

## Owner's Report On Best, Worst Riding Mowers

left side of the deck. The second is a stronger bolt for the mower lift at the hydraulic cylinder."

**Lonnie Andis, Dupont, Ind.:** "It's dependable and easy to operate," says Lonnie, well satisfied with his 1993 Deere 318 mower. "It would help if the mower deck was easier to take off."

**Charles W. Andersen, Northboro, Iowa:** Charles is happy with his 1993 Grasshopper 718 equipped with 60-in. deck.

"The only money I've spent on it is in gas, oil filters and sharpening blades. I haven't spent a dime on repairs," he says. "The only thing that would improve it is if the deck was designed with more flotation."

**David Neises, Dubuque, Iowa:** "It turns real short and the hydrostatic transmission works great," says David about his 1997 Deere STX 38 mower. "The Kohler engine runs fine but is quite noisy. It could be made to run quieter."

**David J. Schatz, Hayes, S. Dak.:** "I love my 1996 Deere F 525 riding mower equipped with an 18 hp Kawasaki engine," says David. "It has 100 trouble-free hours on it. I have cut a lot of grass - 4 ft. tall and shorter - and weeds of all types. Under normal conditions, it operates on 0.8 to 1 gal. of gas per hour; more in heavy cutting. It's built for heavy cutting with no break-downs. It turns sharp, mows clean and fast, and cuts mowing time by 60 percent when compared with the tractor mower we used before."

"I only wish Deere would make the F 525 with hydraulic deck lift and tilt for easier cleaning and blade sharpening."

**Buren Lowe, Joaquin, Texas:** Buren's "very satisfied" with his 1997 Deere STX 38 mower. "It's comfortable to ride, has conveniently located controls and great maneuverability, and is easy to steer in tight corners and curves. It also produces very level cutting results."

**Ronald Miles, Newark Valley, N.Y.:** "The foot control of the hydrostatic drive is great. It's easy to maneuver with your hands free for steering," says Ronald, pleased with his 1993 Deere LX 176. "The only problems I've had are with a couple cheap plastic parts: The plastic throttle control and the plastic hinge for the hood have broken."

"I use a Deere front-mount blade that works great for clearing snow and manure."

**Donald Sunken, Wenona, Ill.:** "I like the foot-controlled hydrostatic transmission," says a well satisfied Donald about his 1994 Murray model 46901X92A. "The only improvement the company could make is improving the deck float since it seems to cut too close when backing up."

**Darrell Templeton, Loda, Ill.:** Darrell likes his 1997 Grasshopper 616 equipped with a 16 hp engine and 48-in. deck. "It performs exceptionally well," he says. "They don't lie about this machine when they say it cuts mowing time in half."

He's also satisfied with his Cab Cadet 149 equipped with a 14 hp engine and 44-in. deck. "The tractor has enough power to do just about anything I ask of it," he says.

**Dale Glendenning, Palermo, Maine:** Dale's generally well satisfied with his 1997 Walker model MDG G.H.S. equipped with 48-in. deck. But he says it could use a few improvements, too. "The choke control should be relocated from the left side of the seat to a more accessible forward position," he says. "It could also use a more shock absorbing seat with a tilt forward position to drain off rain when parked."

**Kelly Jay Homolka, Wilber, Neb.:** "It works fine and is easy to work on," says Kelly about his 1993 Ariens mower equipped with 11 1/2 hp engine. "My only complaint is that I wish it would turn shorter because it's hard to maneuver around trees, shrubs, etc."

**Tony Ohm, Rochester, Minn.:** "It's built better than any other mower we looked at in its class, including Deere," says Tony about his 1996 Cub Cadet 2135. "We really like the hydrostatic transmission, which saves a lot of time in changing directions."

"The only improvement I can see is that I wish we would have gotten a bigger deck. Ours is only a 38-in. deck and the tractor has enough power to handle one 48 in. wide."

**Neil Noble, Shelburne, Ontario:** "The tractor's a pleasure to drive and power steering is a nice feature," says Neil, pleased with his 1995 Deere 345 mower equipped with 54-in. deck. "It does a good job mowing and the mower goes on and comes off easily."

"I wish it had a hydraulic seat like bigger tractors for operating over rough ground."

## Front-End Loader Mounts On Garden Tractor

Howard Vogel's 1970's Deere 110 lawn tractor is equipped with a front-end loader that he uses to carry 50-lb. bags of water softener salt, remove snow from his driveway and haul brush away from his pond.

The factory-built loader was originally designed for a small crawler tractor. Vogel's son-in-law started to convert it to use on the Deere tractor but he passed away before he could complete the project. So Vogel finished it himself.

He built mounting brackets for the loader, which is equipped with a 36-in. wide bucket, out of heavy angle iron. A hydraulic pump mounted on the loader frame is powered off the tractor's snowblower pulley.

He filled the tractor's rear flotation tires with 80 lbs. of fluid apiece to counter-balance the tractor. To further counter-balance it, he also built a weight box, which is fitted with 140 lbs. of cut-down tractor suitcase weights, for the rear of the tractor.



