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# Tee to Green



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# President's Message

## The 2009 Season Is Far From a Washout



Well, I'm happy to say that this season's proved better than forecasted. Though the recordbreaking rains brought their fair share of challenges—added disease pressure, mechanical damage to turf while trying to prep the course for play each day—this seems like nothing compared to years past. Particularly when you think back on what it was like to manage our courses through the high temps and drought periods that hit pretty regularly from the mid-'90s through last season.

**GET GOLF  
READY  
IN 5 DAYS**



And then there's the economy. Remember all the doom-and-gloom about how reduced spending would affect the golf industry? Thankfully, for most of us in the Met area, nothing completely devastating came to pass. And for those of us who did suffer budget cuts and staff reductions, we've done a great job of navigating through choppy waters.

Although we're still not completely out of the woods, I think we can all feel pretty good in that we, as superintendents, have done our part to help our clubs get through a very difficult time.

### Bring Fuel to the Industry

Our hope, now, is that the golf industry, as a whole, continues to respond favorably in the next couple of years so we can grow the game of golf not only for our generation, but also for future generations.

With this in mind, the World Golf Foundation has launched a new program called "Get Golf Ready." Nationally branded, Get Golf Ready is designed to bring new golfers—and former golfers—into the game by providing reasonable education and instruction (five 60- to 90-minute group golf lessons at just \$99!) at golf facilities throughout the U.S. that have been certified to participate in the program.

The World Golf Foundation hopes to sign up 5,000 golf locations through 2011 with the promise of attracting 270,000 new adult golfers into the industry. In dollars and cents, the foundation projects that the program will generate \$700 million in golf-related spending over the course of this three-year initiative and spur 2.1 million new rounds of golf at courses across the country.

Because initiating and keeping a program like this up-and-running can be a tall order, the foundation is reaching out to national, regional, and local golf associations, as well as manufacturers, media, and companies for financial support.

All facets of the industry—the PGA of America, USGA, and GCSAA to name a few—have answered the call by donating significant sums to help administer the program, plus provide stipends to certified facilities. To date, the foundation has raised \$2.6 million—still shy of its \$3 million goal over three years.

This is the program in a nutshell. Anyone



*Tony Girardi, CGCS  
MetGCSA President*

interested in learning more can go to [GetGolfReady.com](http://GetGolfReady.com) or [PlayGolfAmerica.com](http://PlayGolfAmerica.com), where consumers will be directed to go in order to hunt down a program in their area.

This is an ambitious program to say the least, but what a great idea for stimulating the golf industry—and, in turn, our means of livelihood—in a tough economy.

### Don't Miss Our Season's Closing Events

I'd like to close my President's Message by urging everyone to participate on our season's remaining golf events. We have our annual Met Championship, along with the Met Area Team Championship Qualifier and the worthy Poa Annual Tournament scheduled for September 29 at The Meadow Brook Club.

On October 19, there's our Superintendent/Green Chairperson Tournament at Sleepy Hollow, and last but not least is the Met's Annual Assistants Championship on October 20 at Wykagyl Country Club.

I want to encourage all our member superintendents to support their assistants by allowing them to take a day to attend the Annual Assistants Championship. Far too few seem to take advantage of this important opportunity to connect with their peers, share their summer experiences and knowledge, and just kick back and have some well-deserved fun.

While we're on the subject of assistants, in this issue, we've recognized their important role with an article that both assistants—and the superintendents they work with—will enjoy reading. Please be sure to bring this article—written by and for assistants—to their attention.

Here's to an enjoyable remainder of the summer season.

**Tony Girardi, CGCS**  
*President*

## A Special Feature Written by—and for— Assistant Golf Course Superintendents . . .

In this issue, we'd like to recognize the important role assistant golf course superintendents play in our daily golf course maintenance operations with two special feature articles.

Though intended to offer helpful advice to assistants looking to hasten their progress up the career ladder, these articles will appeal to every turf professional—from graduating students to seasoned superintendents.

