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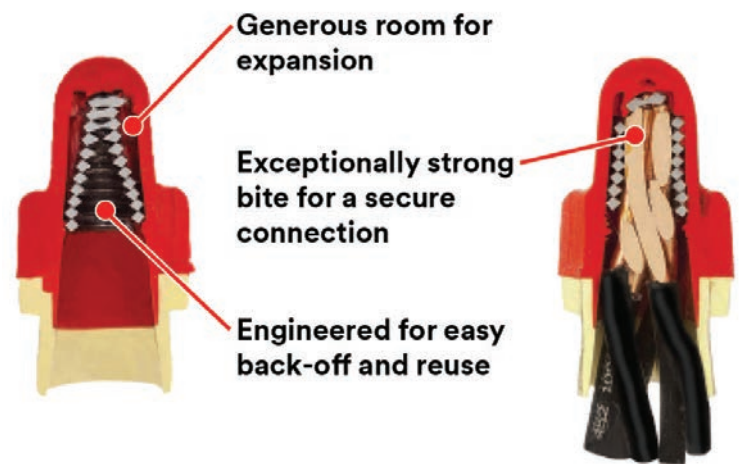
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CEO/Founding Publisher

James Wilson

Managing Editor

Sharon Scott Wilson
Sharon@thetrades.com

Marketing Associate

Marla Carroll
Marla@thetrades.com

Creative Director

Carrie Vandever
golf@thetrades.com
news@GolfTrades.com

Contributing Writers

Linda Parker
Jay Flemma
Jeff Shelley
John Torsello

Accounting

Elaine Swicker
accounting@thetrades.com



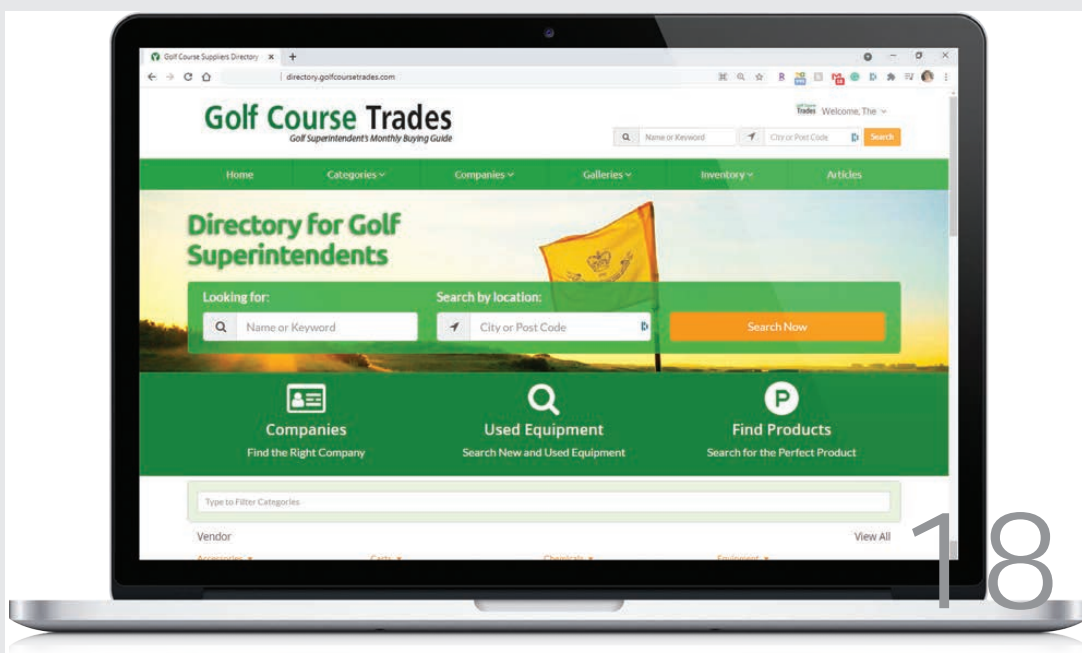
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The Ghost of Golf Courses Past and Yet to Come – C.B. Macdonald’s Lido Golf Club to be Reborn

by Jay Flemma

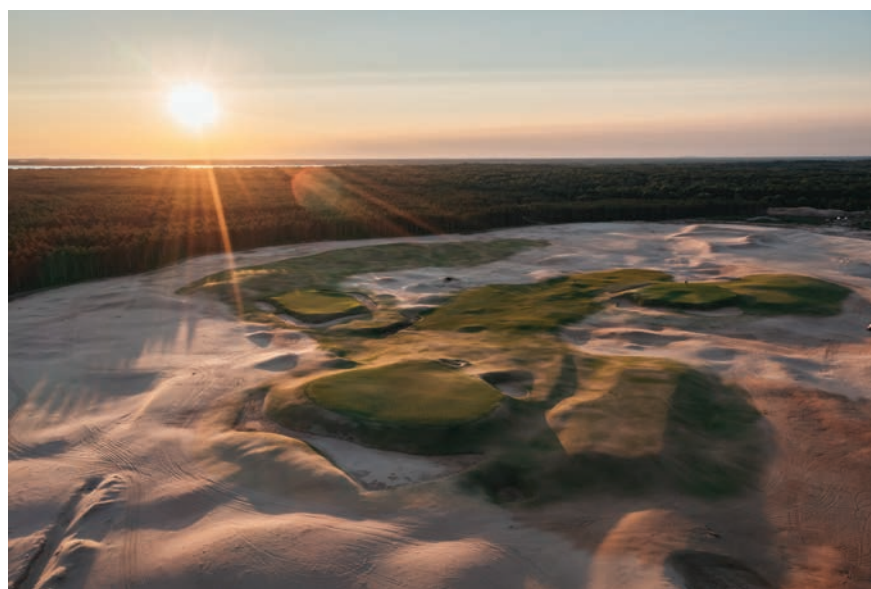
With a collective cheer that might have been heard in space, the golf world celebrated the promised return - indeed rebirth - of a long lost classic. Charles Blair Macdonald’s Long Island masterpiece, The Lido Golf Club, for over seventy years nothing more than a legend from the mists of history, is being faithfully rebuilt in the sandy wastes of rural Wisconsin by the team of developer Mike Kaiser and golf architect Tom Doak.