Vogel converted the factory-built loader to fit his Deere garden tractor.

He also uses chains on the rear tires at all times when he uses the loader.

Vogel paid \$500 for the loader, which he sandblasted and repainted. The bucket is painted yellow to match the Deere's wheel hubs.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Howard Vogel, R.R. 3, Waverly, Iowa 50677 (ph 319 352-4731).

**H.C. Satre, Irma, Alberta:** "It's been trouble-free, unlike the Craftsman mower I had before," says H.C., happy with his 1995 PowrKraft 18/46 mower. "The 18 hp Briggs and Stratton engine has plenty of power and the hydrostatic drive is a pleasure to operate. I bought it at a Montgomery Wards store and the price was right."

"I just wish it had better headlights so I could see better when parking it in the machine shed. Also, the gas tank is a little small for cutting a yard as large as mine."

**Mel Hauck, Sauk Rapids, Minn.:** "It's extremely maneuverable on flat ground," says Mel about his 1995 Dixon ZTR 428 mower. "However, it needs a larger muffler because it runs too loud as is. It also needs better rear tires for increased traction on wet grass. And I'd like to see better cutting height adjustment in the middle settings since I never use the highest and lowest set-

tings."

**Earl Berry, Batesburg, S.C.:** "The only thing I'd like to see changed is relocating the clutch to the left pedal," says Earl, otherwise pleased with his 1996 Snapper SR-140.

**David B. Spink, Platteville, Wis.:** David's had trouble with his 1994 Deutz-Allis 616 mower.

"Generally, it starts hard and the engine breaks down frequently. We've gone through three main power belts. It needs a better belt routing system and easier engine maintenance, too."

**Larry L. Hansen, Rexburg, Idaho:** "It starts and runs very well, but there are problems, too," says Larry about his 1996 Sears mower powered by a 6 1/2 hp engine. "For example, you can't use it when it's wet because it doesn't discharge the grass and plugs up. Likewise, it won't blow the grass into the catcher bag, which is inconvenient to take off and put on to begin with."

## Mower Racing Catches On As "Family Sport"

"Lawn mower racing has grown tremendously the past few years. However, it's still a relatively inexpensive family sport and we're trying to keep it that way," says Fran Ivancic, Fultonville, N.Y., who recently sent FARM SHOW photos of a recent mower race he competed in.

Ivancic founded a lawn mower racing club four years ago. He sets up races in local communities and uses the ticket revenues from spectators to benefit local fire and ambulance departments, park committees, the Ronald McDonald House, and other charities.

"Ten years ago most people who raced lawn mowers cleaned and painted the machines but kept the original look. Today a lot of the mowers are painted to look like stock cars on the Nascar circuit. Speed has increased a lot. It used to be that 20 or 25 mph was fast. Now many mowers race at speeds of 35 to 40 mph. The extra speed is gained by changing belts and pulleys, using modified front ends, etc."

Ivancic has been racing mowers for the past 10 years. He drives a modified 1965 Ford 70 riding mower powered by an 8 hp engine. "I bought the mower in 1992 for \$150. The following two years I used it to win more than \$1,500, which I donated to

various causes. I lost only one race each year.

"The first year our club had only 8 or 10 racing mowers. Last year another club was formed in a nearby community. Now we sometimes have more than 50 mowers on hand for racing events."

Races are held once a month from May through September.

Most racers use "junked out" riding mowers which they modify and paint. "It's the closest most people ever come to racing stock cars. A stock car engine can cost \$120,000 and one season's racing requires thousands of dollars in upkeep. Or, you can modify and paint a riding mower for \$500 or less."

Handling is the key to doing well in this sport, says Ivancic. "For years I beat everyone with my 8 hp engine. Other mowers with bigger engines could go faster on the straightaway, but they couldn't go nearly as fast as I could on the corners. Stiffening up the front end and locking the rear end really helps a machine handle corners well."

There are 4 different classes of races. In all divisions, only mowers with 12 hp or smaller engines are eligible. The "Strictly Stock" division allows no modifications at all to the mower except for a tether kill switch (which is mandatory). Engines can be governed to as high as 3,800 rpms. No modifica-



Classes in mower racing include "Strictly Stock", "Super Stock", and "Modified".

tions can be made to the sheet metal, mufflers, wheels, or tires.

The "Super Stock" class allows engines to be governed as high as 4,400 rpms. Wheels and tires may be substituted with others of any origin as long as wheel rim diameter and width don't exceed the original. The sheet metal may be altered.

The "Modified" class is more of an open class where governors may be modified or removed, a straight pipe exhaust is allowed, wheels and tires may be substituted and sheet

metal altered. Posi-traction rear ends are allowed and the overall mower profile can be changed. Tires can be "staggered" (you can run a bigger tire on the mower's right side in order to turn more easily), tire air pressure can be adjusted, gearing can be altered, and the front end can be adjusted to the left or right or tipped forward or backward.

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