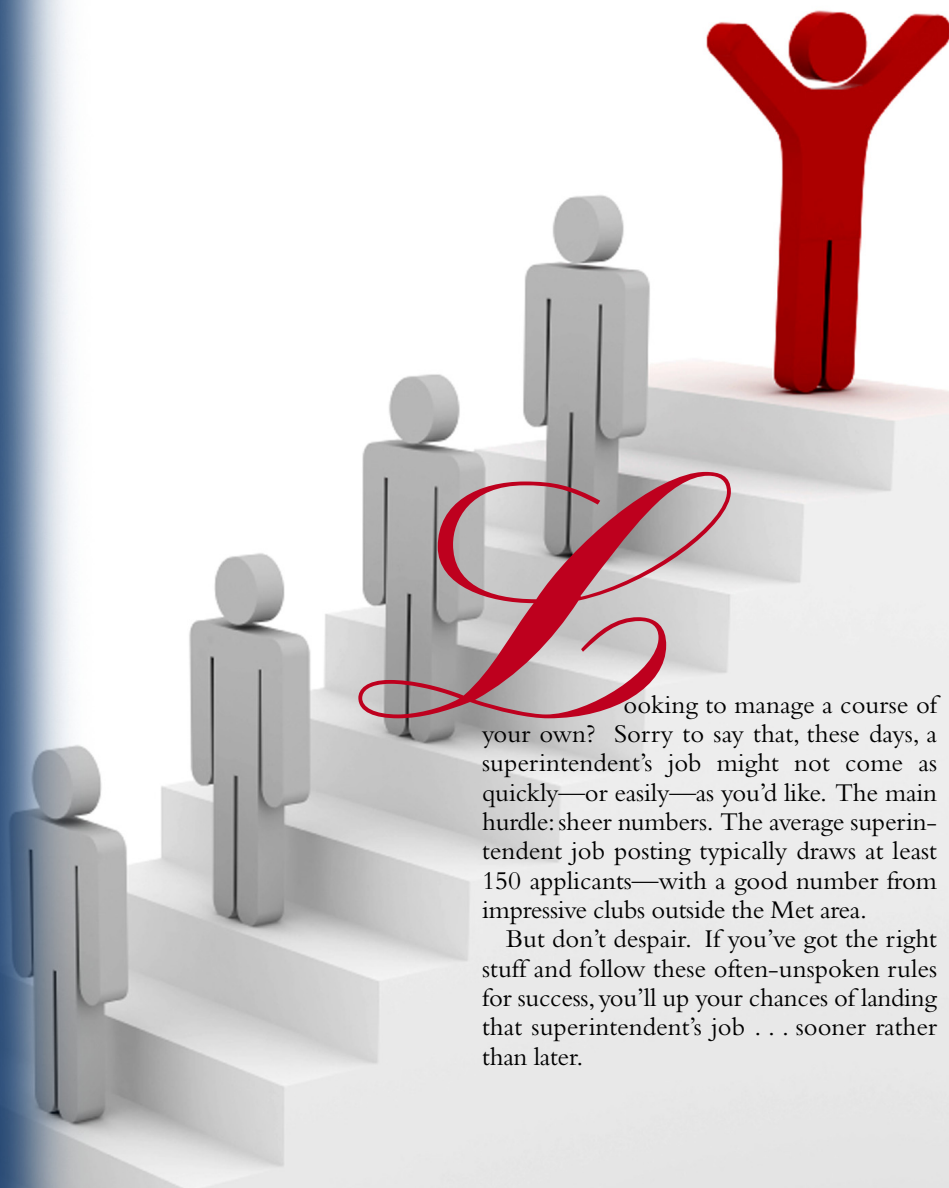
We'd like to offer special recognition to our three authors, who collaborated to bring us these special feature articles and who not only work tirelessly at their jobs, but also find the time to contribute to the *Tee to Green* and the Communications Committee.

Our hats off to . . .

*David Moffett of Ardsley Country Club, Paul Grabbe of North Jersey Country Club, and Mike Tollner of The Apawamis Club.*

# How to Land That 'Super' Job

## *Sage Advice for Assistants Itching to Move Ahead*



Looking to manage a course of your own? Sorry to say that, these days, a superintendent's job might not come as quickly—or easily—as you'd like. The main hurdle: sheer numbers. The average superintendent job posting typically draws at least 150 applicants—with a good number from impressive clubs outside the Met area.

But don't despair. If you've got the right stuff and follow these often-unspoken rules for success, you'll up your chances of landing that superintendent's job . . . sooner rather than later.



**Rule #1: Set Personal Goals.** Before launching into a serious job search, set your own personal goals. “The last thing you should do,” says Westchester Country Club Superintendent Joe Alonzi, “is settle for a job that falls short of your goals—just to get the title of superintendent. You have to think,” he continues, “about where that job will bring you next. Is it a good stepping stone to a bigger and better position someday—or a dead-end job that may actually harm your chances of moving up the ladder?”

Fenway Superintendent Rob Alonzi is another proponent of making careful choices. “The assistants’ jobs you accept—particularly the last one—should reflect your ultimate goal,” he suggests. “If you want a high-profile superintendent’s job in the Met area, it’s ideal to have an assistant’s position at a top facility. It makes that grand leap a little easier.”

Keep in mind that personal goals come in all shapes and sizes. “Your personal goals might focus more on a lifestyle choice than on the status and salary associated with a prestigious club,” says GCSAA Director of Career Services Lyne Tumlinson. “Being a multi-facility superintendent or even a GM may be a goal for some. Others may set their sights on a less stressful position that allows for more quality time with family and friends.”

Whatever the goal, Winged Foot Superintendent Matt Burrows contends, “Whether preparing for an interview, learning to play an instrument, or losing weight, we should always try to improve. A goal, backed by a strong plan and burning desire is the recipe for success,” he continues, adding, “This success philosophy has been cited in books such as *As a Man Thinketh* and *The Secret*.”

**Rule #2: Network, Network, Network.** Let’s face it, it’s often who you know, not what you know, that gets you the job. Country clubs, after all, are no different than companies: They like, and tend to trust, referrals. In fact, companies get as many as 40 percent of their new hires this way. Clubs are likely no different.

“If you don’t already have a connection at the facility you’re applying to, go out and find one,” advises Brae Burn Superintendent Blake Halderman, who credits his meteoric rise from assistant to his third superintendent’s job with doing the behind-the-scenes legwork needed to find that all-important someone who could put in a good word for him.

“When I was looking at Minisceongo, I got the names of two people in the industry who had contacts at the club; that got me in for the first interview,” says Blake, crediting Larry Pakkala, then his boss at Woodway, for helping him make that valuable connection.

**According to GCSAA’s latest statistics, assistants tend to remain assistants for 7 or 8 years, typically moving into the top slot when they’re around 32!**

“Besides your superintendent, talk to contractors and sales reps,” advises Blake. “They get around; they know people. At Trump-Westchester, his contact just happened to be a contractor he knew who was working with Tommy Fazio on the course construction project.

“In the end,” says Blake, “it all comes down to taking some initiative, thinking outside the box. If you know, for instance, that a headhunter’s doing the search, put yourself in touch with him . . . directly or perhaps through a contact you may have. You can’t expect a club’s hiring committee to just pluck your resume out of a stack of several hundred when there’s absolutely no connection.”

David Dudones of North Jersey Country Club is another proponent of networking as a key aspect to getting yourself noticed. “Make time to attend association meetings and industry events. Your objective is to get your name out there,” says David, who’s been a member of the MetGCSA board for the past four years. “Introduce yourself to superintendents and sales reps. Join a committee. Sure it takes time and effort, but the payback is tremendous: Aside from being a resume-builder, volunteering your time on a committee offers you greater visibility, professional recognition, and a wealth of networking contacts.”

