

Leveling the playing field

BY MARTY CURTIS

Growing up in a small town on the South Dakota prairie, I used to have to travel 50 miles or more to play ball. The drives seemed endless to me. Finally arriving at our destination, we poured out of the bus, filled with boundless energy and the confidence that we could play with anybody!

As our team gathered on the field, we always gazed around the ballpark to check out the general conditions. Memories of bold-colored advertising on outfield fences, smells of freshly mowed grass, and brightly chalked batter's box and base lines remain vivid in my mind.

The outfielders looked over the grass to see how short it was cut, trying to get an idea of how the ball would roll. They checked the warning track, if there was one, and gauged the distance between the turf and the fence while waiting for the coach to hit fly balls.

Infielders lingered at their various positions, ready to start pre-game warm-ups. We scuffed around the infield dirt checking conditions and fielding grounders, taking relays from the outfielders, and turning some double plays. The starting battery warmed up on the sidelines for a few minutes before moving on to the field to try out the slope of the mound.

The ballparks we played on varied from town to town in their design and condition. Some physical characteristics, such as the size of the ballpark, seemed proportionate with the town's size. But good maintenance was not a product of either size or wealth. The quality of the maintenance reflected instead the dedication and direction of the civic leaders. As a young ballplayer, I just accepted that some fields were less desirable to play on without wondering why. Now, after playing ball for nearly 50 years at various levels, I'm still impressed stepping onto a well-maintained field, only now I understand how and why.

Safety first

We of course try to maintain fields in the best possible condition for our athletes' safety. A smooth, level playing field is an important factor in keeping players from injury. And, from the perspective of municipal parks and rec leaders, avoiding litigation stemming from negligence is key.

Another point to consider is the need to schedule make-up games caused by rain or standing water; with the large number of teams playing on a limited number of fields, it can be difficult to schedule make-ups during league or tournament play. A well-maintained field can dramatically reduce the number of make-up



Barney Lopas of the Anaheim Angels cut this flag into his outfield after 9/11. Credit: PBI/Gordon Photo.

games needed by eliminating the standing water problem. As a player, I'm as disappointed today as I was as a kid to arrive at a ballpark eager for a game only to find unplayable conditions!

So what should you consider when planning maintenance for your ballfield? First, talk to the experts, the people who know about turf and how best to care for it. Next, purchase quality, durable equipment that is versatile and easy to operate. Remember that soil conditions change from day to day, and each park and complex will have its own special needs. Finally, familiarize your crew with the operation of the equipment and your high standards of maintenance. The turf industry offers a variety of teaching aids to help you learn about quality care for your playing fields. Take advantage of these opportunities.

When done right, a well-maintained playing field adds to the safety, enjoyment, and success of every player, no matter what their part in the game. And playing teaches us so much about others and so much more about ourselves. If you lose, say little. If you win, say less!

ST

Marty Curtis is president of Rahn Industries, manufacturer of the Rahn Infield Groomer, 800-298-1707.



DIAMOND GROOMER

Bannerman Ltd. has available two groomers used to shape, level, and care for baseball diamonds. The B-BP-6 Ballpark-6 model has five grooming tools, including ripper blade, rake, leveler, roller, and finishing brush. Options include: extension wing brush kit; hydraulic tractor top link; 50-gal. water tank with spray nozzle; and long tine "fluffing" rake.

Bannerman/800-665-2696
For information, circle 198

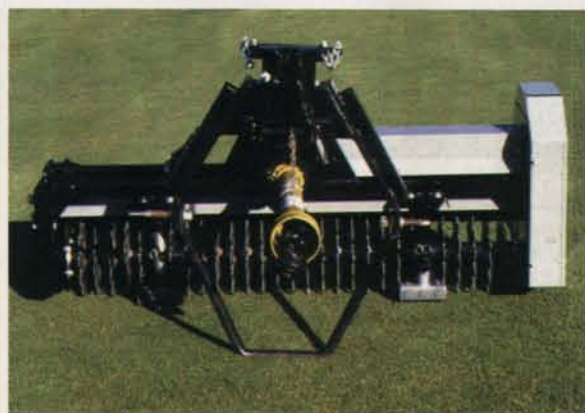
42-IN. ZERO-TURN MOWER

The Swisher ZTR 42-in. commercial cutting width mower will make short order of the biggest mowing jobs. The easy handling and maneuverability make mowing around trees, shrubs, and obstacles a walk in the park. The unit features: 17.5-hp Briggs & Stratton OHV engine; twin hydrostatic transmissions; comfortable high back seat with arm rests; twin comfort grip control levers; mid-mount mowing deck; and 2-yr. engine warranty.

