

U(versa)TILITY VEHICLES

Less known in public circles than its glamorous cousin the golf car, utility vehicles perform a myriad of tasks in industries ranging from golf to garbage.

by Jeff Sobul, assistant editor

During a recent National Football League exhibition game, a player incurred a severe dinger to the head. It was enough of a blow to keep anyone from getting him off the field upright. So on to the field to retrieve the injured man cruised an odd-looking three-wheel vehicle with a flat bed—a utility vehicle.

Drive past any construction site and you notice that these vehicles are performing any number of tasks. In fact, these things are just about everywhere. And with less than 20 companies producing them, the opportunity to enter the market exists.

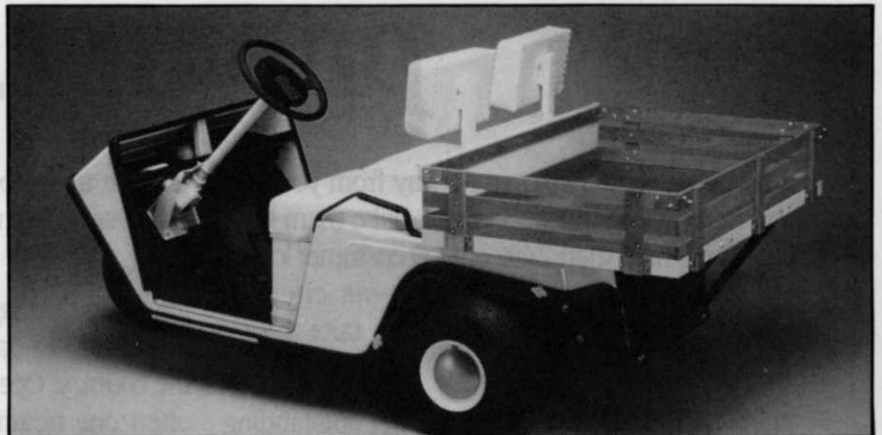
Ronald Skenes, E-Z-Go Division of Textron, believes the utility vehicle (U.V.) market is growth-oriented. "As long as golf course construction continues, that will be one area where there will be new growth," he notes.

E-Z-Go has only been in the utility vehicle market for a few years, originally starting as a golf car manufacturer. The company has essentially created two lines for its utility vehicles, a heavier industrial and a lighter turf vehicle line.

John Deere & Co. recognized the opportunity presented by the market, entering it in January with the AMT-600, "a whole new concept in off-road vehicles," according to Deere's Bob Tracinski.

The AMT-600 is the first utility vehicle to drive on a five-wheel chassis, which Tracinski says adds stability.

