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Turf vehicles



E-Z-Go

Circle No. 159 on Reader Inquiry Card

Golf car and utility vehicle manufacturers look to a bull market, even though they aren't exactly certain what turf managers really want.

by Ron Hall, associate editor and Jerry Roche, editor

The golf course market smiles. Manufacturers of golf cars and utility vehicles look with optimism to 1986, some beyond.

Witness the healthy construction of new golf courses, a reflection perhaps of a national economy that continues to climb from the doldrums of just a few years ago. With unemployment and interest rates at more favorable levels, the number of golfers taking to the links rises. Their expectations about the quality of play increase.

Longtime golf car manufacturer E-Z-Go's plunge into the utility vehicle market in 1985 highlights the confidence of domestic manufacturers. Other evidence is the new muscle OMC-Lincoln engineers into its 1985 line, making more powerful and versatile Cushman machines.

"We see the market for turf vehicles continuing strong through 1986," says OMC-Lincoln marketing manager Frank McDonald.

Cushman vehicles, long the mainstay of the utility vehicle market, are now equipped with 22 hp engines, giving almost 1/4 more power than previous models. Reliability and longev-

ity were prime concerns for the move to more muscle.

"Customers want water-cooled, low-maintenance vehicles that function like regular on-road vehicles," says Tony M. Nunes, marketing vice-president for SDS Motor Import, Oxnard, Calif. His firm offers the Japanese-manufactured Sanfu line.

'We see the the market for turf vehicles continuing strong through 1986.'

—McDonald

And, while foreign manufacturers continue to nip at the edges of the turf market, the big event in the turf vehicle industry in 1985 happened in Augusta, Ga.—home of the Masters and E-Z-Go.

This past year, E-Z-Go purchased the Pargo Industrial line of vehicles from Eagle Vehicles, Dallas, Tex.

Coupled with the introduction of its own new vehicles in February, E-Z-Go can now boast offerings in 19

different styles, everything from a one-seater to an 11-passenger model.

Management at Augusta headquarters spent much of this year weaving an effective sales network. With distributors in place in 1986, E-Z-Go—with its 18-hp GXT-7 model as its workhorse—promises to pursue the turf market enthusiastically.

"The market has grown quite a bit the last couple of years," notes Dave Johnson of E-Z-Go. "In the turf vehicle market, I see a swing toward smaller-capacity units because of cost, versatility and maneuverability."

Which brings up a philosophical question: do turf managers want one vehicle that can, with attachments, do a myriad of functions, or do they want more specialized vehicles?

Kent S. Hahn, general sales manager of Hahn, Inc., Evansville, Ind., says, "the golf course superintendent is looking for more specialized turf vehicles. With the cost of chemicals increasing, there is a demand for more accurate applicators of both liquid and dry to reduce chemical waste and misapplication."

OMC-Lincoln's McDonald agrees.



Club Car

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Melex

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Yamaha

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Cushman

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Hahn

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Sanfu

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"Because more golf course superintendents are utilizing specialized attachments, we believe the 'system concept' will continue to grow. As their primary turf vehicles are increasingly dedicated to specific tasks, we find that they are relying more heavily on lower cost, all-purpose utility vehicles for administrative and runabout work."

It is in the "runabout" area that the relatively inexpensive work/play all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) are making their greatest impact. Even so, their use is not yet widespread in the day-

to-day tasks actually related to turf care.

The golf car market is also experiencing a profitable year with the outlook better than ever, partly due to changing tax laws.

"We see some buyers who are buying capital goods—such as golf cars—due to the probable change in tax laws during 1986," notes Sam W. Mays, marketing vice-president for Club Car, Augusta, Ga. "Of course, this applies to for-profit clubs, so they can achieve favored treatment with the investment tax credits and acceler-

ated depreciation."

Scott Pierce, president of American Continental, Wilmar, Minn., sees the same bull market as Mays.