You’ll recall Kaiser developed both the Bandon Dunes Resort (where Doak built two courses...three if you count the original Sheep Ranch...) and Cabot Links. Now he’s raising the stakes by recreating Lido as a private course attached to his Sand Valley Resort.

Some of you reading this may be saying to yourself, “What is he talking about? Lido is a Robert Trent Jones, Sr.-designed public course, and it’s open; you can go play it right now....” Close: That’s a different Lido, though not far away from where the original Macdonald design was located. The original, tucked between Reynolds Channel and the Atlantic Ocean, with its whimsically-shaped fairways, geometric bunkers,

and oceanic greens with brobdingnagian contours, was founded in 1914, but closed in 1940, the land sold to the Navy in support of the war effort.

At the time, Lido was called the “greatest golf course in the world,” by no less a personage than Bernard Darwin himself, one of the four golf writers whose faces grace our craft’s metaphoric Mt. Rushmore. (The others being Grantland Rice, Herbert Warren Wind, and Dan Jenkins.) It’s one



of the most famous, fabled, and lamented golf courses on the No Longer Exists list. It also inspired any number of holes on countless golf courses throughout the intermittent decades, more

so now in this second Golden Age of Golf Course Architecture, a movement that has brought Macdonald and his architectural scions, Seth Raynor and Charles “Steamshovel” Banks to the brightest illumination. Ingeniously routed over a 113-acre site in tidal marshland, it was played by giants of commerce with hickory-shafted clubs and ancient rubber-cored balls, the move from gutta percha having occurred just a few years earlier. Now the

They are literally firing up a golf design time machine.

“What the Kaisers have already done in the middle of nowhere in a depressed Wisconsin county is nothing short of remarkable: they’ve created so many jobs with their two Sand Valley resort courses and the par-3 course as well,” began Gary D’Amato, the iconic Wisconsin sports writer. **“But when it gets done, Lido will be the most talked about course in America. They are faithfully recreating it. Not down to the inch – there’s no record of the green dimensions. But Peter Flory, the world’s leading authority on the Lido, did 3-D renderings based on the immeasurable historical information he’s gathered over many decades. And he gave everything to the Kaisers and Doak.”**

That’s right: This project is not some pastiche with holes

“inspired by” Macdonald’s work. The Kaisers – father and son and team - promised that every tee, every green, every fairway, every bunker, and every angle will be laid out exactly as they existed on Long Island at the original. And Doak himself promised the same in a press release.

“I’ve been adamant that no project should be called The Lido unless it’s a faithful recreation of the original course,” Doak wrote.

Moreover, 21st century technology is a space age’s quantum leap beyond the gaslight/early electricity era of a century and a quarter ago. With 6 holes grassed already (as we go to press) and 10-12 expected to be complete by the turn of the year, Lido looks to beat their expected opening date of 2023, with the entire course grassed by next August.

Not only are many of Macdonald’ trademark “template holes” featured over



He’ll get his wish, along with a chance to walk the walk in the biggest way. Macdonald’s Lido was such an extraordinary golf course that the pressure is on to faithfully deliver...but Kaiser and Doak have the team that can deliver. Back in the day, Seth Raynor built Macdonald’s design with 2,000,000 cubic yards of sand dredged from the channel in what was, for its time, an incredible feat of engineering. (Pete Dye accomplished something similar in 1980 when he built the Stadium course at TPC Sawgrass.)

By contrast, Doak and his team have an 850 acre parcel of virgin prehistoric sand in Central Wisconsin. Remember, the entire breadbasket of the United States was, 10,000 years ago, the bottom of an ocean. The mammoth sand dunes stretch all the way to Nebraska and Colorado. That’s a magnificent canvas on which to work.



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more on Lido and the Sand Valley Resort. Other venerable Golden Age courses lost to history include Flushing, New York's Fresh Meadow, (site of the 1930 PGA Championship and the 1932 U.S. Open), Timber Point, a Harry Colt and Charles Alison design formerly on the south shore of Long Island, and El Caballero formerly in Tarzana, California, a Billy Bell design set in the canyons of the Santa Monica Mountains.

When not reporting live from major sports championships or researching golf courses for design, value, and excitement, multiple award-winning sportswriter Jay Flemma is an entertainment, Internet, trademark, and banking lawyer from New York. His clients have been nominated for Grammy and Emmy awards, won a Sundance Film Festival Best Director award, performed on stage and screen, and designed pop art for museums and collectors. Twitter @ JayGolfUSA

the course of the round – iconic holes such as “Alps,” “Punch Bowl,” “Cape,” and “Redan,” - Lido will also showcase two holes completely unique to the Macdonald lexicon: the Channel hole at the short par-5 fourth and the Alister Mackenzie-designed 18th.

“Those are the two legendary holes that people think of the most when talking about the Lido,” explained Mike Kaiser, Jr. “At the fourth you had to play a shot over the channel twice. In fact, Macdonald called it the greatest 500 yard hole in the world. And the 18th was actually designed by Alister Mackenzie, with its three separate fairways.” Mackenzie actually drew the hole for a magazine contest and won. Macdonald liked it so much that he built it at the Lido. But Kaiser, Jr. had a different choice for the hole he’s most excited about.

“My favorite right now is the second hole, [called Plateau] because it reminds me so much of St. Andrews,” Kaiser, Jr.

stated energetically. “It shares a fairway with two other holes – the 11th and 17th,

it’s spotted with bunkers, and it has an enormous green that sits besides the equally enormous 11th, so it’s almost a double green. Over 30,000 square feet of putting surface at those two side by side greens.”

The new Lido will play to a par of 37-35 = 72, 6,582

yards from the back tees. The club will be semi-private – membership will be both local and national, but it will also be accessible to resort guests on certain days. And of course, minimalism in maintenance will be the highest priority.

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Making the Rounds Part 16

Golf Scribes

by Jeff Shelley



From Left to Right -
David McLay Kidd,
Tony Dear, Anni
Shelley & Sydney Rice
at Sand Point Country
Club in Seattle

This column features recollections of the author's 34 years as a golf writer. These installments stem from his many travels and experiences, which led to a gradual understanding that the game has many intriguing components, especially its people.

