldn't assert their legal rights, but they should do so only when they've carefully considered the ramifications. It is particularly important that they remember the battle will be uphill, because many in the community already perceive the club as an "elitist playground for wealthy bigots." These are not easy words to hear or see in print and it certainly isn't an accurate depiction of the vast majority of golf facilities, but perception is reality.

The "real reality" is that golf courses should establish and maintain a good neighbor policy. This policy could encompass anything from helping adjacent homeowners clean up storm debris to informing them in advance of chemical applications. It clearly could also include voluntarily providing them with a list of chemicals that the homeowner will eventually obtain through legal means that will be expensive and embarrassing for the club.

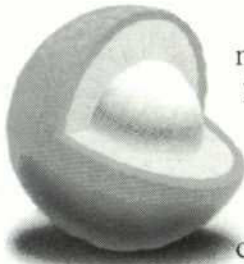
Your club's good neighbor policy could mean fewer bills from lawyers, fewer complaints from nearby homeowners and fewer negative headlines in the local paper. Think about that when the doctor makes a call at your club. ♣

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WHAT'S IN A NAME?

By William Newton

Editor's Note: In a round about way that involved an article in the Ontario (Canada) Golf Superintendent's Association publication I wanted to reprint, I have had several conversations with William Newton. He wrote this piece specifically for THE GRASS ROOTS.

He was in private business in Toronto for 25 years as a designer specializing in corporate identity programs. Although he was well regarded as a corporate designer, he now concentrates on golf writing and related projects with a focus on golf course architecture and the traditional aspects of the game. His company, Golf Images International, provides marketing and design services to the golf industry. His son Matt is currently studying to become a greenkeeper.

Newton comes by his interest in golf and golf course architecture naturally. His grandfather, Matt Thompson, was a golf professional and one of the five brothers of what has been called Canada's greatest golfing family. Another brother was Stanley Thompson, considered to be one of the world's finest golf course architects.

At one time, both Robert Trent Jones and Geoffrey Cornish worked for Thompson, and Jones later became a partner. Thompson and Donald Ross were founding members of the American Society of Golf Course Architects. Many of his designs are still listed annually in the top courses of Canada and rank with the best traditional courses on the continent.

Because most golf courses have more than one hole, you would think that a greenkeeper would be called a greenskeeper. But not so. Since the days of Old Tom Morris — probably the world's first golf course superintendent (amongst his many other golf-related occupations) — it has been a singular descriptor.

The choice of the word green is also strange because early golf in Scotland was played on grass more often brown than green. And much of the "keeping" was done by hungry sheep. This made-up title of greenkeeper seems to be consistent with the idea that the principal preoccupation of the superintendent is to keep a course green. Or is it?

In the perception of most golfers, and particularly those belonging to

private clubs, it probably is. Imagine the reaction that might result from Saturday morning members if the first tee, or part thereof, was a color other than green. What if a patch of dandelion had taken over a corner of rough displaying its dreaded yellow hue? Far worse, imagine the report to the Greens Committee (why is it plural?), if there was some sort of discolored ring around the collar.

Unfortunately, this "green" perception has become too prevalent amongst golfers, partly because television and magazine images portray overly manicured golf courses. This conditioning, and perhaps the high cost of a 1990s membership, creates false demand for perfectly green playing fields.

But it is naive and unrealistic to assume error-free turf with today's budget and environmental restraints. The modern player should learn to live with conditions that will not always be what has become the picture-perfect norm. And stop tongue-wagging to the Greens Chair.

After all, the game's challenge is still dictated by sound architecture and not turf lushness or an artificial palette of green. Two current examples of this come to mind: during the 1994 U.S. Open at Oakmont, the greens by Sunday were no longer green and, probably, within twenty-four hours of agronomic death.