"There's a lot of pent-up demand out there," he notes. "There's going to be quite a scramble for business, and next year will be an excellent one."

One other golf car manufacturer has experienced strong sales this year from buyers replacing entire fleets because of the strong economic conditions. "We expect this condition to continue at least over the near term," says Pierce.

WT&T



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WTT 1185

The money machine

Lawn care and landscape maintenance businesses begin to feel the nation's recovery from the recent economic recession, according to a survey by 'Lawn Care Industry' magazine.

by Jerry Roche, editor

Chemical lawn care revenues increased 40.2 percent from 1983 to 1984—a phenomenal rate—as the economy continued to recover from the recession of the early 1980s. Overall, according to LAWN CARE INDUSTRY magazine's 1985 "State of the Industry" report, the industry grew by 26.6 percent as landscape maintenance increased 11.1 percent from 1983 to 1984.

"From return on assets, this industry is a money machine," says John Kenney of Turf Doctor, a chemical lawn care company in Framingham, Mass. "Absolutely fabulous."

Spending by industry companies was also expected to increase drastically—22.5 percent—this year.

Chemical lawn care and landscape management companies predicted in the LCI survey that their expenditures on chemicals, equipment, and seed would be \$415.5 million in 1985. That's an increase of 22.45 percent over 1984 expenditures.

Growth areas

Biggest gains were expected to be in the areas of tree care equipment, spray tanks, and irrigation equipment. Many companies are diversifying into tree care, while proper irrigation is playing a bigger role in creating beautiful landscapes, especially in high-growth areas like Southern California.

Tree care equipment purchases were expected to almost triple to \$8 million in 1985. Sales of spray tanks were predicted to double in sales to more than \$18 million. Irrigation equipment was supposed to hit the \$23 million mark, an increase of nearly 200 percent.

"There are some other interesting figures here," says Jerry Faulring of HydroLawn, Gaithersburg, Md. "It's



John Kenney



Jerry Faulring

interesting to note that granular fertilizer use is growing faster than liquid (13.5 percent to 8.6 percent). Pre-emergents should show a parallel relationship, but they're only up 4.6 percent. So people are becoming more selective in the use of pre-emergents.

"Insecticides (up 23.2 percent) are still not being used discriminately enough. A lot of seeding (up 53.9 percent), a lot of discrimination in post-emergents (down 4.6 percent), fungicides—a little more awareness (up 3.1 percent), and a lot more awareness of soil amendments (up 74.7 percent).

"I think that follows the trends real well," says Faulring.

Replacing fleets

It appears that many of the companies founded in the late 1970s are begin-

ning to have to replace fleets, judging by predicted sales of spray tanks.

"The cost of money is favorable, compared to what it was two, three, or four years ago," notes Kenney. "Maybe it's expensive to replace equipment, but it's less expensive now, and if you wait the interest rates could go back up."

Number one complaint of customers, according to those responding to the LCI poll, is high cost. Other complaints run the gamut from poor weed control to improper scheduling to poor communication.

Nearly 68 percent of the respondents cited insurance costs as being a major business concern. Sixty-two percent said vehicle costs were a concern, while "liability costs," "government regulations," and "interest rates" were also cited by more than 50 percent.

Big numbers

Not surprisingly, the survey found that the vast majority of chemical lawn care by its readers was being conducted in the East North Central region of the nation (Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin). Lawn care companies owned by LCI readers in those states grossed an average of \$908,938 last year. The overall average for the East North Central region (\$415,338) led the industry.

The Mountain region (Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada), surprisingly, led the nation in landscape maintenance revenues with a per-company average of \$353,640.

New England was statistically the region of least lawn care/landscape maintenance with the average reader's business grossing just \$83,050.

continued on page 28

A PREVIEW OF OUR COMPETITORS' 1989 MODELS.



You're looking at a new tractor that will still be new three or four years from now. That's about how long we estimate it will take our competitors to play catch-up.

