

Electric greensmower eliminates noise and pollution complaints

by JAMES E. GUYETTE / Contributing Editor

Golf course superintendents who are using electric greens mowers say the mowers have greatly reduced mower noise and eliminated complaints from homeowners who live alongside golf courses. Exhaust emissions have also been eliminated with the electric-powered units.

"Any type of pollution is not going to be tolerated in the future—and I'm including noise pollution," reports Ben McBrien, superintendent at the Sea Cliff Country Club in Huntington Beach, Calif.

Loud noises emitting from routine maintenance tasks have become an increasing problem as more new, exclusive housing developments are built around the links to take advantage of the amenities offered by the game of golf. But people have limits: "The golfers want to start as early as possible, and the residents want to sleep in on weekends," explains Ron Parker, superintendent at the Calabassas Golf and Country Club in Calabassas, Calif.

The industry needs to get turned on to the concept and start making the switch, he observes: "It's going to be essential to have an electric mower to start mowing in the morning."

The shift to an electric greens mower has already become a requirement at Calabassas after the long arm of the law threatened to make a collar. "We got a call from the sheriff," Parker relates.

It was a similar situation at Sea Cliff, where early morning mowing was a key part of the dawn. "I've had the police come out here and stop me," McBrien recounts. "The complaints were pretty bad." Switching over to an electric commercial grade

greensmower made by Ransomes created an atmosphere now free of any sparks. "We're no longer having any problems with homeowners complaining about noise."

Weekday teetimes at Sea Cliff begin at 7 a.m. On weekends a golfer can start playing at 6 a.m. The greens are trimmed every day. "Noise and early starts are a real problem," McBrien notes.

COMPARING THE ELECTRICS: RUNNING TIME, IN MINUTES, BETWEEN RECHARGES

	Max.	Min.
Black & Decker (consumer)	67	48
Ransomes (reel)*	360	240
Ryobi (consumer)	100	47
Toro 24-volt (rotary)	114	79
Toro 36-volt (rotary)	206	125

*greensmower

"Now on weekends—when we start really early—everything is electric." The carts carrying equipment and crew are electric, and so is the mower. "We've been very successful with the electric greensmower, it's sure worth the money to us, and we're going to buy a second one."

The pricing is competitive when compared to fossil fuel machines, and the positive impact on the course activities is definitely up to par. "The quality of cut is as good, if not better than, gas," says McBrien.

"It originally was my concern that electric mowers could not mow an entire course," McBrien recalls. "If you can only mow nine holes at a time you need two machines, and that costs twice as much," he points out. "We're able to mow an 18-

hole golf course with one charge."

During the week, the greens are tended by a standard walk-behind mower. "On the weekends there's no way a walk-behind mower can get the course ready in time, so that's when we use the electric riding mower," McBrien explains.

The battery power provides enough juice to get the job done. "You just plug it in (when the day is over) and leave it, and when you come back the next morning it's ready to go."

At Calabassas, the electric model is used daily, and Parker appreciates that the mower comes with lights to enable cutting during the dark, pre-dawn hours. It's also quiet. "You can talk in almost a normal tone of voice, and that's important because we're sort of down in a canyon so the noise echoes around."

"It's just like a golf cart," reports McBrien. "It's quiet. It's like a whisper going from green to green. It's got enough power to light the lights, run to the green, and then mow the green when you get there."

Superintendents who are pondering an electric mower need to take into account several factors, such as the terrain and the distance between holes. Hills and long distances can eat up battery power. Get your dealer to lend you a test model. "I tried it out for a couple of days and then I bought it," McBrien notes.

The reels turn faster on an electric, and McBrien and Parker say they adjust the knives differently than they would with a standard mower. That's the type of things you learn during the tryout period.

"Sea Cliff is not a flat course, it's not a hilly course—and that mower does a nice job here," McBrien says, adding that he's charged up over the concept of electric mowers being put to work—quietly and cleanly—by industry professionals faced with a demanding environment: "And I wasn't really aware of this until the homeowners got after me." **LM**