Some facilities, admittedly, aren’t keen on assistants taking time away from the job, but GCSAA’s Lyne Tumlinson has a few thoughts on how to turn around this unfortunate point of view: “Try to demonstrate how your attendance at these meetings can actually benefit your facility,” she says, “by perhaps starting conversations about the latest research findings reported at a meeting or discussing what you learned another facility is doing to solve a particular problem—especially if it’s one you’re struggling with on your course. Your attendance at meetings is a much easier sell when your boss understands that it’s truly *not* just an excuse to go play golf.”

**Rule #3: Identify a Mentor.** Look for a person who has the right positional power and experience to help you reach your goals. A mentor is someone you can ask questions, share ideas with, and turn to for career advice.

Some superintendents are especially well-known for grooming beginners for future success. Blake feels when deciding where to work as an assistant it pays to look at the superintendent’s track record for turning out superintendents. “I didn’t realize how important this was until I worked for Larry Pakkala at Woodway,” says Blake, noting just how many assistants left “Woodway University,” as it was affectionately called, to become successful superintendents.

Matt Burrows fully believes that identifying not only mentors but also role models is an important component to becoming successful. “Everyone has weaknesses or limitations,” he explains, “and the sooner you can realize what they are, the sooner you overcome them. Mentors are people who have overcome your same limitations and can teach you how to do so as well.

“Role models, on the other hand,” continues Matt, “are those who inherently possess the strengths you wish you had, so you emulate them.”

**Rule #4: Choose Your Career Path Carefully.** When you’re vying for a superintendent’s position, where you’ve worked often means more to interviewers than what you’ve actually done.

Convinced that experience and even education take a backseat to the kind of clubs you’ve named on your resume, Blake remembers a conversation that took place when he applied for the superintendent’s position at Minisceongo. “The hiring committee talked for at least 25 of the 45 minutes of my interview about Muirfield Village where I worked for just a short time as an intern. Was that the reason they hired me? I doubt it. But I’m sure it didn’t hurt,” he says.

“Just as companies love to boast about hiring a Harvard or Princeton grad, club members love to say that they ‘got the guy from a Top 50 course,’” says former Greenwich Country Club Superintendent Greg Wojick, admitting that he often felt he was battling the stigma of coming from a public course.

But if your career path hasn’t led you to some of the “big-name” clubs, take heart. “Not all regions of the country are as competitive as the Northeast,” emphasizes GCSAA’s Lyne Tumlinson. “And if you’re looking to change or elevate your situation, your resume can be written to overcome your past,” she continues, adding, “Networking and establishing contacts can also give you an edge—often more of an edge than being able to rattle off a list of top-name employers.”

**Rule #5: Don’t Overstay Your Welcome.** Though assistants are remaining assistants for a longer period of time, that doesn’t mean you should stay put in the same job.



"Unless you're involved in a major project at a club, where you're continuing to learn new skills," says Matt Burrows, "you shouldn't stay in the same assistant's job for more than four years. Any more than that, and you'll just be spinning your wheels."

Fenway Superintendent Rob Alonzi has a similar philosophy: "I feel strongly that people should move around, particularly right after college, to see other superintendents' operations and management practices. Three years is enough in any one place," he says, adding, "I never worked in a management position for my father or uncle. I knew how they operated and felt it was important to gain a broader perspective. Moving around also had the added benefit of building my network of contacts."

Pelham Country Club Superintendent Jeff Wentworth also emphasizes the benefit of experiencing a variety of operations, but he recommends doing it sooner rather than later . . . as a student. "I interned in three metropolitan areas to gain experience and expand my network," says Jeff. "Experiencing different golf course operations while still in school is a great opportunity to start building lasting business relationships and contacts for the future."

"Current assistants, too, should test the waters at different clubs. At this point, though, they should be looking for the type of positions that will prepare them for the next step, by offering them an opportunity to expand their skill set and develop a heightened level of responsibility," says Jeff.

**Rule #6: Be Willing to Go Where the Job Is.** If you're tied to one part of the country, you seriously limit your chances of getting that head job.

"I wanted a superintendent's job so badly I applied everywhere from Puerto Rico to California," says Blake. As it happened, through local networking, the biggest move he made was from Darien, CT, across the Tappan Zee to Pomona, NY.

"Some of the most successful superintendents in the country have moved not once, but many times to chase their goals," says Matt Burrows, who left his Detroit hometown and his girlfriend, family, and friends to pursue the pedigree for his resume and benefit his career. "I moved around the Northeast numerous times not knowing a single person where I was going. I was willing to make sacrifices to get where I wanted. One of my favorite quotes is, 'Great achievement is usually born of great sacrifice.'"

**Rule #7: Immerse Yourself in the Game of Golf.** To be successful in your career, most superintendents would agree that it's important to not only develop your skill as a golfer, but also thoroughly understand the game: the rules, the top professionals, the best courses and even their architects.

"Play other golf courses besides your own, particularly some of the better ones in the area," advises David Dudones. "You never know, it could help you build rapport with people on the hiring committee who may have played one of the courses, and if you could talk intelligently about other facilities' operations, conditions, and grooming practices, you can't help but make a positive impression," says Dave, adding, "You have to remember, golf is the reason members join clubs. If you don't share their interest, excitement, and passion for the game, it's likely your resume will be shuffled to the bottom."

Matt Burrows takes appreciating the game a step further: "Know golf course architecture," says Matt. "Study up on it. As TMG Golf's Jim McLoughlin teaches, when you interview, you have to have some bullets in your gun; the more bullets you have available, the better."

"Knowing the top architects, their particular styles, and being able to explain the importance of certain conditioning for their architecture . . . those are all bullets for interviews and fodder for cocktail party conversations," continues Matt. "It shows hiring

committees and members that you know more than just turf; you're well-rounded and knowledgeable."