In the meantime, our L2850 is loaded with forward thinking.

Under that streamlined hood is a 4-cylinder high torque-rise diesel engine. Most competitive tractors are 3-cylinder. It also has

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Other advanced engineering ideas add to maneuverability. A mechanical shuttle transmission is one. Another is 4-wheel drive with our bevel gear system.

Of course, our Kubota L2850 works best with Kubota implements. They're perfectly matched to each other. For example, you

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PREDICTED EXPENDITURES (1985) FOR CHEMICAL LAWN CARE AND LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT COMPANIES

| | % Sample Purchasing | Average Per Purchaser | Projection To LCI Readership | % Change Since 1984 |
|----------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|
| Chemicals, Supplies | | | | |
| Granular Fertilizer | 84.7 | \$9,755.70 | \$92.41 Million | + 13.5 |
| Pre-Emergence Herbicides | 73.9 | \$5,259.18 | \$43.46 Million | + 4.6 |
| Liquid Fertilizer | 32.9 | \$11,701.40 | \$43.05 Million | + 8.6 |
| Insecticides | 75.0 | \$3,518.92 | \$29.51 Million | + 23.2 |
| Grass Seed | 72.1 | \$3,102.86 | \$25.02 Million | + 53.9 |
| Post-Emergence Herbicides | 73.7 | \$2,748.33 | \$22.65 Million | - 4.6 |
| Fungicides | 58.2 | \$1,704.73 | \$11.10 Million | + 3.1 |
| Soil Amendments | 33.2 | \$2,563.57 | \$9.52 Million | + 74.7 |
| Plant Growth Regulators | 16.6 | \$501.03 | \$0.93 Million | N/A |
| Equipment | | | | |
| Tractors | 19.7 | \$11,551.33 | \$25.46 Million | - 15.5 |
| Irrigation Equipment | 19.2 | \$10,902.63 | \$23.41 Million | +194.8 |
| Spray Tanks | 33.4 | \$4,901.04 | \$18.31 Million | +219.5 |
| Riding Lawn Mowers | 19.7 | \$7,518.00 | \$16.56 Million | + 30.3 |
| Walk-Behind Mowers | 46.3 | \$2,665.86 | \$13.80 Million | - 17.1 |
| Sprayers, Pumps, Etc. | 52.1 | \$2,350.63 | \$13.70 Million | + 27.8 |
| Spreaders | 47.4 | \$1,520.19 | \$8.06 Million | N/A |
| Tree Care Equipment | 25.5 | \$2,888.06 | \$8.00 Million | +278.7 |
| Aeration Equipment | 22.1 | \$2,805.37 | \$6.93 Million | - 1.7 |
| String Trimmers | 41.3 | \$778.47 | \$3.60 Million | + 11.8 |

1985 Projected Totals = \$415.48 Million +22.45%

Source: LAWN CARE INDUSTRY MAGAZINE

LAWN CARE from page 26

Nationally, the average size of a chemical lawn care business is in the \$350,000 range. Average size of a landscape management company is between \$175,000 and \$200,000. Overall, the average LCI reader's company grossed \$250,982 with a pre-tax profit of 21.25 percent (more than \$53,000).

Still growing

So 1984 exceeded last year's expectations. In LCI's 1983 survey, readers predicted that their businesses would grow to an average of \$247,000, about

\$3,000 less than the final figure. And the growth trend will continue in 1985, poll respondents say.

They have predicted an industry average of 23.99 percent growth this year.

Diversification appears to be a growing trend within the industry. Of the 380 survey respondents, 50 said they are also involved in landscape installation and design. Twenty-two said they service trees, 19 said they are involved in landscape construction and 18 said they are involved in the sod business.

Snow removal, with 13 responses, was another popular sideline. **WT&T**



Joe, why is it important to have a fungicide that will work against a lot of different fungus diseases? "At any given time, conditions may be right for three or more different fungus diseases. And others may be dormant in your turf, waiting for conditions to change. You never really know what you'll be up against next."