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Melex Cargo Carrier



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Club Car Carryall II



Cushman Eagle



Daihatsu Hijet

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MANUFACTURER	MODEL	ENGINE	PAYLOAD	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
CHI Industries P.O. Box 1148 Benton Harbor, MI 49022-1148	Haul Master HX-4660	16 hp 4-cycle	500 lbs	2 seats 4-wheel
	Haul Master HH-1216	16 hp 4-cycle	500 lbs.	2 seats 3-wheel
Club Car Inc. P.O. Box 4658 Augusta, GA 30907-3000	Carryall I (gas)	8.5 hp 4-cycle	250 lbs	2 seats 4-wheel
	Carryall I (electric)	2 hp	250 lbs.	2 seats 4-wheel
	Carryall II	8.5 hp 4-cycle	500 lbs.	2 seats 4-wheel
Columbia ParCar One Golf Car Rd. Deerfield, WI 53531	Utilitruck (gas)	2-cycle	800 lbs.	2 seats 4-wheel
	Utilitruck (electric)	electric	500 lbs.	2 seats 4-wheel
	Runabout (gas)	2-cycle	750 lbs.	2/4 seats 4-wheel
	Runabout (electric)	electric	500 lbs.	2/4 seats 4-wheel
Cushman Turf Care Div. of OMC Lincoln P.O. Box 82409 Lincoln, NE 68501	Eagle 550	8.5 hp 4-cycle 12.5 hp (optional)	800 lbs.	Polyurethane body
	Eagle 550, 551, 552 553, 554, 555	8.5 hp 4-cycle 12 hp air-cooled electric	800 lbs.	Metal frame
	Turf-Truckster 530, 532	22 hp 4-cycle	1500 lbs.	530: 3-wheel 532: 4-wheel
	Runabout	22 hp 4-cycle	1500 lbs.	3-wheel
Daihatsu America, Inc. 4422 Corporate Center Los Angeles, CA	Hijet	4-cycle 3-cylinder	1500 lbs.	6 body types
John Deere & Co. John Deere Rd. Moline, IL 61265	ATM 600 (gas)	8.5 hp	600 lbs.	5-wheel configuration
E-Z-Go. Div. of Textron P.O. Box 388 Augusta, GA 30913-2699	XT-300 (electric)	6.5 hp	1,000 lbs. (includes operator & passenger)	—
	GTX 300 (gas)	8 hp	1,000 lbs.	2 seats
	XT-500 (electric)	6.5 hp	1,000 lbs.	Bed size: 44"×28"×8"
	GXT 800 (gas)	8 hp	1,000 lbs.	6 attachments
	GXT 1500 (gas)	18 hp	1,500 lbs.	Bed size: 52"×54"×12"
Hahn Agri-Turf Turf Products Division 1625 N. Garvin St. Evansville, IN 47711-4596	Multi-Pro 44	16 hp Kohler	1,500 lbs.	Converts to bed, spreader, sprayer
Melex USA Ltd. 1200 Front St. Suite 101 Raleigh, NC 27609	Cargo Carrier (electric)	21.1 hp	330 lbs.	2 seats 3-wheel wood or steel side
	4-Passenger (electric)	21.1 hp	—	4 seats 4-wheel
Toro Commercial Products 8111 Lyndale Ave. So. Minneapolis, MN 55420	Workmaster	14 hp Kohler	1,000 lbs.	3-wheel
Turf Vac 15701 Graham St. Huntington Beach, CA 92649	Sundancer Model 1	11 hp Briggs & Stratten	1,100 lbs.	3-wheel
	Sundancer Model 4 & 8	18 hp Briggs & Stratten	1,500 lbs.	3-wheel

He sees stability, and general safety, to be one of the needs manufacturers must address in off-road vehicles.

Other improvements

Another need facing utility vehicles seems to be lowering maintenance cost and boosting efficiency. "They need longer life, more efficient air-cooled engines with more sophisticated engines," say Ron Kimball and Walt Olmstead of C.H.I. Industries, Benton Harbor, Mich., makers of the Haul Master. They also see a need for larger alternators, better fuel, air and lubrication systems.

According to Kent Hahn, general sales manager for Hahn Agri/Turf products, U.S. manufacturers were awakened to cost-effectiveness problems a few years ago when Japanese companies such as Daihatsu America introduced more economical machines.

He feels that U.S. companies have been taking strides to correct the problem. He notes that Hahn recently switched to the new Kohler Magnum computerized engine.

The future

The trend in the past and present for utility vehicle manufacturers has been to build a vehicle that can do a multitude of tasks. However, Hahn sees manufacturers going to more specialized vehicles. His company's Mutli-Pro 44 is designed to perform only chemical and fertilizer applications.

On the flip side, Daihatsu America's Hijet is one of the more versatile vehicles, adding to a basic chassis any number of options designed to expand the vehicles performance. The Hijet has been available in the U.S. for only eight years. The company is in the process of setting up a new distributor network, with about 45 appointed as of mid-August, the goal being between 100 and 150 by the end of the year. **LM**



John Deere AMT-600



E-Z-GO GXT-800



Toro Workmaster



Hahn Spray Pro 44