

Top dressing in half the time



The grain cart auger fills the Vicon Spreader hopper in a matter of minutes at Hercules Country Club.

Tom Kelleher improved his top dressing operation two years ago when he switched from a dump truck/pull-type top-dresser method to a vehicle-mounted spreader.

Kelleher is grounds superintendent for Hercules Country Club, a 27-hole course located in the rolling countryside of New Castle County, Delaware, near Wilmington. Although pleased with the improvement in his top dressing operation, he still sought a way to cut the time needed for refilling the spreader, a Vicon spreader unit mounted on a Cushman Turf-Truckster.

It took 15 to 16 hours to top dress the 27 greens because the operator had to return to the maintenance building frequently to refill the unit's 700-lb. hopper.

Using some characteristic "Yankee ingenuity," Kelleher and his assistant superintendent, Paul Glenn, came up with a better idea. They bought a used John Deere grain cart equipped with auger from a local farm implement dealer. They had to make some minor modifications so the cart and auger would handle the top dressing mix of 70 percent sand, 15 percent topsoil and 15 percent peat.

Then, using a small utility tractor to pull it, the grain cart became a

"nurse tank" for the top dressing operation. It cut their top dressing time in half.

The grain cart auger, operated from the power take-off of the tow tractor, is used to refill the spreader unit hopper in a matter of minutes. When full, the grain cart holds enough to fill the Vicon hopper 10 times—enough to do nine greens, putting on about $\frac{1}{3}$ yard per green. That means the top dressing crew can do the entire course with just three trips to the maintenance area to refill the cart. And the Cushman-mounted spreader unit can continue top dressing while the cart is in for another load.

"It used to take us eight to 10 hours



The greens at Hercules Country Club are top dressed with 70 percent sand, 15 percent topsoil and 15 percent peat.

to do 18 greens," says Glenn. "Now, with the Cushman/Vicon combination and the grain cart, we do 27 greens, the putting greens and the nursery in six to eight hours."

The improvised system cut labor costs, too. With the former set-up, it took one person to drive the dump truck and two to run the walk-behind top dresser.

"We had to use two men so they weren't walked to death," says Glenn.

Now Hercules Country Club uses just two people for top dressing—one to drive the Cushman/Vicon Spreader unit and one to operate the tractor pulling the "nurse cart."

Hercules Country Club's first 18 holes opened in 1937. Nine holes were added in 1967. According to Glenn, the Hercules course has a reputation of "some of the most demanding golf holes in the region." The par 72 18-hole course is 6,270 yards. The nine-hole addition is a 35-par, 2,889 yards.

Hercules Country Club includes a driving range, swimming pool and eight tennis courts. The club has more than 2,000 members. Kelleher's grounds crews have used Cushman vehicles for years. One Turf-Truckster is used for spraying and a new Turf-Truckster just went into service this season as a course vehicle for the golf course ranger. **LM**