Swisher Inc./660/747-8183
For information, circle 194



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Circle 117 on Inquiry Card



MODULAR POWER RAKE

The productivity and versatility of the Harley Power Box Rake has made this attachment very popular. The new modular design lets you choose or upgrade to a rake that's right for you and your budget.

Features include: Double #50 drive chain in oil bath; reversible box endplates for forward or reverse box raking with any attachment plate; removable and reversible endplates for windrowing or reverse box raking (no bolts, just pull the bins); adjustable Rhino-Hide barrier above the roller allows you to quickly react to soil moisture conditions; and dual independently adjustable gauge wheels allow for skim passes for over-seeding, or adjust to cut drainage grades.

GLENMAC, Inc./800-437-9779

For information, circle 195



HELP INFIELD MOISTURE CAPACITY

A common problem is an infield skin's top inch becoming saturated with water after a rain-storm, while the lower 3-4 in. remain dry. Beacon Ballfields says a "plow pan" forms when water takes suspended silt and clay particles off the skin surface and drains through coarser sand particles. These fine particles clog the open spaces in the mix at a point about 1 to 1 1/2 in. down.

Beacon's Plow Pan Spiker penetrates through the top 1-2 in. to break up the pan and remix the infield soil. The unit has forged spikes that should never need replaced. Both the 4- and 6-ft. models hold standard cement blocks for more penetration.

Beacon Ballfields/800-747-5985

For information, circle 191

GANG REEL FOR BASEBALL FIELDS

ProMow introduces The FLEX, a gang reel mowing system designed in part for baseball fields and infields. The 5-ft. cutting path will deliver a scissors-type cut and a healthier field by not chopping the grass.

ProMow/877-477-6669

For information, circle 193

NEW GROUND-FOLLOWING ROTARIES

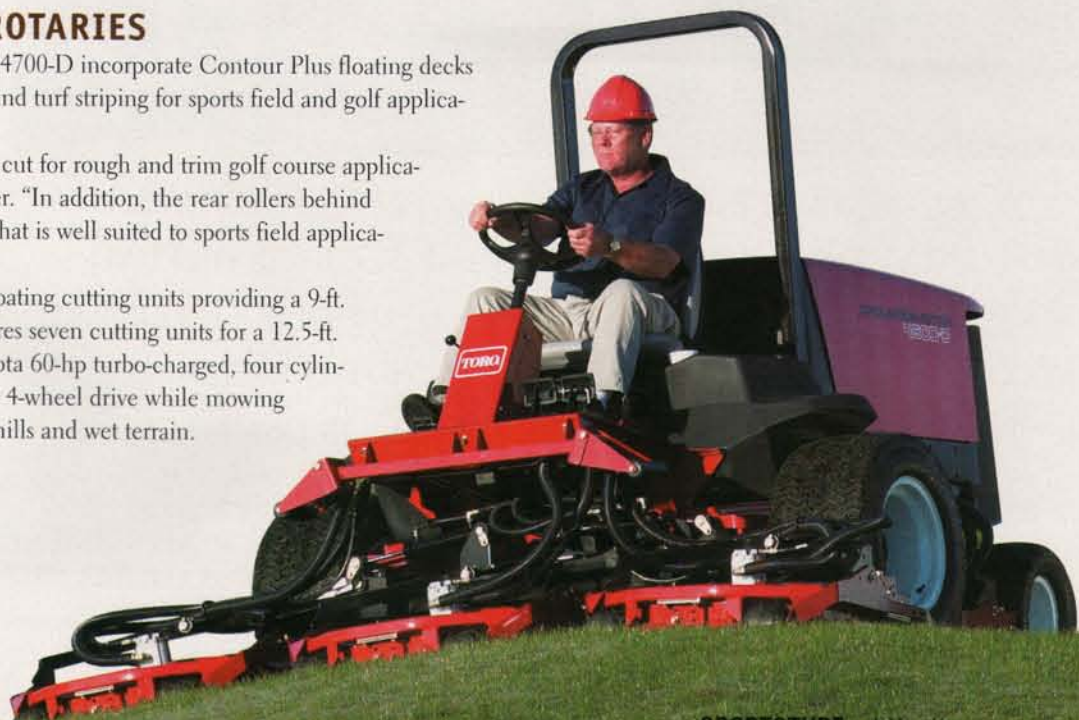
The new Toro Groundsmaster 4500-D and 4700-D incorporate Contour Plus floating decks with full rear rollers to deliver a precision cut and turf striping for sports field and golf applications.

"These mowers deliver a premier quality of cut for rough and trim golf course applications," said Tim Koch, Toro marketing manager. "In addition, the rear rollers behind each deck provide an attractive striping effect that is well suited to sports field applications."

