

Reels on Wheels

An Inexpensive Way to Optimize Workspace In Old and New Maintenance Facilities

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A common denominator among the more highly regarded golf courses across the country, regardless of the operating budget, is a spotless, efficient maintenance facility. A safe, well-organized workplace and clean, properly adjusted equipment are often the prerequisite to superior playing conditions on the course.

A neat and organized maintenance facility also can have a subtle but significant influence on even the part-time, seasonal employees. Keeping the shop clean encourages the crew to keep the course clean. After all, why would a part-timer running the string trimmer even consider picking up twigs, cigarette butts or a scrap of paper when the center of maintenance operations resembles a junkyard? This Turf Tip describes a simple and inexpensive way to keep the shop clean and maximize workspace.

Pat Shaw, a Wisconsin superintendent located at The Bog, noticed that the mechanic's large, heavy tool storage box was conveniently mounted on casters. The ability to easily move an unwieldy toolbox maximized the mechanic's limited workspace and improved productivity. Why not take a good idea one step further and install casters beneath workbenches, storage bins, racks of shelving, tables and other objects?

This concept of rolling storage was further modified and improved by his brother and fellow superintendent, Charlie Shaw, at Naga-Waukee Golf Course during the construction of a new maintenance facility. One of the more unique uses for casters is on the large wooden racks used to store extra sets of mowing and verticut reels. They're also used on several other large sets of multiple-shelf racks that store walk-behind rotary mowers, Flymos and other relatively small maintenance equipment. Again, the combination of rollers and multiple shelves on these storage racks maximizes the storage space in the shop and eases the difficult task of keeping the workspace clean and organized.

Both superintendents experimented with the use of casters that can be locked in place with a lever-type of friction brake, but on a rough, relatively level surface, a brake was not necessary. A heavy rack of equipment on casters

has little potential to roll around without a strong push due to a substantial amount of weight over the wheels and a fairly wide wheelbase that tends to compensate for an uneven surface. Brakes, however, would be a good option on a storage rack placed on a smooth-graded floor, for example, where the floor is graded towards a central drain grate or a collection sump.

The advantages of using casters under storage racks can be realized at the most modern maintenance facility as well as many smaller golf courses that, unfortunately, still operate out of a maintenance "barn." Storage space is always at a premium in the maintenance facility.

Superintendents are employing more push-behind rotary mowers and other small, highly maneuverable grooming units to maintain steep bunker banks, steep green banks and other severe architectural features that are commonplace in many contemporary course designs. Steep bunker and green banks are challenging features that are visually appealing, but they are difficult or impossible to maintain with standard triplex or rotary trim mowers. Multi-shelf racks are ideal for stacking and storing small mowers that could otherwise occupy a considerable amount of valuable floor space.

Golfers expect and demand nothing but the highest quality playing conditions on greens, regardless of the operating budget. Consequently, more and more intensive maintenance operations such as light, frequent topdressing, grooming and vertical mowing are becoming standard operating procedures on nearly all courses. These techniques can be performed much more efficiently when extra sets of sharpened reels are readily available to the mechanic to use at a moment's notice. Rolling racks of reels make this possible and practical.

(Editor's Note: Bob Vavrek is an agronomist who rolls through the western portion of the North Central Region: Michigan through Montana. This article was reprinted with permission from the USGA Green Section.)