

Used, But Not Useless

Modified golf carts to transport supplies.

by CHRIS HARTWIGER

FOR A GOLF COURSE to reach its potential, high standards must permeate every aspect of the maintenance operation. Budgets have been on the rise for years, but recent reports about a downturn in the economy have many turf managers facing reduced budgets. Improving quality with a larger budget is easy, but maintaining good quality at a lower cost is innovative. This turf tip is dedicated to those who are interested in maintaining a high-quality facility while cutting costs.

Mark Hoban, CGCS at the Standard Club (Atlanta, Georgia), and Herb Zeihm, mechanic at the Standard Club, have modified golf carts to transport mowers and carry setup supplies. These setup carts have replaced expensive utility vehicles and trailers, saving the Standard Club thousands of dollars in capital purchases.

Introducing the Setup Cart

It is an accepted fact that walk-behind mowers produce the highest quality of cut on putting greens. One of the challenges in walk mowing greens is getting the mower from one green to the next. On courses with a small amount of acreage, attaching wheels to the walk mower has been an efficient way for the crew to move from green to green. However, many modern golf courses weave through residential developments or rugged terrain and feature long distances between putting greens. These courses typically use expensive utility vehicles and trailers to transport the mowers.

Mark Hoban realized utility vehicles and trailers can cost three to four times as much as the mower and that the type of transport vehicle had nothing to do with the quality of cut. He knew there had to be a better way. Working with his mechanic, Herb Zeihm, Hoban decided to modify an old golf cart to act as a setup cart that could carry one walk-behind greens-mower.

The setup carts at the Standard Club contain the following items:

- Walk-behind greensmower.



Creating an inexpensive setup cart saves a golf course thousands of dollars without affecting the quality of the playing surfaces. The setup cart eliminates the need for a trailer and also carries a clipping container, backpack blower, whipping pole, and other essentials for morning jobs.

- Whipping pole.
- Backpack blower.
- Brush attachment for mower.
- Clipping can and yardstick.
- Insecticide for fire ant mounds.
- Mowing route and directions.
- Rain gear.

To say the setup cart has been a success at the Standard Club is an understatement. The club has saved thousands of dollars in capital purchases that might have gone for utility vehicles and trailers. The approximate cost of creating a setup cart is \$1,500 for the golf cart, \$200 for materials, and \$50 for headlights. The mower platform keeps the bedknife elevated, which reduces the potential for knocking the bedknife out of adjustment during transport. Hoban acquires needed carts every three years as the Standard Club replaces its golf car fleet. Also, the setup carts require little or no annual maintenance. Finally, the setup carts greatly reduce the prep time before leaving the maintenance facility in the morning.

Creating and Maintaining Your Own Setup Cart

The most difficult part of creating a setup cart is locating a golf cart. All the other supplies for the platform are readily available and are outlined below:

- Heavy-duty springs (2).
- Metal brackets (angle iron).
- $\frac{3}{4}$ " plywood.
- Mounting hardware.

Construction of the platform and brackets is straightforward, but attaching the platform bracket to the frame of the cart may require some trial and error, depending on the type of cart. Contact Mark Hoban at the Standard Club for detailed plans for the setup cart.

Hoban has found that there is much less maintenance with an electric setup cart than with a gasoline-powered vehicle. The repairs that have had to be made over the years have been infrequent, inexpensive to fix, and easy to complete. Parts that sometimes need to be repaired or replaced include batteries, battery cables and connections, solenoids (rarely), and tires.

Conclusion

Budget reductions do not mean that quality must be sacrificed. The creation of a setup cart is just one example of cutting costs while maintaining high quality. Let your imagination go, because one person's trash just might be another person's treasure.

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