The Groundsmaster 4500-D features five floating cutting units providing a 9-ft. width of cut; the Groundsmaster 4700-D features seven cutting units for a 12.5-ft. width of cut. Both units are powered by a Kubota 60-hp turbo-charged, four cylinder, diesel engine. The full-time, bi-directional 4-wheel drive while mowing assures dependable traction when negotiating hills and wet terrain.

The Toro Company/952-888-8801

For information, circle 190





ELECTRIC CHAIN SAW

Remington introduces their newly designed 3.5-hp electric chain saw. The improved styling gives the chain saw a modern powerful look full of safety elements, including a full wrap-around front handle makes for comfortable handling at all cutting angles, while the rear handle features a one-of-a-kind soft-touch grip for comfort and reduced vibration.

Built-in steel bucking teeth are great for leverage and pivoting, while a narrow nose bar tip and chain design safeguard against kickback. The new finger chain tension system offers convenient chain tensioning without using a screwdriver and a power cord hitch holds cord for safer cord management.

This new Remington electric chain saw is one of the lightest in the industry at 9.5 lbs.

Remington/800-858-8501

For information, circle 057

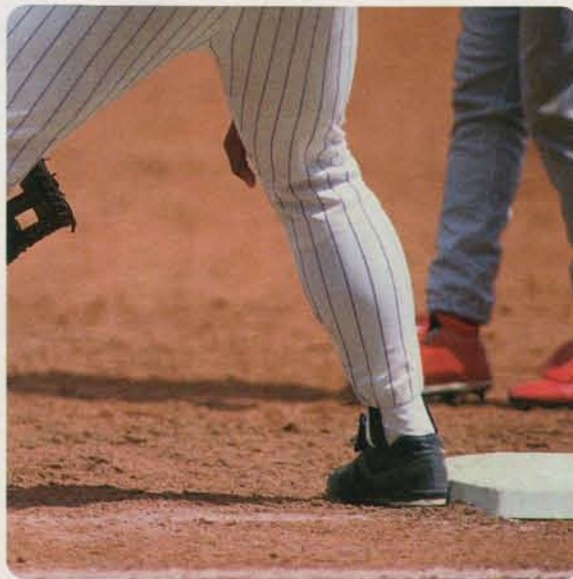
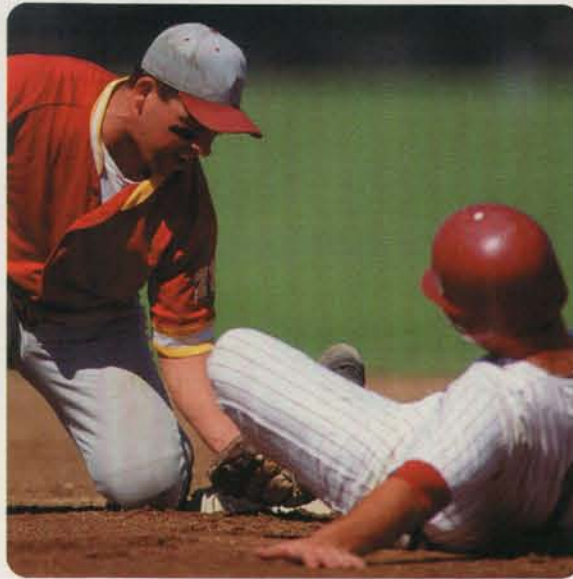


HUSTLING HYDROS

The Hustler line of Hydro WalkBehinds keeps growing. New this year is a 37-in. model and an electric start option on the 17-hp Kawasaki engine. Deck sizes can be either 48 or 54 in. Patented H-Bar steering makes the Hustler Hydro WalkBehind easy to learn and operate; it features simple motorcycle-style controls with a forward twist to go forward and a twist back for reverse. Add the Hustler Sulky and the Hustler Hydro WalkBehind becomes a zero-turn front-mount mower. Other options include a deck-mounted catcher, mulch kit, and Gator blades.

Hustler Turf Equipment/
800-395-4757

For information, circle 056



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Soilmaster®, made from a unique montmorillonite mineral, has been specially designed for great-looking, top-performing fields. Each granule has a network of thirsty pores that quickly wicks water away from the playing surface. Their irregular shape promotes drainage and helps infields resist compaction. The result – surer footing, truer bounces and great performance.



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BALLFIELD "FINISHER"

Broyhill's Ball Field Finisher ensures top-quality pattern definition for all types of soils with its 12 x 2-in. diamond grooves. The standard flip-up scarifier and 45-degree back slope level bar allows for easy grading, surface break-up, or landscaping.

