

Becoming Equipment Dependent

Dr. A. J. Powell
Extension Specialist, Turf—V.P.I. & S.V.

Ten to fifteen years ago, our golf courses were maintained with only the essential pieces of equipment. This was not unlike other agriculture. But turf maintenance on golf courses has progressed rapidly. Labor has been the problem. Clubs have insisted that the superintendent better manicure the golf course with the same amount of labor. This has influenced equipment companies to produce labor-saving equipment and certainly has influenced the golf course superintendent to purchase this equipment. Because of the small sales potential, this equipment has been expensive. But because of the labor problem, it has been well worth the money. Just how far can we go?

Because of the large equipment inventory at every club, qualified mechanics play musical chairs more than the superintendents. A mechanic that fits within the price structure of a golf course is a highly important individual and a rare commodity. It may be that we are presently seeing that the capabilities and quality of the mechanic influences to a large degree the success of the superintendent. It is not uncommon to see a good superintendent on a course that shows a lack of care resulting from equipment problems.

Because of labor expense it is becoming easier to justify equipment. Fortunately the specialty turf equipment companies are highly competitive and any golf course can at least be supplied by three separate companies. Many feel that this isn't competitive enough—more can be done. Almost every day you can hear the complaint, "I can get the equipment, but I cannot get the parts. I cannot get the maintenance. Somebody's at fault. I'm going to switch companies." This is not uncommon because it happens in many other industries, including all types of agricultural supplies. But let's not always point the finger at the other person. Look at yourself and your operation for a moment. Do you have a qualified mechanic? Do you properly maintain your equipment? Can the mechanic or yourself properly identify component parts in the machine? When you call the equipment company or make an official order, do you always record the part numbers correctly? Do you always complete the list of parts you need? How can you be haphazard in your ordering procedure and yet be so critical of the haphazardness of the supply? You should always insist that you have an up-to-date parts list and every order should be made from that parts list by number and quantity rather than trying to identify the appearance of the piece over the telephone to the salesman.

Also, be truthful with the salesman. He has enough problems identifying faults in the machine rather than



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having to identify negligence on your part. Cooperate with him. Your club will often get special cost-saving deals. He certainly shouldn't have to furnish you with a new pencil and pen set or new brief case of a dozen golf balls everytime he visits you. If you are not going to buy his equipment, tell him so. If you tell him you are interested in his equipment, give him a chance rather than going behind his back and purchasing from another company. Many people can easily be pinned a sucker. Become friends with all salesmen but do not become obligated to any. Don't always expect the lowest price. Buy the equipment you have confidence in.

Another problem is time. Why wait until the last second to make equipment purchases and part orders. You know well in advance that your aerifier needs tines and that the carburator is falling off your sod cutter. Again, a good mechanic is essential. However, you must work for the future as well as the present. Keep as much of your own parts inventory as you can. A suggested parts inventory list is supplied when you purchase major pieces of equipment. Develop a system of paperwork in which you can keep a list of parts needed and parts expected to be needed shortly. As parts orders arrive, you can easily check these from the list.

You are the manager of a very expensive operation. Even with a good mechanic, you must make a periodic equipment inspections and plan ahead. New and improved equipment reaches our market yearly and the industry is dependent upon the equipment. Proper equipment maintenance is a *must* for proper turf maintenance.