

# LIGHTWEIGHT FAIRWAY MOWING AT MANKATO G. C.

by BOOTS FULLER  
Superintendent Mankato Golf Club

The concept of lightweight fairway mowing is certainly not a new scheme. For many, the practice has been used for some years now. But for us in Mankato, the dream became a little more realistic during the summer of 1985 when I approached Jerry Odash of Kaye Corporation here in Mankato with the suggestion that he leave three mowers with us for demonstration purposes. He did this with no delay and virtually no questions asked. The target date was our annual Loren Krugel Invitational Golf Tournament in July.

That tourney is played the first weekend after July 4 holidays. It's a three-day affair, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, and annually attracts many of the outstanding amateur golfers from Minnesota and other surrounding states. This certainly was an opportune moment to showcase our course and its reception to the lightweight fairway mowing concept.

On Tuesday before the tourney, Jerry brought up two Ransomes Motor 180's and one Ransomes 5x3 gas powered five reel mowing unit. The Motor 180's are 3 reel triplexes with baskets and all 3 units are generally regarded as lightweight when compared to the 7 and 9 gang units which were used quite extensively in the 1970's and early 1980's on many courses.

Our plan in 1985 was to mow our fairways crosswise with the Ransomes 5x3 unit because the reels can be lifted and dropped rather quickly. The 5 mowing units took a wider cut and the time factor, although it took longer, compared to our 7 gang unit used previously, was still faster than the triplex 180's. The plan then was to mow twice with the 180's, once at an angle, the other time to mow lengthwise. We used baskets to pick up clippings with the Triplex 180's.

So we proceeded with the plan. We mowed the fairways crosswise on Tuesday and

Wednesday of the tournament week. On Thursday and Friday we mowed on an angle with the 180's and picked up grass clippings. Then on Saturday and Sunday we used the 180's again and picked up clippings; this time mowing lengthwise.

The program was an astounding success. Tourney players and our members were impressed. At first, many of our members insisted that we lowered our height of cut. This was not true. We set the height of cut exactly the same as our old 7 gang unit. The difference was that we were cutting grass we had never cut before because now we could cut four different directions.

Jerry continued to let us use these three units for several weeks after the tournament. Our members became more impressed. I must confess though, that I really "set them up" when about the third week of August I mowed the fairways with our old 7 gang unit. The complaints quickly followed. Tire tracks were visible. The quality of cut was nowhere near what the light weight units gave.

It soon became time to approach the Greens Committee and Board of Directors. Now there are many of you superintendents out there who approach boards with equipment purchases in excess of \$30,000 with some regularity. At Mankato this is the exception, not the rule. I knew I was in for a battle because we hadn't spent \$30,000 for new equipment in the six previous years TOTAL. Now I was going to request \$30,000 in just one big swipe. What a task we were facing!

There was much ground work to be done, and lots of horse trading. But through the intensity of the new Greens Chairman, an avid golfer, and also our Club Champion for 1985, George Chesley, the goal was met. We purchased two Ransomes Motor 180's with baskets and we purchased one Ransomes 5x3 five gang mowing unit.

We are now on a regular mowing schedule and use all 3 units. There is no question that the lightweight mowers take more time plus we need a person to pick up the clippings. The trade-off for time is how the turfgrass looks after the mowing. Many of us went back to walk-mowing greens because the results were more desirable. So it is with the lightweight fairway

mowing. It'll cost more, but no one can argue the finished product. We are extremely happy with what we've seen so far. The units have performed admirably.

I feel very strongly that at our course the lightweight fairway mowers are here to stay. We will continue to monitor the performance of these units all summer. Jerry Odash has been extremely helpful and visits us frequently to check on the performance of these mowing units. At this point in time I couldn't be happier about how our fairways look. I guess I really never knew what a difference the lightweight mowers could make. But seeing is believing and many of our members have noticed the difference.



# IN SEARCH OF GREENER PASTURES

by LEIF ERICKSON, CGCS  
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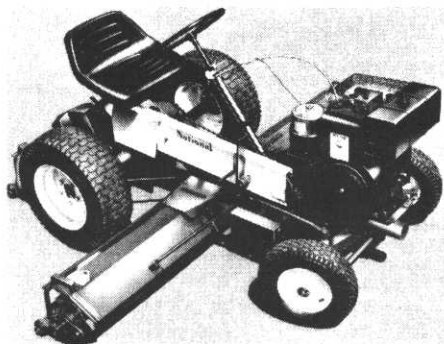
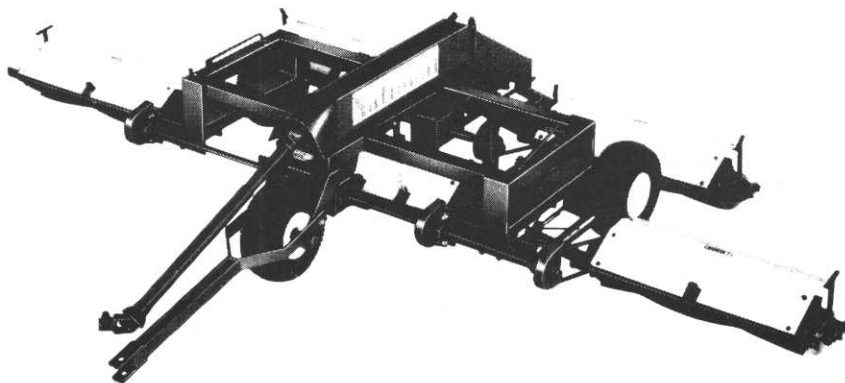
I am sure each of us has been intrigued by other pastures. It is this intrigue of opportunity that shuttles us around the country in search of greener pastures. The grass isn't always greener on the other side of the fence. When we cross a fence or two to satisfy our curiosity, we acquire a better perspective of where we have been.

I suppose Randall Nelson will put some heading on this letter, so some of you will recognize the name. But, after three years absence from your ranks, I am sure there are some youngsters I have not yet

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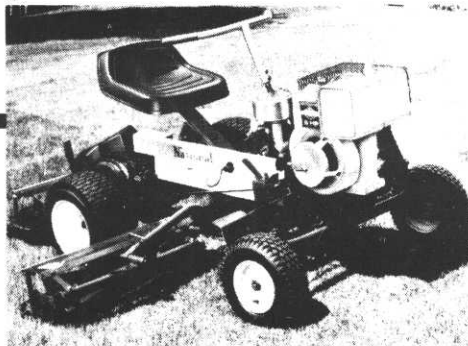
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