**Rule #8: Walk the Walk and Talk the Talk.** You want a head job? Act like you already have it. This doesn't mean treading into your boss's territory, but it does mean, according to Joe Alonzi, assuming the stature of a superintendent. "Assistants who want to move ahead should look the part, shaving regularly and dressing appropriately," says Joe, "and just as important, they should maintain a professional attitude both on and off the course. After all," he adds, "you never know when you'll run into a member—or a prospective boss."

Matt Burrows takes a hard line on both acting and looking the part. "Clubs don't want the old grass farmer in the barn anymore. You've got to be able to grow grass *and* be polished," says Matt. "Know how to match your belt to your shoes. Shave. Wear your hat the right way. Be able to speak articulately and write coherently. It's what the members who do the hiring value and respect."

**Rule #9: Read.** "Reading is such an important tool for success," says Matt Burrows, who is, himself, an avid reader. "Assistants should be reading books on golf course architecture, construction, and history, as well as books on leadership and self-improvement. Not only are you gaining useful skills and knowledge, but you are also expanding your vocabulary in the process."

Aside from golf-related reads, some of the books you'll find on Matt Burrows' shelf: *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* by Dr. Stephen Covey; *How to Win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie; *Think, and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill; and *The People Code* by Dr. Taylor Hartman.

**Rule #10: Create a Strong Resume.** This should be a simple and concise representation of your personal work history and education. Its sole purpose is to get you an interview, so be sure it's perfect. Errors and bad organization will turn away prospective employers quickly. After all, if your resume is sloppy, your work probably is too.

If you're a little shaky on resume-writing protocol, there's good news: GCSAA offers members a variety of resume writing services, from refining an existing resume free of charge to creating an all-new resume for a reasonable \$145 fee. You can access this service on GCSAA.org.

There are also numerous other online resume services (though at more than double the GCSAA rate), offering templates and professional help, all designed to get you noticed and help you stand apart from your competition.



Another resume, of sorts, that's gained favor in recent years is the personal website. Unlike company websites, personal websites are . . . well . . . more personal, offering a visual tour of a person's every career move and accomplishment, along with an opportunity to provide prospective—and current—employers with rapport-building personal data and information.

"When used to share what is being done to maintain or enhance the course—and why—a personal website can serve as both a marketing tool for your golf facility and a passive job search tool for you," says GCSAA's Lyne Tumlinson.

"These days, it's not uncommon for assistants—and superintendents—to take a digital camera around the course with them to document course projects and cultural practices specifically for their personal website," says Apawamis Club Superintendent Bill Perlee.

"And it does seem," he continues, "that club members and hiring committees are as interested in learning about a person's on-course abilities as they are in finding out about an individual's pastimes and interests," says Bill, citing this as one of the advantages to posting a personal website.

Like resume writing, there's GCSAA and a number of other online services and independent companies available to help.

**Rule #11: Never Turn Down an Opportunity to Interview.** Even if it's not the job of your dreams, take the interview. You may find after interviewing that you actually like the golf facility, but if nothing else, practice makes perfect . . . or near-perfect anyway. And the more experience you have interviewing, the more comfortable you'll feel when the "big one" comes along.

Blake's word to the wise on interviewing: "You want to be confident but not cocky. The people who go in thinking they deserve the job generally aren't the ones who end up getting it."

Another point: "Keep in mind," says Blake, "when the club is looking to bring someone in to turn conditions around, be gentle in your approach. Members pay a lot to belong to their clubs and don't want to hear too harsh an assessment of their course and conditions. A better tack is to explain how you might enhance a particular area or at least express confidence in your ability to make some nice improvements."

**Rule #12: Do the Work of an Investigative Reporter.** A proven way to differentiate yourself from the hordes of other candidates is to know more about the golf facility and the job you're applying for than your rivals. The way to do that? In short, do your research.

Job notices will frequently offer a brief description of the facility, but that's not

enough. Go online and investigate the facility's history, philosophy; learn the particulars of the golf course and the maintenance operation. Find out if there are any renovation projects planned, underway, or recently completed, and what they might be looking for in a new superintendent. And last but not least, actually visit the course. As a courtesy, contact the current superintendent about your visit and check to see when might be a good time.

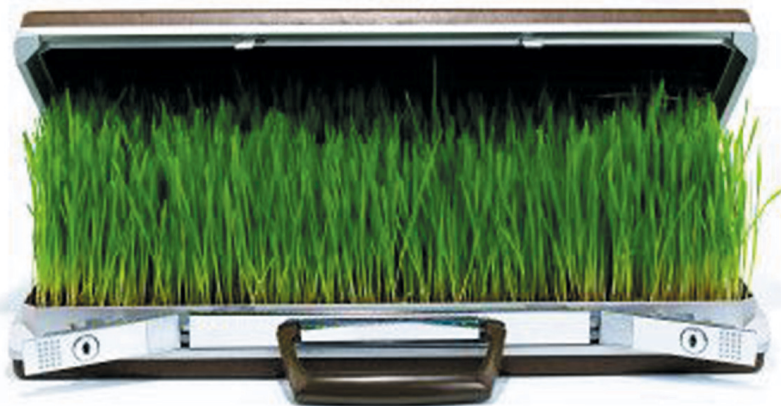
"If possible, you should also come equipped," notes Tumlinson, "with the names and titles of the people you might be interviewing with. You'll appear more confident—and interested—if they know you took the time to learn their names."

In the end, interviews are as much about preparedness as performance. Arriving prepared will not only calm the jitters, it will also make it far easier for you to demonstrate just how uniquely equipped you are for the job.

