

men to do the chores that, in the past, often went undone.

Our greens are largely *Poa annua*, average 5,200 square feet, and they are mowed five days a week during the cutting season; Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays. We are fully unionized and right now; my greensmen receive \$3.95 an hour or \$31.60 a day. This comes to \$684 a month for an 8-hour workday and 40-hours a week. From this you can see that overtime costs can be staggering. For our last fiscal year, overtime alone amounted to over \$18,000, and it was basically for cutting greens on Saturdays and Sundays. Something had to be done about it, and the triplex putting green mower was the answer. Where we once used six men on overtime, we now use two men, and they both come in on Saturdays and Sundays.

I am frequently asked about the 'quality of cut' and the compaction from the use of triplex mowers. So far, I have found the quality of cut very good, but again, I have only used the mowers for the last three months. If there is a

compaction problem, it hasn't shown as yet, and I am on the constant lookout for it.

As to the development of more grain on greens, I do think we will be doing more vertical mowing in the future. However, with the vertical mower attachments available for triplex putting green mowers, this does not present any major problem. In fact, more frequent vertical mowing may actually produce even better putting surfaces than in the past.

To sum up, I am very pleased with our triplex putting green mowers and see no reason why we would ever return to the use of the smaller units. Of course, if we get a lot of heavy rain and the greens become very wet, I'm a little reluctant to use the heavier triplex units. So we still occasionally use the hand mowers or smaller machines. We are not throwing them away. Nevertheless, the triplex mowers are certainly a time saver and have done a very good job for us. Any green superintendent would be wise to at least look and try these new machines.

Watch for Thatch

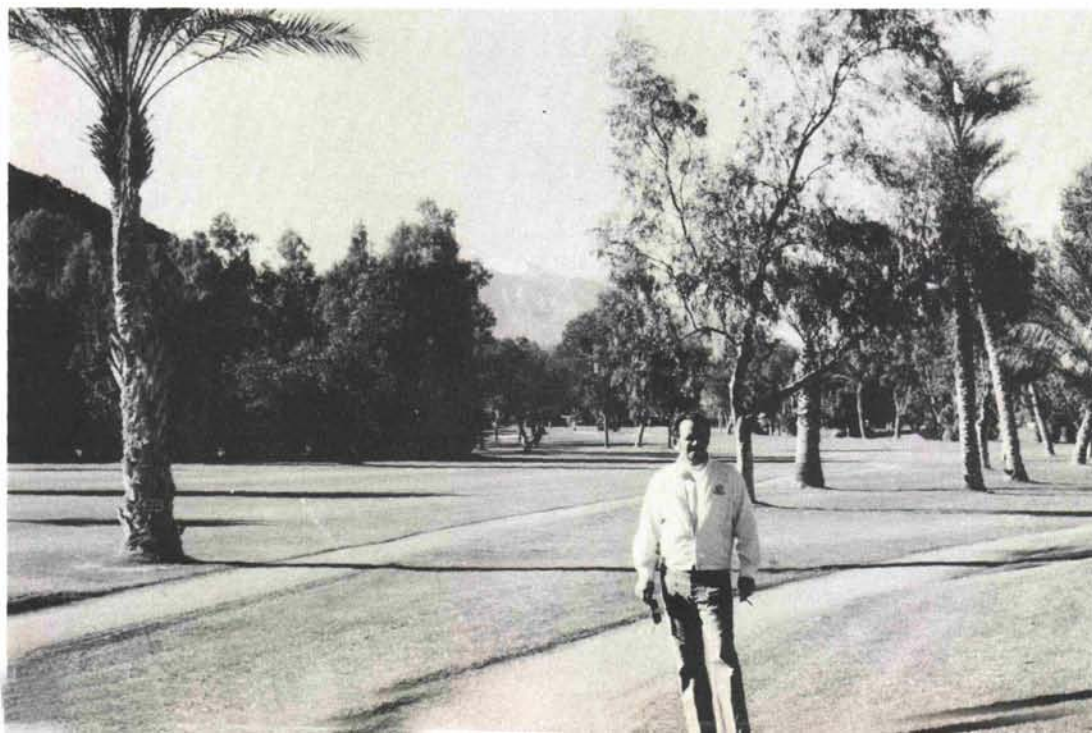
By Harvey Hardin, Superintendent, Indian Wells Country Club, Palm Desert, California