I've been fortunate to have met and worked with many golf writers over the years. Chance encounters involved legends (Hall of Famers Dan Jenkins and Mario Parascenzo). Others came when I was managing editor of four print magazines and as Cybergolf's editorial director, where I assigned articles from over 100 scribes around the world. Among these are two gents who now write for this magazine, Jay Flemma and Andrew Penner.

Cybergolf enjoyed a broad spectrum of contributors, including club pros (Dave Castleberry, Dave Fischer and Ron Stull, to name a

few); college coaches (Matt Thurmond, Tim Bibeau, Casey Martin, et al); instructors (Bob Boldt, Kiran Kanwar, J.D. Cline, Billy Bondaruk, Charlie Schaubel and Bob Duncan); book authors (David Wood, Blaine Newnham, Chris Duthie, George Fuller, Joel Zuckerman and Richard Voorhees); health practitioners (Dr. Divot, yoga instructor Melina Meza, etc.). I created a robust section on Cybergolf called "Architects Corner" that ran pieces penned by or featured golf course designers such as Jeffrey Brauer, Dan Hixson, Drew Rogers, John Fought, David McLay-Kidd, Gil Hanse, Tripp Davis and others.

I also made sure that Cybergolf represented a female's point of view. Two contributors to its "Women's Golf" section have since moved on to bigger and better things. The website was among the first to offer stories by Elisa Gaudet, who later founded Women's Golf Day, now an international entity

that helps draw ladies into the sport. In 2020, Elisa had grown the organization into one that hosted events at 900 locations in 68 countries. An attorney by trade, Nancy Berkley has been a longtime promoter of the LPGA Tour and written many tracts about the inequities women face in golf, on and off the course. The Floridian continues to press for inclusiveness within the industry.

One Writer Stands Out

As with any relationship, some editor-writer exchanges are better than others. Though I always sought to ensure stories were in prime shape for publication, there were a few knotty interactions, which are inevitable in this trade. As a writer who has wrangled with book and magazine editors over the years, I certainly understand when the shoe is on the other foot. Yet most scribes were professionals who appreciated my tweaks to their stories.

One in particular – Tony Dear, showcased here – occasionally disputed my alterations. In fact, his insistence with retaining certain questionable passages (my phrase) simply wore me out, but in a good way. And considering when one posts over 16,000 stories during a 15-year stretch – such as I did for Cybergolf – it's imperative to move on quickly to the next article.

Dear has led an interesting life, one that he's managed despite some physical challenges. "I've had multiple sclerosis for 31 years," says the 50-year-old. "And I have something called Alkaptonuria, which is so rare I have to tell my doctor about it. It causes pretty severe arthritis from your mid-30s on."

Indeed, for years Tony has participated in raising funds for the MS Society and made frequent speaking engagements at their functions. Still, he loves golf and tries to play whenever he can. "I'm basically down to the occasional nine holes in a cart with my daughter. That's not ideal for a golf writer, of course. But I'm well aware how lucky I've been to play some of the world's best courses and do the job I've had," he notes. "I'd rather smile because it happened than worry about not playing now. I always wondered how I'd feel about the game if/when this day ever came, and thankfully, I've discovered I love it as much as ever, just differently. I read, watch, write about and listen to golf more than I ever have."

Learning to Love Golf

The Englishman got his start in golf at a young age. As is typical for most neophytes, Tony was

encouraged to participate by family. "My grandad and dad played. They'd both take me to a pitch-and-putt course in the town where I grew up, about 45 minutes south of London. Dad was a member at the local golf club – Haywards Heath GC (HHGC), and of a couple of golf societies in the city," he said. "They'd have a few meetings a year at some of the best London clubs – Sunningdale, Walton Heath, Tandridge, etc. I'd caddie and play a few holes in the evening while they were having dinner. I very luckily got to see and play some great courses in my early teens.

"I became a junior member at Haywards Heath and remember shooting 103 for my first-ever 18 holes, aged 14 I think," Dear continued. "Dad and I would go to the Open Championship every year and play some great courses early in the week. Then we'd watch Ballesteros, Lyle, Faldo, Woosnam, Nicklaus, Palmer, Player, Trevino, Watson, etc.

"I remember winning the HHGC

junior club championship at 17 with a level-par 71. That was a really special moment because Dad, who had cancer but had been let out of hospital for a few days, was there to see it," he recalls. "I went to Liverpool University and made it on to the golf team, so got to play at Royal Liverpool (Hoylake) whenever I liked. I actually spent way more time at Hoylake than I ever did in a classroom. But I left after a year because my dad passed away and I was diagnosed with MS, which made university (life) difficult."

Tony shifted gears to a new direction. "A few weeks after returning home from Liverpool, I was offered a position as an apprentice professional at a club a few miles from Haywards Heath. I learned/observed how to teach, repair clubs, run a business, etc. It was a great opportunity, and I loved every second. I was on the verge of qualifying but had a pretty bad MS relapse and had to quit."

Then his life made another – permanent – turn. "After a



The Dear Family - From Left to Right - Tony, Madeline, Michelle & Sam

couple of years, I was back in decent shape and considering going back to Liverpool, but my mum died quite suddenly. I was a bit of a mess to be honest and, to cut a long story short, ended up traveling for a year. I played quite a bit of golf in Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Indonesia, and the States, and wrote monthly reports for

an English golf magazine called 'Fore!'

"When I got back to England, the magazine offered me a full-time position, and I spent three years doing instructional shoots with European Tour players, traveling to some amazing golf destinations, and interviewing some pretty big names."

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Tony Dear & David McLay Kidd at Gamble Sands

Time to Settle Down

Adulthood – and its inimitable responsibilities – ensued. “When I was in Australia in 1997, I met an American girl – Michelle – in Brisbane. To cut another very long story short, we got married in 1999, and she came to live in England where I was working for the golf mag. After a couple of years, she wanted to go back to the States.