**Rule #13: Dare to Be Different.** "If you want to stand out from the crowd, you've got to do something to stand out," says Greg Wojick, a former Greenwich Country Club superintendent, whose company, Playbooks for Golf, also offers personal websites and job consulting services for professionals in the turf management field.

Before interviewing at Greenwich, Greg investigated what the club wanted in turf conditions. "I discovered they were interested in converting their *Poa* fairways to bent," he says. "I cut three sod squares—one *Poa*, one bent, and one ryegrass—put them in a briefcase, and when the time was right, I popped open the case and did a little show-and-tell, even plunking a golf ball down on each of the sod squares to show the hiring committee just how the ball lies on the different turf varieties. At the time, I was recommending going from *Poa* to rye to bent. Interestingly, not knowing which sod square was bent, they all selected the ryegrass as their favorite after the demonstration!"

"They were impressed, I'm sure, with the creativity of my presentation, but just as important was the enthusiasm I projected."



**Rule #14: Conduct a Post-Mortem.**

When the interview is over, jot down some notes. Think about what you did well and what you could improve on. Other expert advice: Be sure to write the questions you were asked and the answers you gave. Over time, a notebook with 50 to 100 questions could be a valuable resource, particularly in helping you prepare for future interviews.

**Rule #15: Always Follow Up.** "If you really want the job," says Blake, "following up is crucial. Write a letter to the general manager and, at the very least, to the head of the hiring committee. Mention the high points of the interview; restate why you're well-suited for the job and how you can meet their needs. Then reconfirm your interest in the position. It's a great opportunity to put your name in front of the hiring committee . . . once again."

"Always follow up within 24 hours," says Tumlinson, noting that email is acceptable in most situations.

**Rule #16: Keep Abreast of Industry Trends.** In today's highly competitive job market, it's crucial that you continue to develop the knowledge and skills needed to stay on the leading edge of turf management and technology.

"When I have two candidates who are very comparable," says Joe Alonzi, "I always go with the person who has more schooling. You can never get enough education," he adds. "It's what sets you apart from the pack."

## In the End

As an assistant, you can't—and really aren't expected to—know it all. One of the prime attributes, however, that you should acquire early on, and maintain throughout your career, is a positive, can-do attitude. You will call on this skill more than any other to carry you and your crew through the stresses, strains, and hard work involved in running a golf course operation—your own, one day.





# Oh, How Things Have Changed!

*A Thoughtful Look at the Assistant's  
Role: Past, Present, and Future*

*A*s you walk through the statuesque clubhouses in the Met area, your eyes are drawn to the old black-and-white photographs that decorate their storied halls. Vintage automobiles perfectly lined in parking lots, past champions posing stoically to adoring galleries, and the fantastic pictures of the strong, stern-faced men of grounds crews past. There are pictures of men cutting grass on tractors with spiked metal “tires,” crews watering from hoses attached to a tractor-truck, and the almost biographical pictures of past maintenance crews huddled outside the ramshackle “maintenance facility.” Their faces weary from the work described on other pictures.

In these timeless photographs, two things always stand out: the fact that the work has not changed over the years, only the technology, and the lasting image of the rugged, dirt-covered individual standing to the right of the course superintendent, not looking at the camera because there is not enough time in the day to pose for a stupid picture. Yes, he is the assistant golf course superintendent. The roles and images haven’t changed much over the past decades. Or have they?

Canvassing industry professionals—from superintendents to academicians—it seems some things change . . . while so much remains the same. Follow us as we relive past roles of the assistant golf course superintendent and peer ahead at what’s in store for assistants in the future.

## **From Foreman to Assistant**

Before the days of the assistant superintendent, many golf courses had one person who had been with the club a long time and knew the inner workings of the facility better than anyone else. In most cases, this person was known as the foreman and had responsibilities similar to those of today’s assistants.

“The title of assistant superintendent didn’t exist 30 years ago,” says Fenway Golf Club’s Bob Alonzi. “The first club to have an assistant,” I believe, “was Winged Foot. And my brother, Joe, who started as an assistant at Burning Tree back in 1970, was among the first to hold the assistant title.”





Today, foremen have been replaced often by not just one assistant, but two and sometimes more, depending on the size of the facility. Newer still to many operations is the arrival of the “assistants in training” position. This position is designed to allow recent graduates to spend a year or two essentially learning the ropes until a full-fledged assistant’s position becomes available.

“It was unheard of when I started in the industry to have a turf degree,” says Bob Alonzi. “But as interest in the industry increased, programs at schools were developed for turf students interested in becoming assistants and superintendents. Jim Fulwider Sr. and the late Ted Jozwick were two of the first superintendents to have a formal turf-related degree,” says Bob.

Times have changed. Today, according to a recent survey, 90 percent of all golf course superintendents have some type of formal education. And many more turf students are graduating from turf management programs with degrees ranging from an associate’s to a bachelor’s and beyond.

In response, colleges and universities throughout the country are either enhancing their turf programs or starting brand-new ones.

SUNY Delhi in upstate New York is a school that’s expanded its turf program to include both a two-year and four-year-degree program. Also new to its curriculum is a Professional Golf Management program.

The University of Connecticut is an example of a school that’s developed a very reputable turf management program, offering students the opportunity to graduate with a now highly sought-after bachelor’s.

Michigan State Professor of Turfgrass Management Dr. John Rogers III is a strong proponent of pursuing a bachelor’s. “A four-year degree gives turf students opportunities that a certificate program can’t: to learn skills beyond turf maintenance that are increasingly important to success on today’s golf course.

“My advice,” says Dr. Rogers, “would be to take some additional classes in accounting, business, management, and communications or writing. These are skills that will be needed in the future.”

## **Roles and Responsibilities: How Different Are They?**

Though the winds of change are clearly blowing, when you really get down to it, is the role of the assistant, today, all that different?