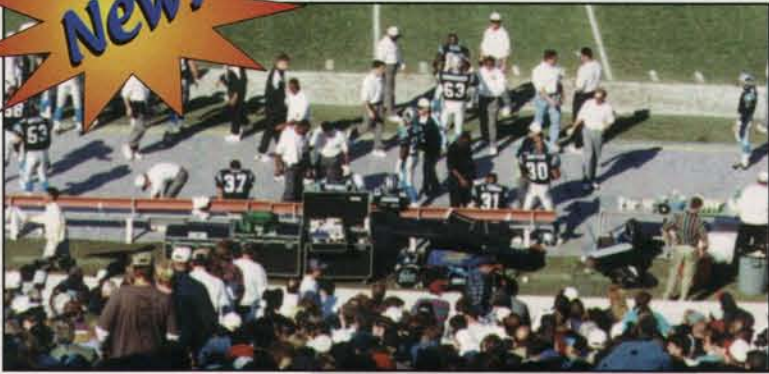
The Finisher can quickly be attached to and detached from various turf vehicles. The optional electric two-point lift raises or lowers attachments on the rear of the vehicle for easy use and transport.

Broyhill/800-228-1003, x34
For information, circle 192






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LOADER BACKHOE

Featuring a servo-controlled hydrostatic transmission, a 25-hp diesel engine and an exclusive ESL backhoe design, the new Allmand TLB-425 heavy-duty compact tractor loader backhoe can perform in many applications.

The backhoe design features oversized polished pins with replaceable composite bearings and urethane lip seals in all working joints to reduce friction and extend service intervals. For safety, the unit has a boom lock that is engaged by the operator.

With a maximum lift capacity of 2,100 lbs. and a 3,400-lb. breakout force, the loader bucket meets many needs; a maximum loading height of 90 in. enables the 1/2-cu.yd. loader bucket to dump loads where other tractors could not reach.

Allmand Brothers/800-562-1373
For information, circle 204

Circle 119 on Inquiry Card



SOLID STEEL BODY & FRAME

Snapper's SPLH171KW has a solid steel body and frame. It also features a 17-hp OHV Kawasaki engine and Accutrac on-the-go fingertip hydrostatic drive control with comfort-loop steering. The full-floating deck with easy height-of-cut adjustment is constructed with 7-gauge (3/16-in.) steel. Also included is the field-serviceable spindle assembly for ease of repair. The patented Ninja Mulching System can be added to the deck to leave lawns looking manicured without bags of grass clippings.