“I didn’t have much family – a brother who spent half his life out of England on business anyway – and she had a massive family, so it made sense to go,” Dear relates. “We first lived in Phoenix, then Denver, then Seattle. We decided I would stay at home and freelance because my health wasn’t getting any better, and we were planning on having kids. When our son, Sam, arrived in 2004, we needed to move closer to Grandma and Grandpa, who lived about two hours north of Seattle near the Canadian border, so we moved to Bellingham. That was 2004

and we’ve been here ever since. Sam is 17 now, and our daughter, Madeline, is 14.”

Through hard work and perseverance, Tony became a well-traveled, in-demand golf writer, visiting places worldwide and writing about them. I asked him about all the cool places he’s visited over the years; memorable people; most fun and not-so-fun times; to name names and tell stories.

“I don’t think I could give you all the places I’ve visited and people I’ve met. There are 30-plus years of memories. I believe I’ve played golf in 32 countries now. I could bore you with stories for days, but a few do linger longer in the memory,” he said.

Treasured Memories

“In Harare, Zimbabwe, in 1996, I had the same caddie for four straight days at four different courses. That’s how it worked there. We became firm friends, and at the end of the week, I

gave him my clubs. I didn’t want to lug them around the world for a year, and I knew he needed them more than me. Sadly, I had to write and sign a note saying I had given the clubs to him in case the police stopped him and asked where he’d gotten them. We kept in touch for a few years. He’d send me pics of his family, and I’d tell him about life in England. We lost touch eventually. I really hope he’s doing okay.

“In about 1998, I interviewed Darren Clarke in the clubhouse at Royal Portrush. We each had a Guinness or two, and it was a really enjoyable afternoon. Actually, the Guinness and some powerful painkillers were masking the discomfort of a kidney stone. Following the interview, I flew back to London and had it removed.”

Tony evolved into a well-known and respected golf-architecture writer who has notable encounters with many course designers. “Two stories I’ll mention involve David McLay-

Kidd, whom I’ve gotten to know quite well over the last 10 years. Both happened fairly recently, so I remember them better.

“Following the PGA Merchandise Show in 2012, I flew on a private jet belonging to Don Carlos Pellas, from Orlando to Managua in Nicaragua. David had built a course on the coast for the Nicaraguan billionaire, and he wanted a few golf writers to see it. Don Carlos is an amazing character and I urge you to Google him and read his story. Anyway, the plane was incredible – not some dinky, little, face-forward, no-leg-room private jet, but a sit-where-you-like, get-up-stretch-and-walk-about private jet with a cabin steward who made us lunch and bought drinks whenever we asked him. We all got to spend time in the cockpit and flew low over a volcano (dormant thankfully), which was pretty cool. Anyway, the course, which we played a few times, was superb and we each stayed in our own enormous villa and drank a lot of Flor de Caña – a

delicious rum that was part of Don Carlos's huge portfolio of businesses.

"My other Kidd-related story happened in 2020. He flies his own prop plane – not Don Carlos's jet, but still pretty cool. He flew from Bend, Oregon, where he lives, to Bellingham to pick me up. From there we flew to Brewster (in north-central Washington) and Gamble Sands where his new 14-hole short course – Quicksands – was about to open," Dear said. "Sitting right next to David as he flew the plane was amazing, and as we came in to land he took it down low(ish) over the (regulation-length) Sands Course, which he'd designed a few years previously, and Quicksands. A wildfire that had stopped burning just a few days before had turned the surrounding area a charred black, but the fairways were still emerald-green. It was a surreal sight.

"Gamble Sands is probably my favorite golf place in America," Tony added. "I love everything about it, and actually came up with the name, which makes it even more special. The day we were due to fly back, the weather in and around Bellingham was dicey, so David arranged for me to drive back to Seattle with former Seattle Seahawk and Super Bowl-winning wide receiver Sidney Rice. That made an already amazing trip even more memorable.

"I've played the Sands Course at Gamble Sands with David a couple of times. I've also played several courses with their designers. Playing the Loop in Michigan with Tom Doak was great as he explained the thinking behind the reversible layout. After the round, I drove him a couple of hours to Gull Lake View where his team had designed the superb Stoatin Brae course. We stopped for lunch on the way. I have to say, for a golf course architecture nerd like me, sitting in an Arby's and talking course design with one of the greatest golf architects ever is a life moment.

"Speaking of reversible courses, it was really cool playing Silvies

Valley Ranch in Oregon with Dan Hixson. I asked him about the routing and how many double greens there were, and he had to think long and hard about it. It's such a confusing, but brilliant, layout."

Rubbing Elbows with the Pros

Tony has also had the privilege of teeing it up with some outstanding players. "I've been lucky to play with some great golfers. There have been a number of those charity or media days when a celebrity or pro plays a hole or hits a tee shot with every group, but I've played complete rounds with a few Tour players. In 1998, I think it was, I played a European Tour pro-am with an English pro named Ross McFarlane, and around 2008 I played with Australian Robert Allenby in a PGA Tour pro-am. And 18 years ago, when I lived in Phoenix, I played with Paul Casey at Grayhawk and Aaron Baddeley at Whisper Rock for articles in 'Golf World UK.'



Tony Dear & Tom Doak at The Loop

"They were all great, but the one I remember best is Casey," Dear mused. "He had graduated from ASU a few years earlier so had been in America much longer than me. I remember thinking how weird it was that a couple of youngish English guys should be walking down Arizona fairways. We talked about England, football (soccer), and his time at ASU, and I made fun of his accent. I'll never forget him hitting a 230-yard 3-iron from fairly thick rough that never left the flag. Finished about 10 feet



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away. The game with Baddeley was great fun, too. At the 600-yard 18th, he was pin-high after a drive and 4-iron!"

When asked what's helped him become so successful and prolific, along with all the books and magazines he's written for, Dear demurred: "I don't know about 'successful' and 'prolific.' I've just sought opportunities to write about golf, which is what I love to do. Of course, if you love it, it's not really 'work.' And there's no way I can list everything."

I did some research and found Tony Dear is the author of five books: "Golf" (1999), "Good Golf Made Easy" (2000), "Every Golf You Ever Wanted Answered" (2002), "The Golfer's Handbook" (2008), and "101 Golden Rules of Golf" (2008). Some of these titles are available on Amazon.