If you ask longtime Met area Superintendent Bill Perlee, he’ll tell you certain aspects of the assistant’s job have changed little, if at all, since his days as the assistant at Sleepy Hollow, where he worked in the late ’80s, early ’90s for then Superintendent Joe Camberato. “The daily tasks—course setup, material applications, irrigation repairs—these are the same responsibilities I had as an assistant,” says Bill.

Someone who took the unconventional route to becoming a golf course superintendent, Bill, now superintendent at The Apawamis Club in Rye, NY, has a bachelor’s in computer science and a love for the game. He found his way into golf course management when jobs in computer science were scarce. His early industry experience as a greenkeeper and nighttime waterman on a manual irrigation system led him to Sleepy Hollow.

He has since completed many turf courses, including the Cornell University Short Course, but it was his experience as the assistant at Sleepy Hollow that prepared him to become a golf course superintendent.

“The old guys in the business were tough,” says Bill. “I was late for my own wedding rehearsal because a horse had crossed a green, and I had to repair it.” (They obviously didn’t have second and third assistants to cover for him back then!) But fortunately, Bill’s wife, Lorah, forgave him; they’re still married today.

Veteran Superintendent Joe Alonzi of Westchester Country Club points to a job function he had as an assistant that just doesn’t exist today in the Met area: that of part-time mechanic. “When I started out,” says Joe, “very few clubs had full-time mechanics, so the assistant had to spend part of his days repairing the equipment.”

John Carlone, superintendent of The Meadow Brook Club in Jericho, NY, took the traditional route to turf management, completing his bachelor’s in 1983 from the University of Rhode Island and then landing

his first assistant’s job at The Stanwich Club, right out of school.

Though, like Bill, John feels the core tasks assistants perform are basically the same today, he does note one significant difference: “I think superintendents today give assistants far greater management responsibility, something that was almost unheard of 20 years ago.”

It’s true. Assistants today are more involved in course and employee management decisions, which these days entail a little more than just having finely developed people management skills. “It helps to be at least somewhat conversant in Spanish,” says Dr. Rogers, noting that Michigan State has added a Spanish course to its curriculum to better prepare students for working in an industry that is dominated by Spanish-speaking laborers.

Many assistants’ responsibilities also extend into budget planning and making a strong presence at green committee meetings.

And then “thanks” to the increasing demands and expectations of club memberships to produce tournament-quality conditions and ever-faster green speeds, assistants’ skills have been put to the test. They have to make judgment calls and perform agronomic feats, flying solo when the superintendent is called to a meeting or other off-course commitment.

## **The Internet: The Saving Grace**

With all the stress and strain of meeting member expectations, at least assistants today can turn to the internet for answers to difficult questions and mystery turf problems.

“This is a resource I wish existed 20 years ago,” says John Carlone, who along with his assistant, knows its value. “We had an issue this spring with either cool-season brown patch or Waitea Patch,” says John. “Since they are almost impossible to tell apart without DNA testing, I suggested that my assistant Google controls for both. Within an hour, we were out spraying the best material for control of these two particular diseases.”

The internet also opens up a world of opportunities to learn and broaden your knowledge far beyond the boundaries of the course you work on. Searching university and chemical company websites spare you from

***“I think superintendents today give assistants far greater management responsibility, something that was almost unheard of 20 years ago.”***

—John Carlone, CGCS



having to dust off the old textbook to edify yourself on a topic. And online turf forums enable both assistants and superintendents to communicate and discuss issues that may be common at many courses, or unique to their own facility.

## Technology's Role in the Role of the Assistant

Technology has truly changed the face of the golf course management industry. It's allowed us to achieve more picture-perfect conditions than were imaginable several decades ago. Look, for instance, at how mowing and irrigation have changed over time—and how these maintenance practices are still evolving.

In the “olden days,” only greens were watered—with sprinklers that had to be physically dragged out onto the green. Now, one 18-hole course can have a system with anywhere from several hundred to several thousand irrigation heads keeping the course watered from wall to wall. These systems are so elaborate that they require a dedicated individual just to stay on top of repairs and routine maintenance. Recognizing a need for more education in this area, Michigan State University will be adding one credit to its irrigation class in the spring of 2010.

Look also at the change in mowing. Instead of a large tractor-drawn gang mower handled by one employee, most courses now have three or four employees on smaller units, some with onboard computers programmed with the height of cut.

But more amazing still is the potential for robotic mowing. “At the Golf Industry Show this year, the Precise Path RG3 Robotic Greens Mower had everyone speculating where our profession is headed,” says North Jersey Country Club Superintendent David Dudones.

Will this futuristic machine eventually replace skilled laborers? Will it, perhaps, require assistants to become mowing techs, more skilled in this equipment's operation than in employee management? Only time will tell.

## The Environment: Taking Stewardship to New Levels

When it comes to environmental awareness, oh, how things have changed. Here's a story that couldn't demonstrate this better:

“When I first started in the golf course business,” says Bob Alonzi, “we used chemicals that have long since been banned: Mercury, DDT, Chlordane, to name several. When I was 19 or 20, working summers on a golf course crew, we used to buy DDT in 50-gallon drums and didn't do anything by spe-

cific weight. We'd use a coffee can to measure one pound of material and we'd put out three coffee cans of material on the fairways every week.

“Every fall,” he continues, “we'd spray Chlordane on the fairways, whether they needed it or not. When we reached the bottom of the DDT barrel, we'd stick our heads in to fill up our coffee cans. If I behave kind of funny, now you know why,” says Bob with a smile.

Needless to say, those days are gone. Long gone. Over the past decade, in fact, environmental concerns—and awareness—have soared. These concerns have caused us to put the environment at the forefront of many of our golf course management practices.

Many members have become Audubon Cooperative Sanctuaries and others, like Westchester Country Club, have been recognized for their environmental stewardship, which in Westchester's case involved taking measures to protect water quality and quantity, promote wildlife on the course, and initiate an IPM program that, with vigilant scouting, has enabled them to reduce pesticide applications on his course.