Snapper/800-762-7737

For information, circle 059

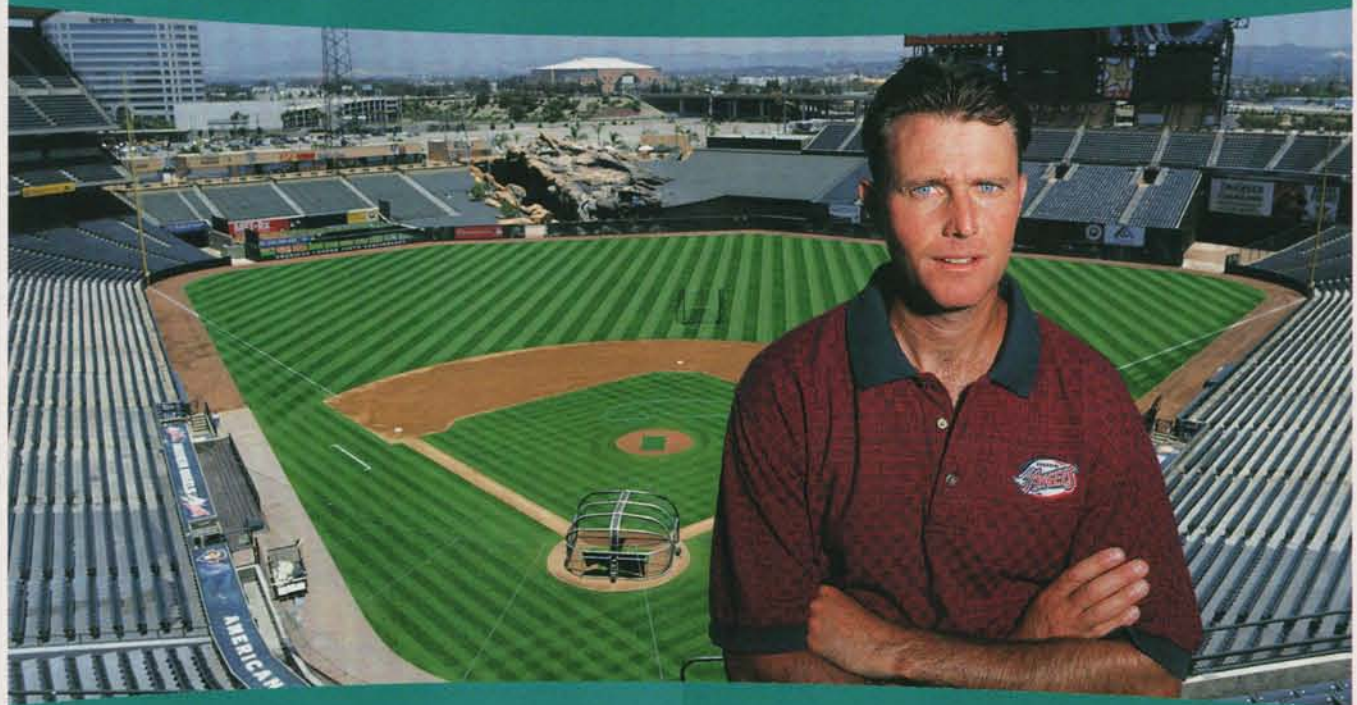


REDUCE USER FATIGUE

Husqvarna's WHF5218ETS features the Easy Touch System (ETS) with pistol grip controls and a one-lock system (instead of two independent locks). The ETS reduces fatigue and provides the user with more leverage. The mower's Quick Lift deck allows height to be adjusted from the operator's position, eliminating the need to leave the controls. Floating decks use the Advanced Cutting Systems technology that follows the terrain evenly for a precise cut. The hydraulic system uses fully synthetic Mobil 1 15W-50. A 52-in. deck increases productivity, and a 5.3-gal. fuel tank provides up to 6 hours of mowing time. An 18-hp V-Twin Kawasaki engine with standard electric start powers the unit.

Husqvarna Forest & Garden Co./800-HUSKY-62
For information, circle 056

I've worked in lots of ballparks with many different turfgrasses and Bull's-Eye is the best I've seen. It outperforms other bermudas in color, overseeding and recovery.



Let's Talk Turf.

Bull's-Eye sets a new standard for bermudas with improved performance in every category. It's tougher, has improved shade tolerance and returns from overseeding with a vengeance. And the color? Other bermudas pale in comparison. Ideal for sports fields of any kind—just ask the pros.



—Barney Lopas
Field Manager
Edison International Field,
home of the Anaheim Angels
Anaheim, CA.

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Circle 120 on Inquiry Card



QUICK COUPLER SYSTEM

John Deere has introduced iMatch quick-attach hitch for all 4000 TEN series tractors. The system converts the three points of a 3-point hitch to fixed hooks and attaching points. You simply back up the tractor and slide on the PTO shafts. Older implements can still be attached to 4000 TEN series CUTS by just removing the iMatch mounting plate.

iMatch compatible implements include 550, 660, 680 tillers, all utility and MX-type rotary cutters, compatible flail mowers, and Frontier rear blades.