Dear has received 25 writing awards from the International Network of Golf, and recently won a third-place award from the Golf Writers Association

of America for an article on Bandon Dunes. He has two other GWAA Honorable Mentions. In 2017, he received the Distinguished Service Award from the Northwest Golf Media Association for his wonderful career.

I'm hoping that my good friend and longtime colleague continues to enjoy and explore the myriad facets of golf writing for decades to come.

Jeff Shelley has written and published nine books as well as numerous articles for print and online media over his lengthy career. Among his titles are three editions of the book, "Golf Courses of the Pacific Northwest." The Seattle resident was the editorial director of Cybergolf.com from 2000-15. For seven years he served as the board president of First Green, an educational outreach program that is now part of the Golf Course Superintendents of America and Environmental Institute for Golf.



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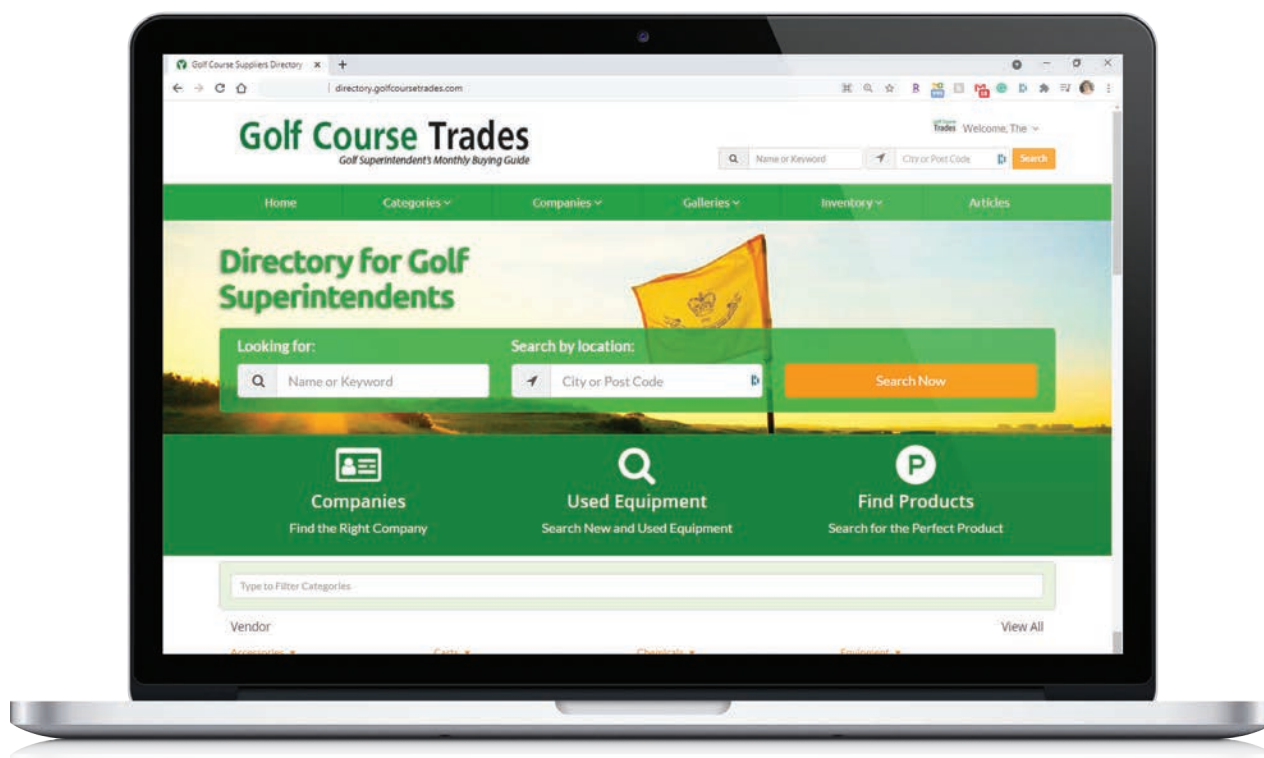


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How to Buy the Best Golf Course Equipment

by Sharon Scott Wilson



Whether a golf course superintendent is looking for golf cart accessories, mowers and turf equipment, or even turf irrigation solutions, doing a little advance research can help you find a reliable provider. Particularly if you're looking for used golf course equipment, you'll want to find a company with integrity, as well as expertise. A good starting point is to research and compare providers in Golf Course Trades' "Supplier Directory," a comprehensive list of both advertisers and non-advertisers (<https://directory.golfcoursetrades.com>).

Used or New?

Joseph Hubbard, CGCS/CEMP, Certified Golf Course Superintendent at the Boca Delray Golf & Country Club, says he steers clear of used equipment as a rule. "When I compute the age of a machine, my formula is



Joseph Hubbard

that one hour of use is equal to 90 miles. With this high usage, it's tough to come out on the winning side when buying previously owned items.

"I understand that Capital is not available for everyone and Boards have their agenda of expenditures. For my part in over several different golf courses from private to public to municipal, we did not have very good luck with longevity of the purchased used equipment. You will have to beef up your budget for the parts of those used pieces. Every course is different in their wants and needs, so the companies that provide the refurbished equipment definitely have a niche in the golf individual story today."

Greg Moore, Cutter Equipment Company co-owner,



Greg Moore

along with his brother Glenn, operate a company that does just that. Cutter has built a solid reputation for more than 20 years as a reliable provider of used equipment.

Moore explains when Cutter acquires a new unit, it goes into the service department for assessment. "Once you get a piece, you might find it's in need of service. We have eight top-level technicians on staff that are part of the vital infrastructure for our business. That's a huge difference. We don't operate out of a shed. It's like buying a car. If there's a problem, you want a dealership that can fix the product before it becomes your problem."

Pricing & Quality

Hubbard observes that while a private club ordinarily relies on

its Board of Directors to make buying decisions, municipal courses are often managed by individuals without experience in nurturing turf, in which case superintendents might need to provide supportive documentation to support additional expenditures. "I start with a spreadsheet that is a master list of what we have and what we need," he says. "I find that if I approach the Board with statistics to back up my requests, it's a lot easier to justify a purchase. And sometimes you just need to approach the situation like a politician: Talk to the general manager, head of the greens committee, or the city manager."

