

How I Get The Most From My Triplex Green Mowers

by STAN CLARKE, Property Manager, La Gorce Country Club, Miami Beach

Having operated two triplex putting green mowers for almost a year, I feel I can now make some appraisals of how to get the most from them. Perhaps some readers will gain from our experiences, especially if they are just starting or contemplating the use of these machines.

La Gorce Country Club in south Florida is open year round, and our Tifgreen bermudagrass greens (overseeded with bentgrass during the winter) are mowed every day. Weather and certain maintenance practices may require a few days when the greens will not be cut, but at other times we will mow them twice daily. So, for all practical purposes we cut the greens 365 days a year with the triplex putting green mowers.

When the mowers first arrived, I was no better informed than anyone else about techniques in their use. At our monthly superintendents association meeting, fellow superintendents had had their triplex mowers for only a very short time as well, and we exchanged questions and answers as to how they may best be used.

First, let me say that I was using the same manufacturer's regular putting green mower and had changed the front roller from a solid one to one I had designed and believe to be an improvement over the solid roller. I am now

using the 'improved type' roller on the triplex machine. Figure I illustrates the roller modification.

- A) Contains ball bearing and seal at each end with proper clearance inside for shaft and grease.
- B) Shaft with one hole open to the inside of the grooved roller so that from "end seal" to "end seal" the inside is completely filled with grease and cannot leak out.
- C) Snap ring to hold roller in position on shaft.
- D) The roller itself is made on a lathe from a steel tube.
- E) The outside edges of the roller are rounded so that the triplex machine can turn with a short radius and not cut or mark the putting green surface.

These rollers will outlast conventional rollers by about 3 to 1. The reason for designing rollers in this manner is that, in my opinion, the solid roller mashes down the grass blade and the cutting unit does not have a chance to cut properly. Under these conditions, thatch builds up.

Due to the cutting width of the triplex

FIGURE I

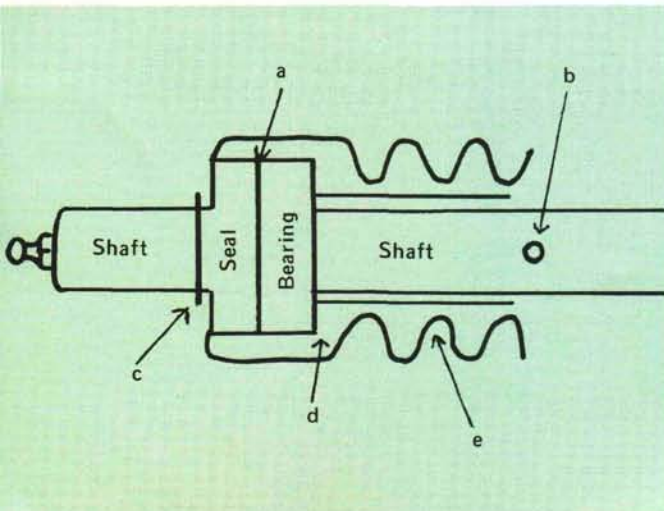
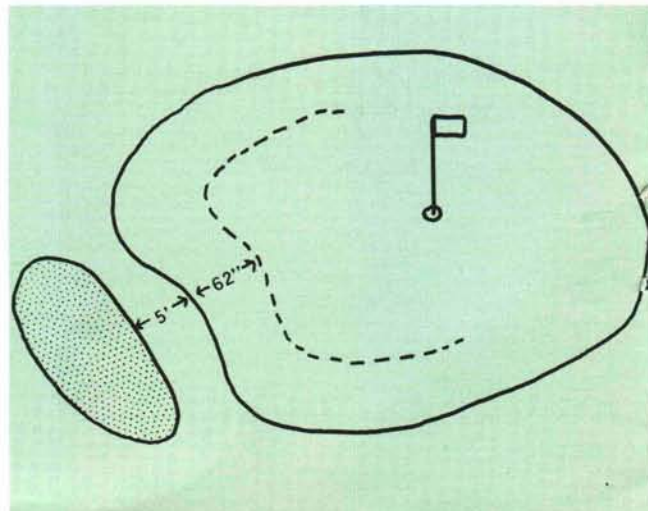