The second example was the 1994 U.S. Senior Open at Donald Ross' beloved number two course at Pinehurst. Clearly, many parts of the slopes surrounding his hallmark inverted-saucer greens were, heaven forbid, brownish. But, both these memorable old design masterpieces were carefully selected years in advance to provide for a proper "examination of golf".

Many members I have played with at different private courses talk more per round about the inefficiencies of their superintendent than about the last book they read, or their own course management, or whatever. This business of green and tidy, it seems, never

leaves their minds.

Where are they at 6:15 in the morning when greenkeepers are making their rounds like a dutiful surgeon at a general hospital? Where are these experts when the same person is attending an evening Greens meeting? And where are they at 3:00 a.m. when a security guard calls to report vandalism, or a misbehaving sprinklerhead?

We should appreciate what greenkeepers actually do to keep the course functioning, which is more than simply growing grass. They are people managers, budget watchers, property keepers, communicators. The greenkeepers I see are constantly on the move — checking work progress, directing construction, writing reports, supervising daily schedules and inventory needs. All of this in the pursuit of not just keeping the grass green, but maintaining a high standard for the golf arena.

Although greenkeeper is an honorable and traditional title, it is appropriate any more? Is the word superintendent any better? I think not. Because of the specialization and multiple responsibilities now required (including the need for continuous educational upgrading), this job should be regarded as being part of the high-end contemporary golf course management. If this is true, then greenkeeper does not cut it. Equally so, superintendent doesn't measure up.

But what about Director, Turf Management Services, or Manager, Golf Course Operations, or simply Turf Director? Perhaps the most appropriate title is the one used to identify Australian superintendents — Curator.

This Jack or Mary-of-all-trades needs a new moniker. And given that golf courses might become considerably less green in the future, how about Turfkeeper? Anyway, it might be something for the greenkeepers to think about in the coming months.

It seems to be the only part of their game which needs work — a fact that might cause a few honorable members to be green with envy.



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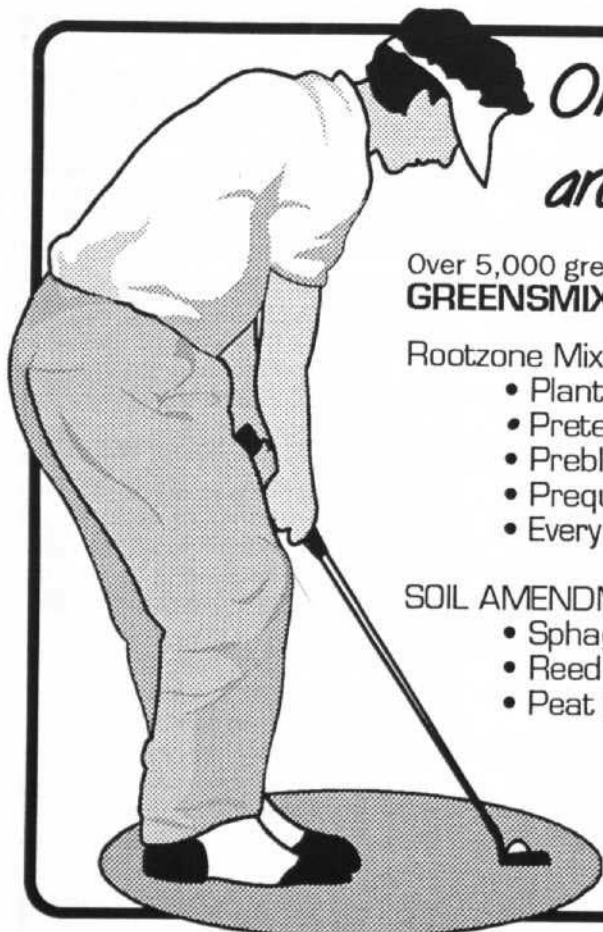
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JANESVILLE C.C. HOSTS AUGUST MEETING

By Kris Pinkerton

The August meeting for the WGCSA was held at Janesville Country Club.