Companies like Cutter believe themselves to have the best answer. "New equipment is expensive," says Moore. "You might spend \$70-to-80 thousand for a new mower, for example, or \$20-to-30K for a fairway mower. Buying the same unit – used -- might be 30 to 40 percent less; it can save you substantially."

Chad Wiertzema of Foley Company, leading the market as producers of grinders and air injectors, mentions the company's broad range of choice. "Our portfolio from high-end to more affordable," says Wiertzema. "Big or small, Foley has solutions competitors can't match. Another highlight of our company is our customer service. We are always available by phone or video call and have the expertise available to address any issues or questions a customer might have. Whether buying a brand new 653 Accu-Master Reel Grinder or a 20-year-old refitted item, we have the best solution to fit your budget and your requirements. Plus, we have full capabilities to fix, upgrade, and help train a new operator. "

“Foley is committed to investing in our grinding and air injection facilities,” he adds. “We have 42 employees and are fully invested in innovating the product of the future.”



Chad Wiertzema

years, chiefly because we are reliable.

Hubbard advises it is wise to not mix and match equipment as you will eventually need to interchange parts. While Revels sells equipment from a number of manufacturers, it specializes in John Deere.

“John Deere has earned a reputation for excellence,”

says Austin. “The John Deere brand is an assurance of quality; they make excellence a standard. We’re confident enough in the quality of John Deere products that we’ve increased our warranty over last year. John Deere supports a three-, and sometimes four-year warranty, rather than the previous two-year warranties.”

An excellent resource for checking out providers is the Better Business Bureau. In addition to seeing whether or not a company is listed in Golf Course Trades’ directory, look for a supplier with an A or A+

rating. According to the Delaware BBB, “In most cases, complaint history drives a business's letter-grade rating. Nearly 85 percent of the scoring is determined by consumer-reported complaints that have been verified and evaluated by BBB, such as the number of complaints, the severity of complaints and how a business resolves complaints.”



Greg Austin

Steady growth

“We started this company [Cutter] in 1998 and have grown steadily since by investing in the future of the company,” says Moore. “If you’re looking for a reliable vendor, look for an established company with a good track record. Follow up and find testimonials. Also, take a good look at their facility and personnel. We’re the largest independent dealer of used golf course equipment. It’s a big investment; so make sure

the company will stand behind product.”

Says Austin from Revels, “The lowest price isn’t necessarily the best when you’re buying equipment. Can you get parts? Will the provider back up their products with service? An important question is, ‘Will they get me up and running again if we have issues?’”

Before Wiertzema assumed his marketing responsibilities for Foley, he didn’t understand how much work goes into readying the course for play. “We take pride in giving superintendents superior product; choices, methodology within grinding industry. Whatever solution we have option for you. Customer service. If question or issue, team ready to help.”

Sharon Scott Wilson is Publisher of Golf Course Trades magazine. Stay current with people and events in the industry: visit [YouTube.com/GolfCourseTrades](https://www.youtube.com/GolfCourseTrades) and subscribe to the ePublication, Golf Course Trades Weekly, on our website: <https://www.golfcoursetrades.com>.



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What if this Golf Course is the Epicenter of Change?

by Linda Parker

Rob Collins and Tad King are the talented duo behind King-Collins Golf Course Design. Together, they have built a brand that is quickly becoming one of the hottest names in golf course architecture and construction. Their company is so unique in its approach to envisioning how golf can be played, a number of golf writers have questioned if King-Collins Golf will be the change agent that alters the trajectory of the game of golf forever.

The Golf Course Trades had the opportunity to ask Rob this question during an interview with him this past August. But before we share his thoughts with you, we first want to tell you about the days when Rob's and Tad's phones went weeks, months and sometimes years without ringing.

Planting the Seed: I'd Never Seen Golf Courses Like This Before

In 1994, Rob Collins was an art history major at Sewanee, The University of the South when he had the opportunity to take in The Open at Turnberry in Scotland. As part of the experience, he had the chance to play both the Old Course and the New Course at St. Andrews. Rob explained, "The trip made a huge impression on me. I'd never seen anything

like it ever before. And I realized there was a lot more to golf than what I had seen for the first 19 years of my life.

"The more I thought about it the more I became interested in the creative aspect of how you would create a golf course. I knew that there were people out there who were golf course architects, but it seemed like such a strange and far off profession that it was hard to even imagine what steps one would take to do that. So, I held on to this wild dream of mine, and didn't really tell anyone for a while."

The Wild Dream Takes Root and Grows



A series of unfulfilling jobs helped crystalize Rob's clarity about his future. He applied to Graduate School at Mississippi State as part of the Landscape Architecture program.

"They were very open to me tailoring to the greatest extent possible, my schooling towards golf architecture," said Rob. "I made it clear from the git-go that I didn't have any interest at all in being a landscape architect, but really was very, very interested in being a golf course architect. They were fine with that.

"I graduated from Mississippi State in 2005 with a master's degree in landscape architecture. The courses

helped me understand the basics of planning. I learned a lot about plan production and thinking about things in a landscape scale. Some of it was basic, some not, but all a good solid foundation of planning skills that I was able to apply to golf architecture. And I was fortunate to come out at a time when they were building about 300 courses a year domestically."

Rob worked as an intern for Golf Architect Rick Robbins of Robbins & Associates International in 2004. After graduation, Rick referred Rob to Frank Henegan. "At that time," said Rob, "Frank was a Senior Designer with the Gary Player design firm, which led

me to some great projects, including working on a course in Eastern British Columbia and working a project in Florida where I first met my current business partner, Tad King. We connected immediately because we both believe that courses could be built more economically, more efficiently and more artistically.”

No New Golf Courses in a Recession

The golf course construction boom of the late 1980s to early 2000s came to a screeching halt when the mortgage crisis of 2006 catapulted the U.S. economy into recession. Rob was soon back home in Tennessee trying to survive on landscape architecture projects, all the while desperate to get back into golf course design and construction.



“I called Tad one day,” said Rob, “and I said, ‘Let’s do this thing. If we can just get one project in the ground during this recession, we’ll have an opportunity to come out of the backside of the recession and start to build a name for ourselves and have a chance to show the world what we can do.’”