This trend isn't going to go away. The environment will continue to play an increasingly important role in how golf courses are maintained and, as a result, in the tools assistants will need to keep pace—and succeed.

It's hard to say, precisely, what the future will bring. But it wouldn't be a surprise if, in

the coming years, we were forced to strictly adhere to an IPM program, like our colleagues to the North in Ontario, Canada. Their journey to pesticide-free maintenance practices prompted the May 2009 *Golf Course Management* article “Goodbye Pesticides, Hello Paperwork.”

New regulations will most certainly require an IPM exam and accreditation for the course, as well as more detailed documentation and recordkeeping.

Water will, no doubt, be among the top concerns of the near future. We haven't suffered prolonged drought restrictions in this area yet, but it may be only a matter of time before drought is no longer a prerequisite for imposing water restrictions.

“It's crucial,” says Preakness Hills Property Manager John O'Keefe, “that assistants begin preparing for the future by positioning themselves on the leading edge of environmental issues. That means understanding and thinking about best management practices for water and chemical use. Taking a proactive approach to these issues, while continuing to focus on maintaining a high level of course conditioning, can only benefit assistants as they begin their search for a superintendent's position,” adds John.

## Skill Set of the Future

Given the challenges ahead, what is the best course of action for assistants? Just about everyone we spoke to agreed it's ongoing



education.

Many skill-enhancing webcasts and ON DEMAND classes are available on GCSAA.org, including a long list of agroeconomic studies and Microsoft Excel and PowerPoint—two programs that turf professionals, assistants included, are expected to use in developing budgets and high-caliber presentations, often for an interview.

And with the ever-increasing regulatory pressures, certificates of specialization in GCSAA's Environmental Management Program can provide you with exceptional qualifications for positions at the growing number of golf operations that are being constructed as environmental models.

"Completing these courses," says GCSAA Director of Career Services Lyne Tumlinson, "has the added benefit of awarding GCSAA education credits that can be used toward your Class A certification." A nice bonus.

"Pursuing educational opportunities through GCSAA is one of the most effective ways to stay on top of new industry developments and trends," says John O'Keefe, who as a director on the GCSAA board is committed to building initiatives designed to support assistants in their career development and success.

"I feel it's critical," says John, "that we, as superintendents and chapters, work along with the GCSAA to continue to promote and advance our assistant superintendents. They're our future golf course superintendents and potential chapter and GCSAA leaders," he continues.

With this in mind, GCSAA has been working hard to provide assistant superintendents with quality education, programs, and career services. Three years ago, GCSAA formed an Assistant Superintendent Task Group that's now a standing committee. And beginning this month, *Golf Course Management* will run an assistant superintendent column in each issue. And then the annual Golf Industry Show has many educational sessions planned specifically for assistant golf course superintendents.

"These are just several of the many ways GCSAA works to promote our assistant superintendents," says John, emphasizing that assistants should be sure to take advantage of all that GCSAA has to offer.

## Final Note

While still in the throes of the long, hot days of summer, it's important for assistants to stay focused and remember their goals. Years of school, more years of paying back student loans, and 60-plus-hour workweeks can, and still do, pay off.

Remaining focused is always the best way to achieve the goal so many of us have: getting that first head job.

## Government Relations Update

# Westchester County Gasoline Tank Requirements Clarified

by Bob Nielsen, CGCS, MetGCSA Government Relations Representative

**B**e aware: Westchester County inspectors have been policing Petroleum Bulk Storage (PBS) facilities—which includes area golf courses—looking for violations in New York State DEC laws. These laws have been in place for the past 22 years but, until now, were loosely enforced. To help you avoid hefty fines when a county inspector calls in at your facility, here's what you need to know about gasoline tank requirements.

First, as the chart below indicates, only those golf course facilities with a gasoline tank that's more than 250 gallons need to be concerned. For tanks 250 gallons or larger, the tank's installation date will also play a role in the requirements you'll be expected to meet.

Note that meeting the Stage I Vapor Recovery requirement means having the devices in place to prevent vapors from escaping into the air when the delivery truck pumps fuel into your tank. The Stage II Vapor Recovery requirement specifies that you have the devices in place on your gas pumps to prevent vapors from escaping into the air as you pump gas into your vehicles.

This chart assumes an annual usage of 120,000 gallons of gasoline or less. Golf courses, of course, fall well within this range.

Gasoline Tank Size (Gallons)	Tank Installation Date	Requirements
Less than 250	All Years	None
250 or Greater	Before 01/02/1979	Submerged Fill
250 or Greater	1/02/79 to 6/27/87	Stage I
250 or Greater	After 6/27/87	Stage I and II

Among the violations Westchester County inspectors have been uncovering when conducting their routine inspections: tanks installed without fill buckets (\$500), improperly cleaned fill buckets (\$1,000), and improper color-coding of fill ports (\$100). Note, too, that if an inspector shows up when you're getting a gas delivery and the truck fails to hook up to your Stage I Vapor Recovery device, both you and the truck driver are subject to a \$1,000 fine. Westchester County inspectors mean business!

For further details on gasoline tank requirements, type "PBS facilities" or "gasoline tanks" into the search engine on Westchestergov.com.

## Waste Oil Information Correction!

During our August 6 Education Meeting, I was mistaken when I said that you could not have more than one 55-gallon drum of waste oil at your facility. You may, in fact, have as many drums as you'd like—as long as you register as a PBS facility and ensure that your drums are properly labeled, stored, and checked daily. You'll find more on these requirements listed on the Westchestergov.com website.