Golf course superintendent Brad Wagner and his staff did an outstanding job of preparing what is known as one of Wisconsin's oldest golf clubs.

Celebrating its 100th anniversary this year while hosting their fifth State Amateur, Janesville Country Club was certainly a treat for us to play. Good luck on the next 100 years!

The event for the day was a 2 man Best Ball. Winners are as follows:

1st Place:	James Krutilla Wayne Horman	70
2nd Place:	Skip Vincent Bruce Schweiger	72
3rd Place:	Steve Beavdoin Doug Laak	73
4th Place:	Brad Wagner Don Ferger	Tie 75
5th Place:	Chris Craddick Kim Arnotz	Tie 75
6th Place:	Steve Blendell Jeff Kingsly	Tie 75
7th Place:	Don Schaffer Dewey Laak	Tie 75
Closest to pin #3:	Chuck Wollner	
Closest to pin #10:	Chad Ball	
Long drive #15:	Scott Scaller	
Long putt #18:	Jim Krutilla	
Closest in two #7:	Mike Yontz	

Also, "special thanks" to Wisconsin Turf and Curt Larson for donating refreshments on the golf course.



Brad Wagner, Janesville C. C. host.

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Pythiums: In the Canopy, On the Roots

By Dr. Julie Meyer

Department of Plant Pathology, University of Wisconsin-Madison

How often do we see slow growth, poor fertilizer response, off-color and thinning out in bentgrass greens? These common symptoms were described by pathologists from all over the country as those associated with shallow, poor root systems. I know I saw many bentgrass samples this year that could be described that way.

At the recent national meeting of the American Phytopathological Society, a whole morning was devoted to a discussion of poor rooting and summer decline of creeping bentgrass greens. The timely and lively discussion was well-attended. It seems poor root development is plaguing superintendents throughout the country, and pathologists are wondering to what extent pathogens are involved. The main suspects are Pythiums. I write the plural form "Pythiums" here to highlight the fact that *Pythium* is actually a group of soil fungi that include many species, all of which are widely distributed in soil.

Why is *Pythium* suspected as a component of root rot in mature bentgrass? Isn't *Pythium* a foliar blight that you can almost predict like the sunrise when warm nights and high humidity coincide in summer? Isn't *Pythium* the cause of a seedling disease called damping-off? Yes, "Pythium blight", or "grease spot" is familiar to us because of the predictable environmental conditions under which it occurs in summer, and the occasional presence of mycelium in the early morning dew. Pythium rot of seedlings, called damping-off, occurs as seeds germinate or just as they emerge from the soil.

What is much more insidious, and unfortunately more common than we realize, is that many species of *Pythium* are active at cool soil temperatures (below 70F) and can cause root and crown rots of various intensity. Pythiums are "water molds" that release their spores directly following

a rain or irrigation, when the soil pores are saturated with water. *Pythium* is suspected to be involved in root problems associated with (1) slow growth in the early spring, when plants don't respond to fertilizer, (2) "summer decline" later in the season where weak, poor root systems can not keep up with canopy growth, and (3) new sand greens that turn yellow, wilt and decline. What is happening in these cases?

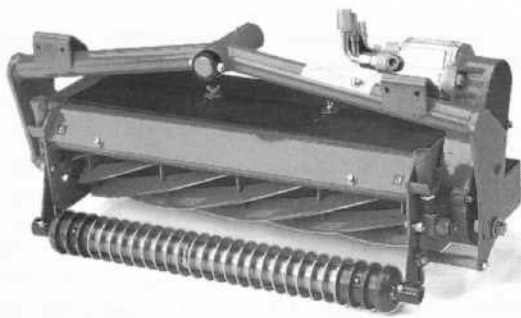
Pythium is suspected of "pruning" the root system to various degrees during phases of active root growth, sabotaging the plant's effort to establish a strong root system for the summer months. Seldom do the roots look rotted; more often they are simply stunted, short, and underdeveloped. It is generally agreed among pathologists who have studied poor root development that environmental and other kinds of stresses are involved (and may even be primary causes), which are predisposing factors for root infection by *Pythium*. This is different from foliar blight (the grease spot disease), which can occur on healthy, unstressed turf when the weather conditions are very favorable. When Pythiums are active at cooler temperatures, they seem to be part of a "root decline syndrome" that is characterized not only by the presence of *Pythium* fungi, but by other major stress factors on the turf. Dr. L.T. Lucas, from North Carolina State University, shared with us the most important stresses he has found associated with poor rooting:

1. high soluble salts
2. localized dry spots
3. high rates of sterol inhibiting fungicides/herbicides that inhibit root growth
4. greens that are closed in, without good air circulation, (also associated with foliar *Pythium* disease!)

5. poor drainage
6. clones of Penncross that have segregated out and appear more susceptible to root rots
7. high soil temperatures (he has measured over 112F in North Carolina)
8. heavy traffic
9. soil compaction

Managing turf with an impaired root system is one of the most difficult management challenges. Sometimes the affected parts of greens need intensive management, such as frequent syringing and light frequent fertilizer applications to help the roots supply the canopy with enough water (without keeping the soil continually wet) and nutrients through the worse parts of the summer. Since it's difficult to determine if *Pythium* is the cause of the poor rooting, it is hard to recommend fungicides. In cases where *Pythium* was likely involved, flowable formulations, applied as a drench, have been found to be most effective. Although metalaxyl products (e.g. Subdue®) are effective against foliar *Pythium* diseases, they have been found to be less effective against *Pythium* on roots. Other compounds, such as ethazol (e.g. Koban®) and Fluazinam® were reported to have some efficacy.

The general agreement at the end of the session was that poor root development in bentgrass stands is a major health problem for bentgrass greens all over the country. The causes appear to be a combination of wet soil, management stresses, traffic, disease, heat stress, and often poor air movement. The management challenge is great, but the goal is clear. A deep, healthy root system is the foundation of plant health, and in turf, with its lush canopy to support, this is especially true. ♣



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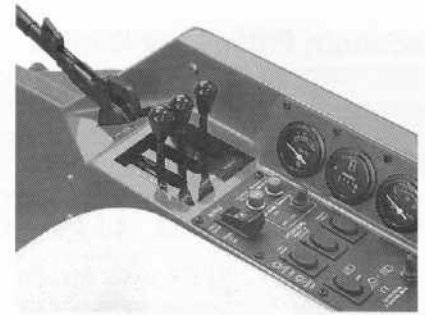
Transverse engine mounting helps you handle

slopes with confidence.

This up-front automotive design produces surprising traction and excellent climbing ability in a 2-wheel drive unit.



Shown with optional roll over protection structure

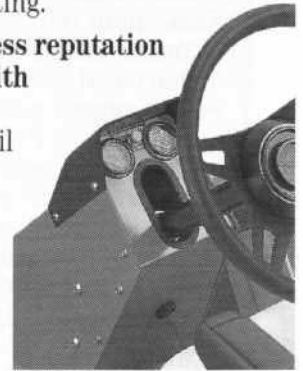


Exclusive SynchroLift control—Cross cutting at its easiest & most productive.

A simple push or pull of the synchronized lift levers is all it takes with this system. The machine automatically raises the reels to turning height, then lowers them for nimble, flawless cross cutting.

Maintain a spotless reputation on the fairway with GreenSentry™

Our advanced oil leak detection system is standard, to give you every advantage possible on the fairway.



The list goes on and on.

Variable-speed, power backlapping; 3, 4 or 5 gang operation; heavy-duty hydraulic system; a 38 hp, liquid-cooled Kubota diesel . . . the quality features just never seem to quit.

For a complete list of features and benefits, as well as a complete demonstration, contact your Jacobsen distributor today.

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