



The Toro vertical mower.

Quality Lowered

By **John Zoller**, Superintendent, Eugene Country Club, Eugene, Oregon

Much has been said about the convenience and speed of the triplex putting green mower and these are important considerations in this day of high maintenance costs. I am not sure the story ends here however. In some ways it is another case of our subordinating what is best for the golfer to what is best for the golf course superintendent. This has been done too frequently already.

In our section of the country, I have heard members of some clubs say that suddenly their greens don't seem to putt as good as they used to. They seem to be slower or not as smooth or they have more grain. In most cases, the member is not aware that a change in mowing equipment has been made. I have had experience with only one of the three triplex putting green mowers that are on the market, so I am not qualified to discuss two of them. But here are some of the day-to-day problems we must give attention to with our triplex mowers.

First of all, by the very nature of triplex mowing, it is a must that all three cutting units be matched as to cutting height and balance. This must be checked every day. If a bearing or bushing on a roller shaft has some wear, that means it will not cut at the same height as the other two. Another problem that we must guard against is damage to the putting green hole. It would appear to be an easy thing to straddle the cup with one of the wing units but more often than not, a portion of the hole is run over by one of the tires and the edge of the

hole is broken down. The result? A good putt is unfairly penalized.

The perimeter cut around the green presents another problem that demands attention, particularly greens that have a high percentage of bentgrass. Because this cut can be made in only two different directions, a lot of swirling of the grass seems to develop. It can only be eliminated by vertical mowing and topdressing. We have tried to help this condition by not mowing around the perimeter every time the green is mowed.

In summation, we—at our club—are not sure that we want to sacrifice the quality that we feel we can get with the single unit mowers for the quantity that we get with the triplex mower. The actual savings are not all that great. Undoubtedly, there is a place for the triplex green mower and many golf courses can benefit from the use of it. But at no time have I heard any of our members favor lessening the quality of green maintenance in order to reduce costs. There are many other time and labor-saving pieces of equipment that, to me at least, are a more practical way of reducing costs. For instance, the use of 9 and perhaps even 11-gang fairway mowing units; the power sand trap rake; and even the 3-wheel vehicles for use in spraying and top-dressing greens can substantially contribute to lower costs.

It has been said that a person is recognized by his face not by his feet, and so, too, a golf course is largely recognized by its greens and not by its roughs or fairways.