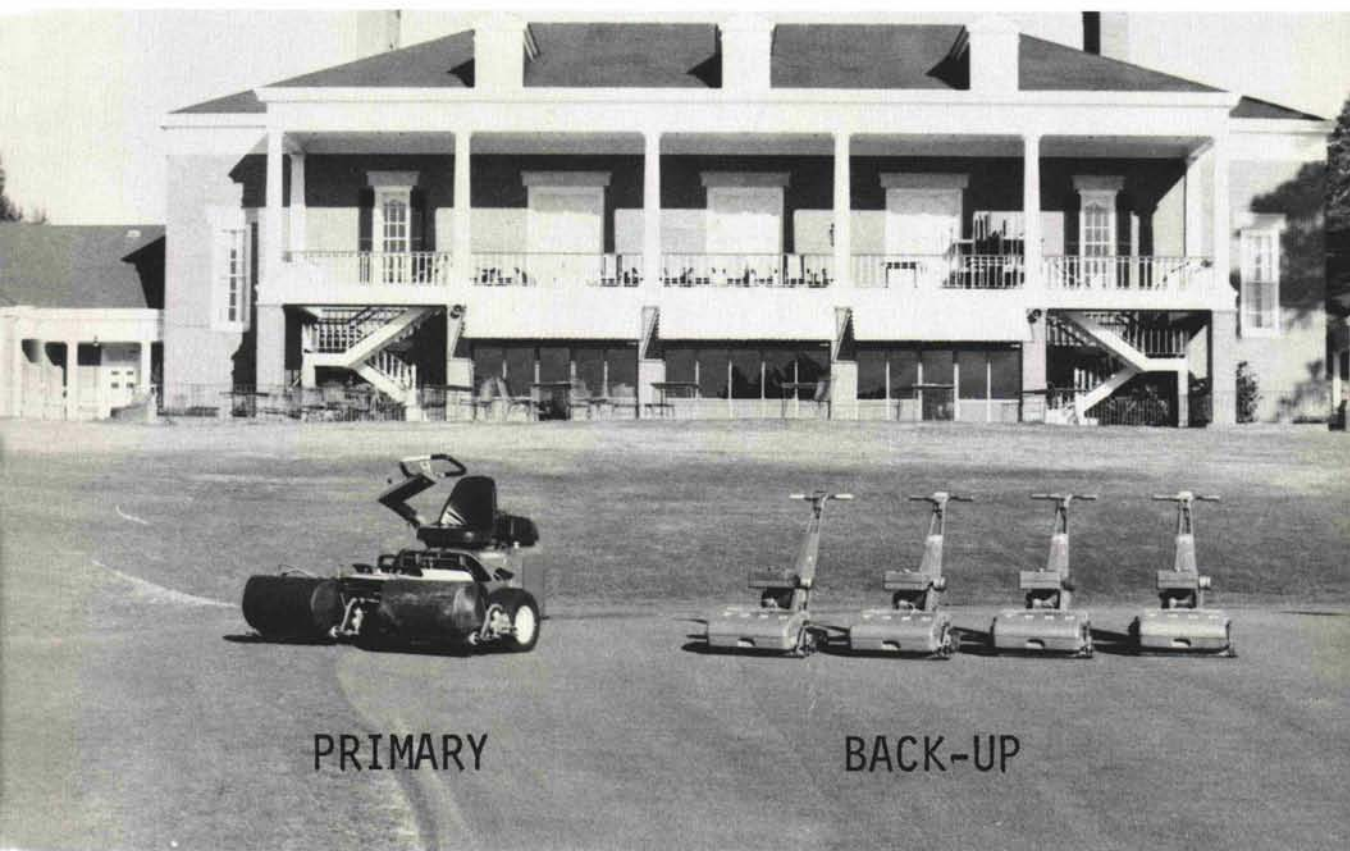


## Are Your "Back Up" Systems "Go!"?



PRIMARY

BACK-UP

by **Maynard Brown, Jr.**, Superintendent, Idle Hour Golf & Country Club, Macon, Ga.