“There were a lot of inefficiencies in the golf architecture model of construction, where you have the golf architect on one side and the contractor on the

other. And those two important entities to the creation of a golf course often have diametrically opposed ideas and thoughts. It doesn’t always happen, but it’s not uncommon for the architect and the contractor to be at one another’s throat.

“With the architect on one side and the contractor on the other, you run the risk of having a situation where there are details lost in translation. We liked the idea of being able to control the artistry and completely control all the shaping. We felt we could deliver a better golf course that way and also do it less expensively, with more efficiency.”

One Project in the Ground

In 2011, the phone finally rang, and the one pivotal project Rob and Tad were seeking fell into their laps. Hired to do what became more of a construction

project than a renovation of the 9-hole Sequatchie Valley Golf & Country Club in South Pittsburg, Tennessee, King-Collins Golf reworked the course with vengeance.

“We completely remade the landscape,” said Rob. We moved about 300,000 cubic yards of earth. We poured our hearts and souls into it. And then, through a convoluted set of circumstances, our client decided that they did not want to be in the golf business anymore.

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“They walked away from the project when it was basically complete, saying, ‘Hey, would you be interested in taking it over on a long-term lease?’ My first thought was hell no, I don’t know how to run a golf course.’ But we talked about it and decided to take the plunge.”

For the first few years, the grossly undercapitalized course, renamed Sweetens Cove, struggled. But there exists, according to Rob and Tad, something known as Sweetens Cove Magic. The existence of this empowerment is hard to doubt when you

realize that a 9-hole course that opened without a clubhouse, a paved parking lot, proper signage or an adequate maintenance crew began slowly to attract golf industry attention and acclaim. Soon a cult-like following of devotees developed, including Peyton

Manning, Andy Roddick, Jim Nantz and others who soon went from fans to business investors.

What Makes this 9-Hole Course so Sweet?

In 2019, Sweetens Cove was ranked in 2019 by GolfWeek as #21 on the list of Top 100 Public Courses and #49 on the list of Modern Courses. The contours are bold, the features are artistic without being pretentious and the ambiance of the course is so authentic, you are welcome to bring your dog, to wear your jeans and, if you like, imbibe pre-round with a shot of bourbon, a tradition that has inspired the launch of Sweetens Cove Spirits.

Sweeter still is that Rob and Tad think golf should be challenging for players without sucking the joy out of the game or taunting golfers with distances and designs that are unplayable for





anyone except tour legends. “I think,” said Rob, “the most interesting hazard in golf is the combination of short grass and tightly mown, fast turf. That opens the full suite of shot-making opportunities and potential things that golfers of all skill levels can do with the club in their hands.”

A Fruit Bearing Tree

Rob refers to Sweetens Cove as a fruit bearing tree that took a few years before it began producing. Since word has spread about the magical 9-hole course in Tennessee, King-Collins has built the behemoth 18-hole Landmand course (see Winterberry Irrigation’s Super-Sized Project in Nebraska). They’ve also created the quirky 9-hole Inness Course in New York’s Hudson Valley, have remodeled the legendary urban course, Overton Park, in Memphis, and are starting on the new Red Feather 18-hole course in Lubbock, Texas. Each of these courses is another unique golf experience and a story in itself we hope to share in upcoming articles.

The uniqueness of each of these courses brings us back to where we started. Is King-Collins Golf Course Design and Construction changing course design and the game forever? To this question, Rob responded, “I never really thought about that until my dear friend Patrick Boyd, who was our GM at Sweetens Cove for a long time, looked at me back in our early days and said, ‘Rob, I really think in a hundred years, people are going to look

at this place and say this is the epicenter of where it all started to change.’

“At first, my reaction was, ‘What, we can’t even pay the light bill?’ But that was the first time I ever really thought about the impact Sweetens Cove has had. And I do think our courses are changing the game. Without ego and hyperbole or boastfulness, we do have a unique approach, and we think about things differently. But at the same time, we are also drawing off ancient lessons. A lot of what we’re



doing isn’t necessarily new. It’s just repurposed in a way. And in that repurposing, there is a sense of newness to it.”

Intrigued by Sweetens Cove? Learn more in a new book, “The Secret Home of Golf: Sweetens Cove Golf Club” by Jim Hartsell.

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Linda Parker has been writing professionally since the 1980s. With clients in finance, sports, technology, change enablement, resorts, and nonprofit global initiatives, Linda helps organizations communicate their stories in meaningful ways to the people they most want to reach. She has authored, ghostwritten,

or contributed to more than a dozen nonfiction books. Linda is a member of the Authors Guild and the Golf Writers Association of America. You can connect with her at linda@glindacreative.com

COMPANY SPOTLIGHT



A Legacy of Agronomic Excellence

In 1994, The Toro® Company set out to revolutionize the way superintendents managed their turfgrass. The idea was to couple soil and tissue analysis with a liquid line of nutrients that would allow turf managers to dial into site specific needs. As a result, the BioPro® line was born as a group of specialty, liquid products with an organic component that offered superior performance and consistent quality. The liquid solutions could be applied through Toro fertigation systems, providing a simple and cost effect method of delivery.

Through acquisition of Liquid Ag Systems, Inc., Toro expanded the line with a group of environmentally friendly liquid products developed by Dr. Max Brown. The founder, President and General Manager of Liquid Ag, Dr. Brown, is recognized by many as the father of fertigation for the turfgrass industry.

Though Toro's BioPro line functioned extremely well, their distribution model for plant nutrition did not. After a few short years in the fertilizer business the irrigation and equipment titan divested themselves of the entire fertilizer division. In 1999, the BioPro line was sold off to TerraBiotics. At the time, Jim Spindler, who worked for Toro Turf Management, followed the line to TerraBiotics.

Under TerraBiotics leadership the BioPro line continued to grow with the addition of CytoGro® hormone biostimulant and Aqua-T™ pond bacteria.

As fate would have it, TerraBiotics would eventually go out of business. Fortunately, Jim Spindler put his faith in the line and rescued it from being lost to history. In 2008, Spindler partnered with Rick Irwin at Ecologel Solutions and the BioPro line was brought into the fold as one of Ecologel's premiere brands.