What makes Fertilizer Plus Fungicide VIII so special? "It's a broad-spectrum fungicide—among the broadest on the market, in fact. It handles dollar spot, brown patch, leaf spot, red leaf spot, and pink snow mold. And it's a double-barreled weapon against disease: it works first on contact for quick action, then systemically for additional protection."

Sounds like that would be helpful to any turf manager. "Sure would. It makes things a little handier—you don't have to pick and choose from among several products for the best treatment."

What about follow-up outbreaks of those diseases? "You don't have to be as concerned about future disease problems, because Fertilizer Plus Fungicide VIII does more than just cure. It's also effective as a preventative."

How often should you apply it? "Every 10 days to 3 weeks, depending on the severity of the disease pressure."

Won't that be too much nitrogen? "No. At the recommended application rates, you'd be using a modest amount of nitrogen consistent with the development of quality greens."

How does the price compare with other alternatives? "The pricing is very competitive. Considering that the alternative is normally a combination of products—which may even call for different methods of application—I think a lot of turf managers will end up saving money with this fungicide combination."

For more information about Fertilizer Plus Fungicide VIII, call your ProTurf® Tech Rep. Or call Scotts® direct at 800-543-0006.

"Economy and broad-spectrum action will make this one of your most powerful weapons against turf disease."

Joe Bell, Scotts Research project leader (Turfgrass Fungicide R&D), talks about new Fertilizer Plus Fungicide VIII.

Circle No. 137 on Reader Inquiry Card



ServiceMaster goes 'Green'

Chicago's Richard White built Village Green from the ground up. Now he and his former company are part of an \$800 million service company that is building a nationwide network of 'ma and pa' lawn care operations.

by Ron Hall, associate editor

John Willis once taught flying at Chicago's Midway Airport. He traded that for the drudgery of cleaning homes and offices in Elgin and Schaumburg.

He dug hard cash out of his pocket and presented it to a company called ServiceMaster for the privilege.

Now his blue eyes dance as he describes the \$400,000 cleaning and disaster restoration business he owns and manages from his 10-year-old home, evidence of a profitable 14-year association with ServiceMaster.

This brick house, tucked in a corner of a wildlife preserve near Elgin, Ill., is a comfortable home. The basketball hoop over the garage suggests anything but the business beehive which is in the remodeled, basement where employees man the phones.

Opportunity comes knocking again, Willis believes. He digs again.

This time for lawn care.

The key again, ServiceMaster.

Says Willis, "I want to get in on the ground level of ServiceMaster Lawn Care. I enjoy the pioneering part of it more than anything. Who knows? Maybe I'll put all my efforts in one direction—lawn care."

You in lawn care ought to know more about ServiceMaster.

It knows about you and the healthy growth of your industry.

ServiceMaster, the \$800 million service giant headquartered in Downers Grove, Ill. about a half hour from O'Hare International and 45 minutes from the Willis' home, eased into lawn care in 1985 with the purchase of Village Green, the Chicago-area business headed by veteran lawn care businessman Richard White.

"ServiceMaster looked for nine

months, 12 months trying to find a good fit before it bought Village Green," White recalls. "I think our company did business the way ServiceMaster likes to do business."

White believes "they wanted a company to use as a model for lawn care. The management was in place to do lawn care."

The management, of course, was White. He'd already put together a comprehensive training manual. It was no secret he was thinking franchise with Village Green.

Industry insiders consider White, still trim and on the sunny side of middle age, one of lawn care's pioneers. The idea is that young. White treated his first lawn in 1962, before the industry had a name. He was 16. In 1973 he started Village Green in suburban Chicago.

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Richard White poses in front of ServiceMaster headquarters in Downers Grove, Ill. White, vice-president of the Lawn Care Division, is former owner of suburban Chicago's Village Green.