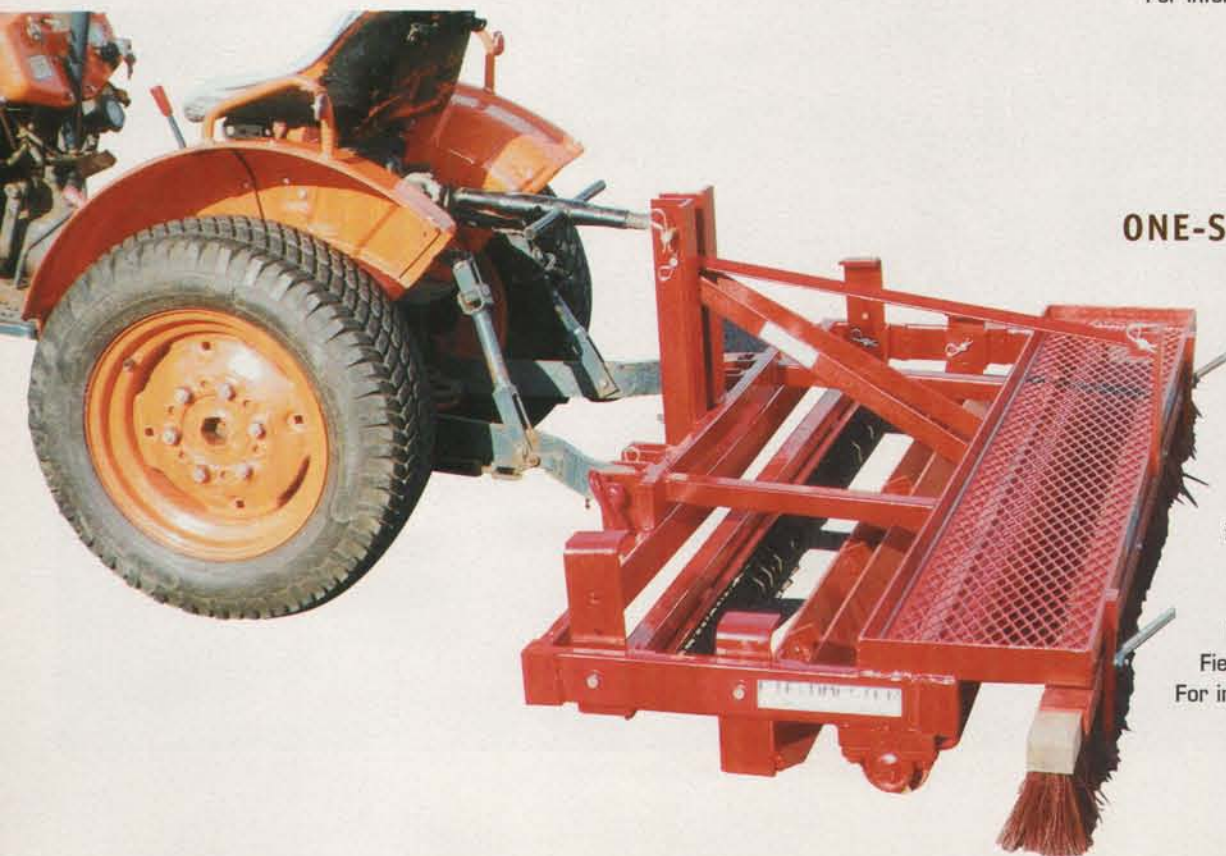
John Deere/800-537-8233
For information, circle 202



DIAMOND GROOMER

Bannerman Ltd. manufactures groomers that quickly will level and care for baseball diamonds, warning tracks, and walking trails. The B-DM-6 Diamond Master has five grooming tools: ripper blade, rake, leveler, roller, and finishing brush. Options include extension wing brush kit; hydraulic tractor top link; 50-gal. water tank with spray nozzle; and long tine "fluffing" rake.

Bannerman/800-665-2696
For information, circle 197



ONE-STEP GROOMER

Field Master's infield groomer is a three-point hitch or drag machine that comes in 4- and 6-ft. widths and feature: combination scarifier/dethatcher bar; dual drag leveling bars; roller with built-in scrapper bar; built-in weight tray; and final sweep for textured finish.

The Fieldmaster unit is used by the Girls College World Series in Oklahoma City, the National Baseball Congress in Wichita, the College World Series in Omaha, and was used in the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta. Gary Hines, superintendent of the Lawrence (KS) Parks Dept has a groomer that has taken care of 21 fields for more than 7 years. "What I like best about it is, it works," says Hines.

Field Master/800-728-3581
For information, circle 199

BREAKTHROUGH TOOL TECHNOLOGY

No more dropped or lost sockets, no more accidental disconnects, and no more stuck sockets in hard to reach spots—that's the guarantee of the new Link(r) symbol here] locking tool technology. Greater efficiency, more productivity and greater safety are the benefits to the professional mechanic, says the manufacturer.

"I think they're fantastic; they're useful as heck. You're not dropping sockets and you're not fishing them out. I wish I had had them for the past 40 years," says Julius Liptak, turf technician, Beverly Country Club, Chicago.

Only Link makes this Hand-to-Work Promise: all LINK tools will stay solidly locked together from the user's hand to the work, no matter the distance, the number or type of tools, or the number or sequence of the connections.

The Link Tool System works unlike any other: simply push on any tool (with just one hand!). When you hear the distinctive "click" sound, it's securely locked and guaranteed to stay locked together until the user decides to pull up on the gold collar (again with just one hand) to quick release.

Link(r) locking extensions, ratchets, and other drive tools are available in 3/8-inch and 1/4-inch sizes.

Link Tools/888-727-5465

For information, circle 196



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VERSATILE UNIT FOR BASEBALL FIELDS

The SISIS Quadraplay can do four things in one pass to produce a true, level, firm but uncompacted surface, says the manufacturer.

The unit's universal frame connects to any conventional tractor's three-point linkage and also incorporates a carrying platform for line marking equipment, hand tools, etc. It can be used on infield clay areas as well as infield and outfield turf, even warning tracks.

A range of implements is available, including lute, roller, slitter, brush, choice of rakes, seeder, and Diamond Buster for severely compacted surfaces.

