

GOLF COURSE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

VOLUME 10, NUMBER 4
JUNE / JULY 2002 • \$4.25

The French get grooving

PARIS, France - Europe's first Graden machines outside the UK were purchased by William Warnick, course manager at France's premier golfing complex, Golf de St Nom La Bretech, near Paris. Warnick knew about the Graden from his native America and when he started to hear about the Graden in the UK golf market, he wanted to know more. After reading articles written by the USGA and the STRI about the Graden, he was convinced about the benefits compared to some conventional management practices.

Warnick spoke to Keith Kensett of Turfmasters, who not only imports the machine with the Northern half of Turfmasters, STS, but even more importantly, both companies actually use the machines extensively. He could not only answer all his queries from a greenkeeping point of view, but also confirmed the number of the world's top golf courses who have bought and use the machines. Even though Warnick had not actually seen the Graden working, his research indicated that it wasn't a gamble to purchase the machines.

Designed and built in Melbourne, Australia, the powerful and reliable Graden is a purpose-built deep scarifier capable of creating a groove up to 13/4" (45mm). An article written by the USGA on the Graden showed that when using 1, 2 or 3mm blades, the surface area impacted for aeration purposes can be nearly 300% greater than that achieved by standard hollow coring, at the same time creating less surface disruption. Indeed, a major attraction to Warnick was the cultural benefits that could be achieved with minimal interference to play.

"We have a heavy tournament schedule in the spring and a PGA European Tour event in the fall so traditional hollow coring causes disruption and member complaints. This spring we hollow cored one of the two 18-hole courses at the beginning of April and, because of the cold spring, the greens were in poor condition until the end of the month. We received two Graden pedestrian models in time to do the other 18-hole course on the 15th of April. The Gradens allowed us to remove more thatch than the hollow core machines and yet with a light topdressing the greens were playable in just a few days." Commented Warnick, who continued, "A surprising use for the Graden was for the two newly constructed USGA greens we built this winter. We used our own sod/turf, but the surface was uneven. With one pass with the Graden we were able to lower the height to 3.5mm and the greens were good. With one more pass at the end of May, they will be as smooth as all the other greens on the course."

