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AUSTRALIAN INVENTIVENESS CHANGES THE AERIFIER



Livingstone demonstrates the stability of his PTO-powered aerifier on the edge of a sand trap.

Seven years ago David Livingstone's creativity was limited to numbers on financial statements for an international bank in Sydney, Australia. The son of an inventor, Livingstone's mind would wander to some strange subjects for a banker. For example, why did the operator of the turf aerifier at his local "bowling club" have to walk backward? If he could design an aerifier that worked twice as fast, could his neighbor's contract aerification business be more profitable?

It wasn't long before Livingstone's daydreams turned into reality. While doing his neighbor's taxes he learned the business was for sale. It was his chance to test his ideas first hand. The deal was signed and Livingstone started to put his idea's for a better aerifier down on paper. But, in the meantime, he used the American machines to do his jobs.

"My only interest at the time was to get a marketing edge for my aerification service," said Livingstone. Manufacturing had not crossed his mind. "An associate took my sketches, which changed almost weekly, and started putting together this machine."

Livingstone had a list of things he wanted his aerifier to do. He wanted to eliminate the power source from the unit and use a light-weight tractor instead. The operator was to face forward. Moving parts were to be reduced to a minimum and all high-wearing parts were to be easily reached for service. He wanted a wider swath and a way to change the pattern of the tines.

In 1982, Livingstone's prototype was ready. He quickly discovered that conventional tines did not work well at the speed his machine ran. New tines were designed. He was working days aerifying any one of 120 bowling clubs and golf courses in the Sydney area and repairing his old aerifiers and inventing at night. He became extremely sensitive to occupational irritations like heavy vibration, leaking hydraulic lines and hard-to-reach lubrication fittings. Every unnecessary moving part was axed in his design.

He tried all types of aerifiers by calling on his golf course friends. When he finally returned to these golf courses with his prototype, he padlocked the lid so no one could see how it worked inside. When the lock was finally removed and the lid opened, the common remark was "It looks so simple."

There have been more changes since Livingstone started manufacturing his aerifier under the name CoreMaster. Today, Green-Care International in Fountain Valley, CA, handles manufacturing, distribution and marketing in the U.S. and Canada. "Now, the superintendent controls the machine, not the other way around," boasts Livingstone. He can vary the tine pattern and depth. Repairs are fewer. No longer does he have to go over a green two or three times to get the core pattern he wants. "We are giving the superintendent a fair go," he states.

There are a few lessons to be learned from Livingstone's experience. When you haven't grown accustomed to a certain performance

from a machine, you are more likely to want to change it. Secondly, it helps those who design machinery to operate and maintain their prototypes to see practical shortcomings they overlooked.

Because Livingstone's exposure to aerifiers was brief before he started redesigning them, his standards were different. Things he saw superintendents accept, he rejected. As a contractor, his need for a fast, reliable machine was closely felt. The fact that this was his chance to prove himself as a private businessman made success very important to him. His lack of engineering background may have caused a few redesigns, but it brought new thought to a standard way of doing things.

But, when it came to marketing his invention, Livingstone wanted someone experienced in the existing international distribution structure of turf products. He met an American in Sydney who travelled extensively selling artificial turf to sports complexes in Australia, Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia and Europe. Livingstone created an international marketing company called GreenCare International and made the American, Dale Hansen, executive vice president.

Australian inventors are the source of much new thinking on aerifier design today. Banks Multicore is another Australian company marketing new concepts in aerification in North America today. The Toro Com-



The Banks Multicore aerifier also originated in Australia.

pany purchased the marketing rights of Roh, a New Zealand manufacturer of aerifiers.

The opportunity provided in Australia to serve hundreds of bowling clubs, golf courses and sports stadiums has brought new energy and technology to the aerifier

business. The growing use of aerifiers in the United States has made this market attractive to Australian companies. These companies are bound to influence the competitive business of aerifier manufacturing in the coming years. ☞

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