SISIS Equipment/864-261-6218

For information, circle 200



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MULTI-PURPOSE MACHINE

The Kromer AFMM is a multi-purpose machine for athletic field maintenance. The grooming attachment gives a uniform soft top surface for safe playing. The Ridge

Remover eliminates the ridge around the infield grass, which helps prevent injuries.

The 50-gal. liner can line several football and soccer fields while you ride in comfort. This tank can be used for spraying chemicals or water to condition infields. A line cutter creates an inlaid line and paints at the same time.

Kromer Co./952-472-4167

For information, circle 201

VERSATILE HAND TOOL

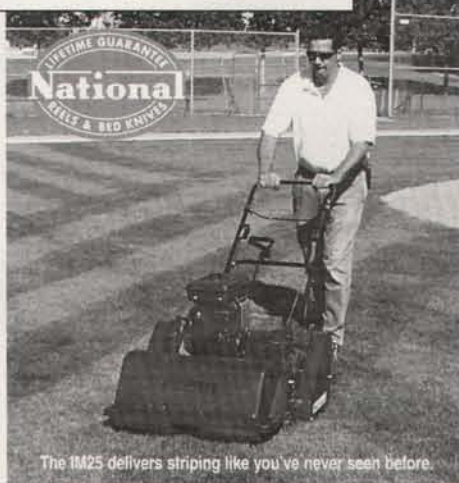
The RedMax SGCX2600S is a heavy-duty edger, trimmer, pruner, and brush cutter all in one tool, powered by a 26.2 cc four-cycle engine that provides good handling, 40 percent more fuel economy, and 80 percent fewer exhaust emissions, says RedMax.

The company says its reciprocators cut like gas-powered scissors. A 1-yr. commercial warranty is available.

RedMax/800-291-8251
For information, circle 055



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LOADER/TOOL CARRIER

This compact articulated wheel loader/tool carrier features tool visibility, pilot control hydraulics, ergonomic operator's station, universal tool carrier, and 2-speed auto shift drivetrain, says the manufacturer. The VersaDyne has a 3,000-lb. lift capacity with its 85-hp Cummins turbo diesel engine and an integrated rear axle/transfer case with 10-degree oscillation. Front and rear axles include 45 percent limited slip differentials for skidless operation on turf.

Axles feature planetary reduction hubs to reduce driveline stress and internal sealed wet brakes for uncontaminated operation.

NMC-WOLLARD/800-656-6867
For information, circle 054



TURBO MOWER

John Deere's 1600 Turbo wide-area mower provides power, maneuverability, traction, and cut quality, it says. Powered by a 64-hp turbo-charged Yanmar diesel engine, the unit can operate all day at a clipping rate of 8.5 acres an hour at 6.5 mph without refueling. The mower includes a hydrostatic, dual transaxle that achieves a mowing speed of up to 8.6 mph. Transport speed is 14.5 mph.

With a cutting width of nearly 11 ft., the mower accommodates three commercial 7-gauge mower decks, a 62-in. center-mower deck and two 42-in. wing decks. The mower's anti-scalp rollers included on the center mower deck help ensure a clean cut. A standard water temperature gauge as well as a hood and air intake system reduces downtime in dry, dusty conditions.

Standard features include: turn brakes for additional traction on side hills and tight trimming areas; electronic cruise control; cup holder; and toolbox.

John Deere/800-537-8233

For information, circle 203



Our innovations in sport and recreational surfaces, are born of experience, research and testing.

Stabilizer Solutions, Inc. is the developer of **Stabilizer™** the all climate, natural cohesive for crushed stone and native soil infield mixes. Other product innovations in sport surfaces include **TurfGrids®** and **Hilltopper™**. **TurfGrids®** fibers stabilize turf for baseball, football or soccer fields, equestrian venues and golf courses. **Hilltopper™** is a polymer coated clay for baseball or softball mounds and home plate areas.



stabilizer

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It can be used with other ballfield amendments. Stabilizer is available internationally as a bagged component to be mixed on-site.

Stabilizer Pre-Mixes are available from our regional dealers. We have developed Pre-Mixes for Infields, Warning Tracks, Soccer Fields, Pathways, Parking and Recreational Areas. Contact us for a dealer near you.