**T**he space program is under fire from many quarters. People say it costs too much, we don't get enough benefits from it, and who wants to get to the moon anyway. There are far more pressing needs here on earth. I'm sure you have heard all these arguments and more, but agree or not, you have to admit that we have reaped much from the program, especially in the field of medicine and basic research. It has touched almost every facet of our life here on earth. It has even touched me here at my club in the sleepy little town of Macon, Ga. Here is how:

When I was sitting glued to my TV and radio during the abortive Apollo flight, praying every minute for the safe return of those

trouble-plagued astronauts, I was awed by the cool, efficient commands of Mission Control, telling the crew to use "back-up system so and so" because the primary system had failed. These "back-up systems" saved the lives of that Apollo crew. They are used on all space flights and, also, as you may not know, on all commercial aircraft we fly today. I thought about this some time later; it hit me that "back-up systems" might be incorporated into my maintenance program.

How often have you been in preparation for that big tournament and your new triplex greensmower malfunctions? Or your tee mower, or fairway mower, or tractor, or vertical mower or any other of a hundred pieces of equipment fail when you have a deadline to

finish a job? Could I possibly devise some back-up systems for this expensive maintenance equipment?

Now I don't have a big budget. I can't buy two or three of everything and just keep one in stock in case the other breaks down, but there must be some steps I could take.

For years when I bought new equipment, I would trade the old piece on the new to reduce the price. After all, this was a prudent business practice. But was it? Was I really so smart in trading in those old pieces of equipment? What would it really cost me to keep the old if it was worth repairing, and use it as a "back-up" system for my primary new equipment? It turned out to be surprisingly little.

Most suppliers don't want the old equipment anyway. You can probably get some direct discount and keep the old items just so he won't have to cart them into his shop. Often the new equipment is a labor saver and the machine or machines it replaces are still in good working order. Sure, you could get a pretty good price for a six-months-old walking greensmower, in good condition, but what is its value to *you* when that new triplex has broken an axle, or hose or cracks a ring at 6:30 a.m. mowing for that big tournament? It's worth *plenty* to me. So much so that I went in depth with this back-up program. Here is what I did.

First, when I obtained my new triplex greensmower, I kept all four of my walking mowers. Not just "kept" either. I made sure they were sharp, set at the same cutting height as my triplex, engines were in top operating order, and checked out each week. (See photo No. 1)

When I purchased my new larger triplex apron and tee mower, I kept my two small ones. They were performing well except that it took two men to do the job and only one with my new mover. They are also checked every week and are set at the same height as my new tee mower.

I did the same with my verti-cut units when I purchased my triplex vertical mowers. They were in excellent shape, and I could not recover enough from trading them to really make a dent in the cost of the new units. Actually, they were worth more (I had two) than the triplex units sold for. The supplier surely was not going to swap even.

My old gang mowers I repaired and kept to mow the range. In a pinch they could still be used on the fairways.

I kept one extra tractor. This took some convincing of the Green Committee, but it has proved its worth many times over. A used tractor has a good trade-in value or can be sold on the open market easily. I convinced the

Committee by turning this into a plus. After all, its value will depreciate little from now on, and we could sell it any time later if things got tight. They agreed.

My latest purchase was a utility vehicle mounted sprayer. I kept my old one just in case. It comes in handy, also, if you spot Pythium, to have two guns to fire.

Now this may not be new to some of you. Maybe you have been doing this all along. I am talking mainly to the low budget nine-hole, or low budget 18-hole superintendents. After all there are more of us than you rich guys. But our members are demanding the same ideal playing conditions that the more wealthy club members have grown to expect as ordinary.

Here are some closing tips on what I found to be helpful in setting up my back-up program:

1. Analyze the old piece of equipment. Is it worth keeping? Will it cost too much to fix? Do I have room to store it? Don't keep junk.
2. Have figures to present to the Green Committee or Board showing the value of this equipment to the course. One good argument is that it is usually paid for and depreciated out of your budget by now, so why give it away?
3. Don't keep it stuck in a corner and never checked out. If you don't have the mechanical help to keep old equipment ready to use, it would be better not to keep it at all.
4. Don't carry the system too deep. By this, I mean, when you get your next new equipment, phase out your old "back-up" system at that time. You will be the judge of this, of course, and you may want two back-up systems, but I have found it to be unnecessary in practice. They take up too much room, require too varied a parts inventory and require too much of my mechanic's time.

Don't get caught half-way to the moon in that next big tourney without a back-up system to get you home. Try it, you'll like it.

#### THE AUTHOR

Maynard Brown, Jr., has been the golf course superintendent at Idle Hour Golf & Country Club, Macon, Ga., since 1967. Earlier in his career he held positions as pro-superintendent-manager and pro-superintendent at other courses in Florida and Georgia. He is a Director of the Georgia GCSA and a member of the GCSAA. A graduate of Mercer University, he holds a degree in law.