FIGURE II



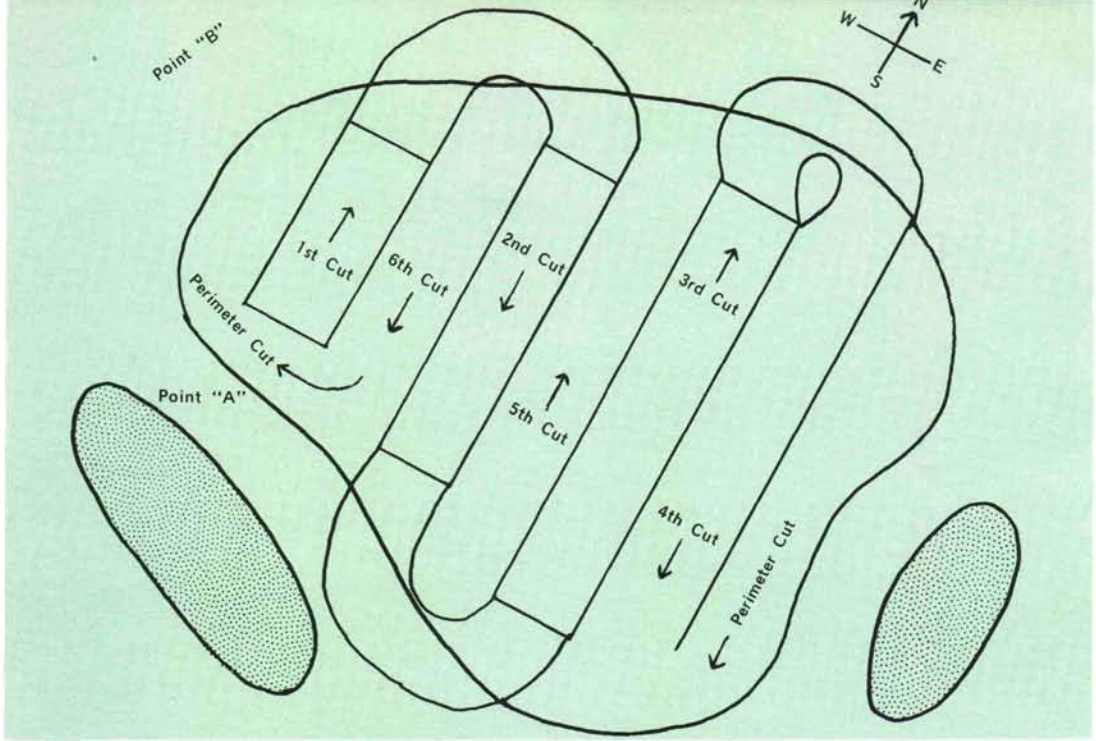


FIGURE III

machine and also its required turning radius, I decided to reshape the aprons of the greens so that they could accommodate the high operating speed.

Experimentation showed us that the apron needed to be a minimum of 5 feet and, with the additional space gained by a perimeter cut of 62 inches around the green, I could turn the triplex machine at any given location on the putting green perimeter. Thus, we would not have to back up or turn on the green itself. Any square footage lost in relocating the apron was made up by enlarging the green and our total putting surface remained the same. I understand that other manufacturers will soon present new models of triplex putting green mowers capable of carrying the "apron cut" much closer to sand traps, trees and other objects around greens.

As to the best method to use when cutting greens with triplex green mowers, I can only tell you of our experiences at La Gorce Country Club. No doubt, other superintendents have found other methods they feel best for their golf courses.

As the operator approaches the green, he must decide which direction to mow the green on this particular day. In this illustration, let's assume he will cut in a northerly direction. He will stop his machine at point "A" as this is the closest point from the last green and in line with today's line of cut. He dismounts, removes the flag and places it where it will be out of his

way when cutting the green and will be close to where he will stop his machine before going on his route to cut the next green. Also while he is dismounted, he makes sure that bunker rakes are out of the way, automatic sprinkler heads are properly closed and checks the overall surface of the putting green for golf shoe spikes, coin markers and other unwanted objects. He now mows the green in the following manner:

His first cut is just far enough away from the perimeter of the green to allow a slight lap between the perimeter cut and the first cut. As he approaches the opposite edge of the green, he lifts the mowers at a point that will not leave a skip when he makes the perimeter cut. He now turns to his right (or east) and lines up to make his second cut. This position is approximately the same as two widths of the triplex putting green mower.

He now lowers the cutting units at a position that will not leave a skip for the perimeter cut, and also leaves an uncut width from the west side of the second cut that can be covered by the triplex mower at a later time.

The whole green is cut in the described manner with these uncut widths left until the operator is at the east side of the green. At this time, he will now turn and go back and cut the uncut widths that were left starting at the east end and cuts in a north-south — south-north direction until the entire green is cut. He now makes one final perimeter cut, stopping off the



A close up view of a triplex green mower.

green at point "B" to replace the flag and make a final inspection of his work.

By cutting the green in this manner, you have cut down on all unnecessary travel around the perimeter, and by cutting the perimeter last, I have found it cleans up grass clippings left by raising and lowering the cutting units. The operator now travels down the edge of a fairway when possible to the next green. He stops at different locations each day along the fairway to scatter the clippings.

At La Gorce we have a total of 124,000 square feet of putting surface consisting of 18 regular greens, a practice putting green and a chipping green. Two triplex units are used in the mowing operation. The time required to mow, clean up the machines and service for the following day is two hours for both machines. This time is exclusive of the mechanics' time to sharpen, adjust or perform other services that may be required.

Other observations we have made include:

Due to tracking of wheels when making the perimeter cut, it is sometimes necessary to cut the perimeter with a regular 22-inch walking green mower. Needed is a valve to cut wing units off, so when using triplex machines, you can vary the wheel pattern.

An automatic valve is needed to cut off cutting units when they are in a raised position.

More and improved attachments are needed to control thatch and grain.

Needed is a different type of fluid that will operate machines, and at the same time, not be detrimental to turf. The use of a colored fluid is also suggested so that leaks may be easy to spot.

Improvements in hose and hose connections are needed, as well as tubing and tubing connections.

There is some advantage gained in the quality of cut by using the rear roller nylon brush wiping assembly. This assembly is used to keep wet clippings from building up on the cutting units.

In conclusion, let me say that the triplex putting green mower now on the market and the two new ones to be released very soon must be considered as "first generation." I am confident that improvements will be continually made and in the future, all greens will be cut with some type of triplex mowing machine.