With Spindler serving as the Director of Agronomy for Ecologel, the product line has continued to improve with the latest developments in fertilizer technology and respond to customer's needs with new innovative products. The BioPro brand now includes an advanced line of liquid nutrients, micronutrients, soil enhancements, biostimulants, seaweed supplements, root zone moisture management and pond clarification products specially formulated for greencare professionals.

In 2018, Ecologel partnered with Arborjet, Inc. to expand its distribution network and broaden expert resources to enhance customer support. Through this partnership, Ecologel has been able to expand the availability of BioPro products throughout the country.

The BioPro brand originated as an early leader in liquid fertilization solutions. Though the line changed hands, grew, and evolved over the years, it has remained true to its roots as a superior quality, affordable, environmentally responsible line of plant management products. Today, that legacy of agronomic excellence has expanded to provide a robust offering of foliar and soil applied solutions to address both soil health and nutritional deficiencies. Chelated nutrients and slow-release nitrogen are included in many of the products to increase availability and uptake. Individual nutrient solutions and combination products provide flexibility for any agronomic program or budget.

Beyond the current product line, BioPro Technologies also offers custom blending options as well as consulting services.

For more information contact Ecologel Solutions, LLC at 888-545-6307 or visit <http://www.ecologel.com>.

EVOLUTION OF THE BIOPRO LOGO

1999



2008



2015



2020



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Agrono-Lytics Turf Consulting	2504	Geoponics Corp.	1905	Redexim North America, Inc	101
AgStone LLC	1716	Golf Agronomics	3105	Regal Chemical Company	2304
AQUA-AID Solutions	514	Golf Course Industry	516	Revels Turf & Tractor, Greenville Turf and Tractor, John Deere Golf	3107
Aquatrols	3516	Golf Safety	801	Rightline	1305
Arborguard Tree Specialists	402	Grand Strand Dermatology Skin Cancer Screenings	3701	Salsco, Inc.	2207
Arborjet - Ecogel	1307	Green Resource	1604	Seago International, Inc.	2818
Armada Technologies	1618	GreenGo Recycling	1116	SePRO Corporation	3103
Atlantic Installations	818	GreensGroomer WorldWide	1316	Shapemasters, Inc.	3104
Audubon International	005	GURUscapes	2314	Simmons Irrigation Supply, Inc.	814
BASF Corporation	2804	H & H Farm Machine Co., Inc.	1601	Simplot	2201
Bayer CropScience LP	2814	Haifa	1018	Sipcam Agro	2501
Bella Mulch	1009	HARCO Fittings	2216	Smith Turf & Irrigation	1607
Better Billy Bunker Inc.	1114	Harmon Turf Services, Inc.	702	Sod Production Services	214
Blue Planet Environmental	2916	Harper Turf Equipment	1916	Sod Solutions, Inc.	2217
Brandt	2507	Harrell's, LLC	2516	SOLitude Lake Management	805
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CarltonMarshallGolfDesign	3204	Kings Greenhouse, Inc.	1401	Sterling Sand, LLC	209
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Ceres Turf, Inc.	1301	McGill Premium Compost	803	The Cartpath Company	215
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Corbin Turf & Ornamental Supply, Inc.	2004	NC State University	014	Triangle Turf and Ornamental	3216
CORETASK LLC	3505	New Generation Ag LLC	817	Trident Mobile Service LLC	2318
Corteva Agriscience	2317	NewLife Turf, Inc.	1614	TriEst Ag Group, Inc.	2902
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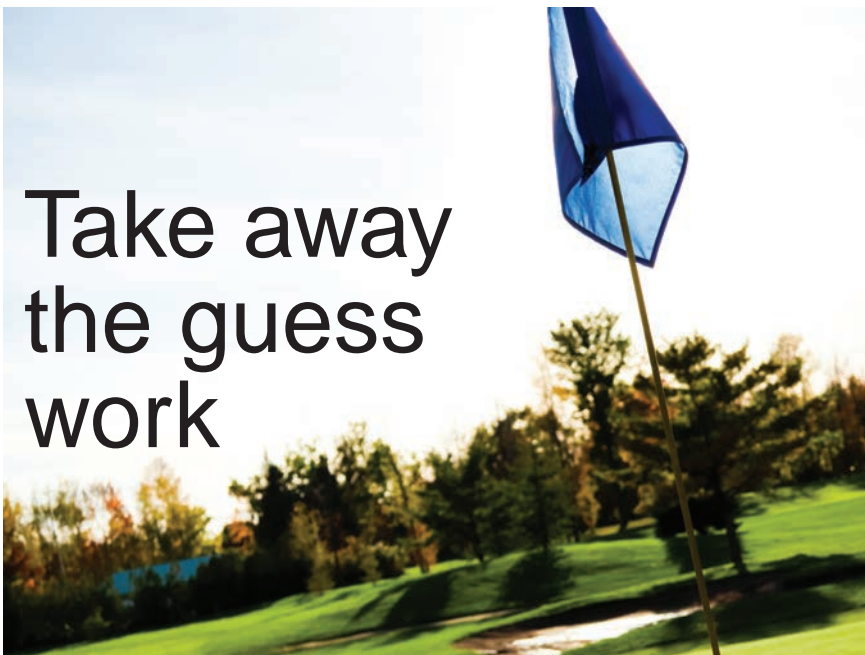
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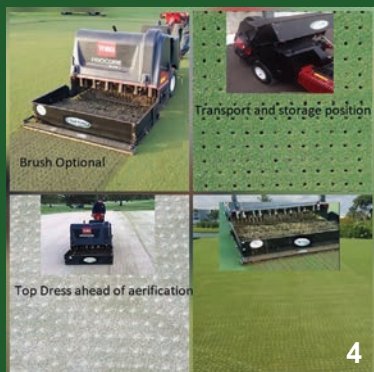
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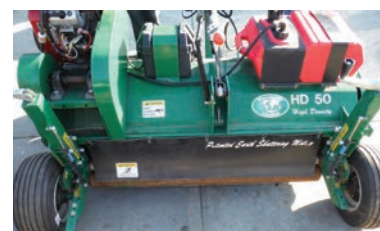
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