Optimize your turf's
shear strength & load bearing

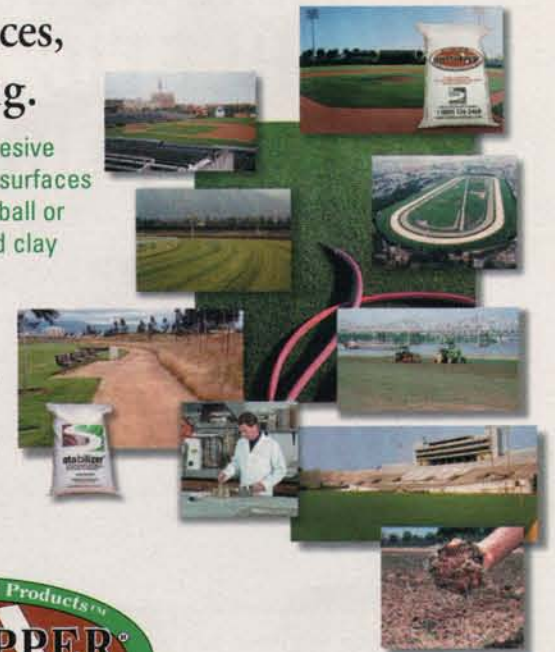
TurfGrids® are safe, non-toxic, polypropylene fibers that help provide a consistent athletic surface that can be worked and maintained with conventional equipment. These small fibers act as a mass of indestructible roots. Turf roots intertwine and interlock with these "fiber roots" resulting in an extremely strong reinforced turf surface that resists divoting and rutting. **TurfGrids®** can be used for complete field stabilization or in selected high wear areas. **TurfGrids®** are a proven performer on all types of turf surfaces including, golf courses, turf race tracks, baseball, football and soccer fields. **Improve Stability, Drainage, Divot Resistance, Aesthetics and Durability**



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Circle 124 on Inquiry Card



DEBRIS BLOWERS

The Toro Company has introduced two new debris blowers, the 400 and 600. Both have 1/4-in. steel frames for long life to clean areas of leaves, twigs, pine needles, clippings, and other debris. The 400 also can clear dew in minutes for early morning mowing; the compact unit goes anywhere your tow vehicle goes. And airflow direction is easily changed from the tractor's operator seat.

The 600 has a 36-in. fan diameter that produces an air velocity of 153 mph; the bi-directional discharge allows you to change the direction of the airflow instantly.

The Toro Company/952-888-8801

For information, circle 063

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Tif-Way Sports and **Tifton Turf** teamed up to provide the ultimate in **athletic field construction** and **renovation**. The combined strength of these two companies allows us to handle any size of athletic field or facility. Paying attention to **details** is a big part of a winning athletic team...it is also a big part of a great athletic field. From taking **soil samples**, determining proper field **drainage** and **laser leveling** the field to insure proper **slope** to selecting the right **turf product** and **installing** the turf to our exacting standards we make sure your athletic field is ready for you and your competition. We will also work with your grounds superintendent to **develop a specific grow-in schedule**. For more information about our athletic field work and field construction steps, call us at 800-841-6645.

Circle 125 on Inquiry Card

NEW JACOBSEN G-PLEX GREENS MOWER



The new Jacobsen G-Plex Control-Arm triplex greens mower, from Textron Golf, Turf & Specialty Products, combines a lightweight platform, ergonomic design, precise cut, and high performance. Previously marketed under Textron's

Ransomes brand, it incorporates ease-of-operation features and measures up to Jacobsen's legendary, 83-year reputation for quality.

Three 22-in., 11-blade reels provide an exceptional quality of cut. The patented, parallel-link head system assures level ground contact. Swing-out reels make cleaning, adjustments, and change-outs easier. For simplified operation, an innovative mow-speed system automatically switches back and forth from transport speed to mowing speed.

Textron Golf & Turf/888-922-TURF

For information, circle 062



VERTI-CUT MACHINE

Thatch Master verti-cut machines are designed with managers of sports fields in mind. They need only 25 hp, and are easy to adjust. The thin blades do not leave slow healing grooves.

Blades can easily be adjusted shallow for runner control or deep for digging out even heavy accumulations of thatch. Five-foot working width gets the job done fast. The blades are inexpensive and easy to change.

Turf Specialties/863-289-3330
For information, circle 061



DINGO'S STUMP GRINDER QUITE A SIGHT

I witnessed a demonstration of Toro's Dingo TX 425 compact utility loader's stump grinder attachment and Toro just tore it up. In just a few minutes and maybe a half dozen cuts, this unit had dug a hole big enough for three kegs of beer. The grinder has a 17-in. cutter wheel with 12 cutting teeth, a wheel speed of 2,000 rpm, and a tooth tip speed of 148 ft. per second—all

of which combines to dig a big hole while the operator looks like he's comfortable enough to have a sandwich. You can position the wheel index at a 30-degree angle too, to get at those troublesome roots.

The operator showed me how easy it is to attach tools to the Dingo; even I can turn two locking pins and connect two hydraulic lines. Key also is that you can fit the Dingo in places where traditional grinders can't go—that's saving money and time.—Eric Schroder

The Toro Company/
800-344-8676
For information, circle 060

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