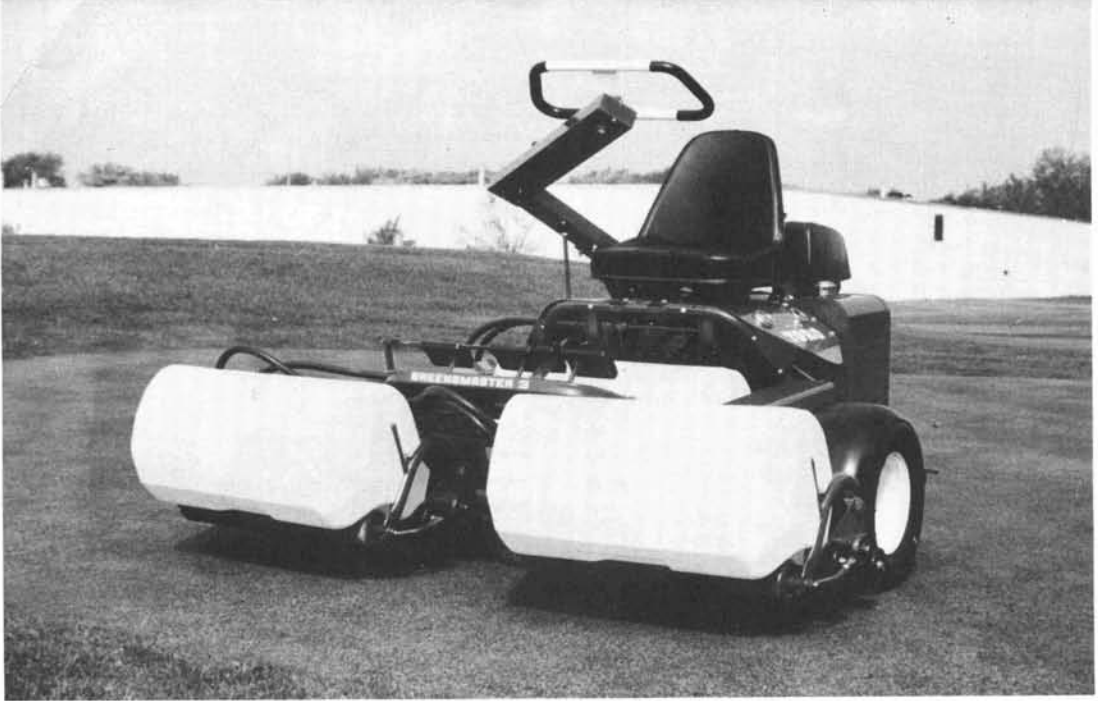
Indian Wells Country Club was fortunate in having the use of the first pilot model triplex green mower in early 1968. This was the mower first shown at the GCSAA International Turfgrass Conference held in San Francisco earlier that year. It received a full workout under our conditions as we used it six days a week for ten full months. Since that time, triplex putting

green mowers have been in almost constant use at Indian Wells.

Initially we used a circular mowing pattern on the greens. However, our members preferred the striped appearance of greens and it wasn't very long before we went to this type of mowing pattern. The new triplex mower performed beautifully for the first several months.

Supt. Harvey Hardin has used the Jacobsen triplex for four years at Indian Wells Country Club, Palm Desert, Calif.





The Toro Greensmaster mower reduce man hour mowing requirements.

However, after about three or four months I found it necessary to brush cut because definite signs of grain began to appear. I think after several months of mowing with any triplex mower we are going to have to closely watch the grain and thatch problem. The reason is the 'floating head.' Any cutting unit that 'floats' must gradually raise up more than the solid, fixed head of the older walking mowers.

To correct the condition, we used the walking vertical mowers since the vertical mowing units were not yet available for the triplex riding mower. From my experience, brushing does not do the job of grain and thatch removal as well as a vertical mower.

Another problem we encountered is that of excessive wear on putting green perimeters. Of course this is from 'ringing the greens' with each mowing—six days a week. We have tried 'ringing' greens every other day but you can still see some wear. The only way to correct this is by step-cutting; i.e., alternating from three to two to one mowing unit for the outside circle cut each succeeding day. This seems to even out the compaction and wear problem and helps avoid wheel marks or tracking. During the winter season, we will often have 300 rounds of golf a day on our 27 holes. With temperatures as low as 15°F. at 6:30 in the morning and then up to 85°F. by 10:30 a.m., we must do all we can to reduce excessive putting green wear caused by equipment.

Indian Wells is one of the host clubs each year for the Bob Hope Desert Classic I have

checked with the PGA and it has no objections whatsoever to the use of the triplex greens mower. The PGA wants all four courses in the tournament to use the same height of cut, however. In my operation, I have four triplex putting green mowing units; one I use for tees, two are used for greens and one is available just in case one of the others blows up. In addition, I still have several of the older walking mowers and use them periodically. This seems to help keep down thatch and we are not verti-cutting in front of the members quite so often when this technique is used.

In summary, I think we will all have to learn to live with the triplex putting green mower because of its great labor saving advantage. Personally, if I had my druthers I would be mowing with the old walking mowers. There are simply more maintenance procedures to be accomplished with the triplex units; i.e., more vertical mowing and more brush cutting than in other years when we were using the smaller mowing units. Certainly there is more wear on greens. Nevertheless, I used to use seven men every morning to mow 27 holes, and now I use two mowers and two men! In addition, vertical mowing of greens is easy with the new units that may be used with the triplex machine. Our tees have also been improved with triplex mowing and at a lower cost. Therefore, whether we like the triplex mower or not, I think we are all going to have to use them at some future date and we can be sure they will be continually improved.