## Scorecard

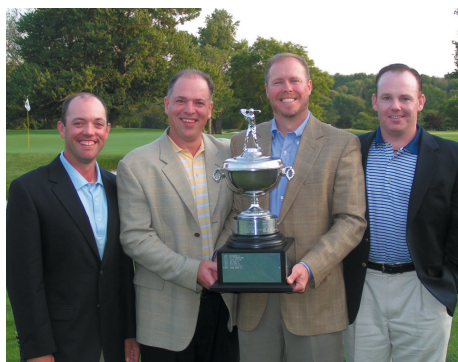
# Wykagyl Takes Invitational Trophy

by Ken Benoit, CGCS

It came as no surprise that we had a full field at this year's much-anticipated MetGCSA Invitational, held at The Stanwich Club on June 25.

Though Mother Nature provided us with a rare day of spectacular weather, it was the event, itself, that stole the show. Stanwich exceeded all expectations—which were admittedly high—with its superior course conditioning and five-star-quality hospitality.

After an enjoyable and challenging round of golf, participants were treated to a wonderful assortment of food and beverages... and a special awards ceremony. Gene Westmoreland, former MGA Senior Director of Rules and Competitions, was presented with a small token of our appreciation for all he has done to help local superintendents over the years.



Wykagyl team strikes a pose with their trophy (left to right): Ben Hoffhine, head golf professional; Sasha Mrdelja, Wykagyl board member; Mike Scott, golf course superintendent; Bill Rudolph, Wykagyl member.

He received a gift certificate for dinner at one of his favorite restaurants and two tickets to a Broadway show.

A special thank you goes to Scott Niven and his crew and to the entire clubhouse staff for making our Invitational such a huge success.

Wykagyl shot an impressive round of 55 to take home the net trophy. Fenway shot a round of 65 to win the gross division.

Here's a look at the full lineup of winners.

### Net Team Winners

- 55 Wykagyl Country Club
- 58 Cherry Valley Country Club

### Gross Team Winners

- 65 Fenway Golf Club
- 65 Pelham Country Club

# Dave Mahoney Two-Ball Championship

by Larry Pakkala, CGCS

Contestants dodged the raindrops to complete the first round of the 2009 Dave Mahoney Two-Ball Championship. There were many great matches, and with them, a lot of good stories. Here are a few of the highlights that contestants submitted to us for print.

### At Metropolis Country Club White Plains, NY

In an epic battle, interrupted for more than an hour by a severe lightning storm, the team of Kevin Collins/Nick Lerner defeated Rob Alonzi/Mike Cook 4 & 3 in match play. Lerner, hampered by hip and knee injuries, closed out the match with a par on the difficult par 3 15th.

In the press tent after the match, Lerner was very direct when asked about the future of the Collins/Lerner pairing. "Collins knows what the story is," Lerner remarked. "Either he produces or he's gone." Luckily, both played well, and the team (and their friendship) will continue on at least one more round.

### At Brae Burn Country Club Purchase, NY

The team of Ken Benoit/Greg Gutter beat Tim Garceau/Ernie Steinhofner in a rain-shortened match that didn't see a hole halved until the sixth. Benoit and Gutter leaped out to a 3-up lead after three holes.

Garceau and Steinhofner fought back, and by the turn, the two teams found themselves back to even in what was considered to be some pretty shoddy golf all-around. However, with the weather looking ominous, Benoit and Gutter stepped up their game and darted out to a 2-up lead after the first two holes on the back nine.

The two teams never made it to the 12th tee as the bad weather forced them off the course. The match was conceded on the terrace by Garceau and Steinhofner. It's too bad this exciting match had to end early.

### At Tamarack Country Club Greenwich, CT

The Scott Niven/Larry Pakkala team was handily defeated 4&3 at Tamarack by Kevin Seibel/Jon Barlok. Niven and Pakkala were shell-shocked after the first 3 holes, going 3 down at that point. After battling back to 2

down after 12 holes, the Seibel/Barlok team was just too strong to find an edge to get the match closer.

### At Fresh Meadow Country Club Great Neck, NY

As is often the case, the #1 seed and last year's winner went down in the first round of this year's event. After being beat handily in last year's semi-finals by Glen Dube/Blake Halderman, the team of Brian Benedict/Bob Lippman Jr. was out for revenge. It was with poor play by Halderman (1 par in 14 holes and, finally, a birdie on 15—then no help the rest of the way) that Dube was exhausted by the last hole and couldn't find the strength to two-putt from 20 feet to extend the match. Dube held off Benedict and Lippman most of the way, but he let them back in the match with a three-putt on 17. Both Benedict and Lippman hit great fairway bunker shots on the last hole and two-putted for par to win the match 1 up.

For a full rundown on the results, go to [metgcsa.org/events/two-ball](http://metgcsa.org/events/two-ball). Congratulations to the teams who have advanced. Watch for the second-round results in the next issue of *Tee to Green*.

## Upcoming Events

# Calendar Update



Here's a look at the association's events through the end of the year. If anyone is able to host a meeting or social event that does not have a site, please contact the appropriate committee chairmen. For professional events, contact either of our Tournament Committee co-chairs: Ken Benoit at 914-241-0700 or Mark Chant at 631-643-0047. Our Social & Welfare Committee co-chairs are Mark Millett (914-949-4203) and Paul Gonzalez (914-273-3755). Both are available to discuss any upcoming social events.

### **Met Championship and Met Area Team Championship Qualifier PLUS the Poa Annual Tournament**

*Tuesday, September 29*

The Meadow Brook Club

Jericho, NY

Host: John Carlone, CGCS

### **Met Area Team Championship**

*Monday, October 5*

*Rain date: Monday, October 19*

Plainfield Country Club

Plainfield, NJ

Host: Travis Pauley

### **Superintendent/Green Chairperson Tournament**

*Monday, October 19*

Sleepy Hollow Country Club

Scarborough, NY

Host: Tom Leahy, CGCS

### **Annual Assistants Championship**

*Tuesday, October 20*

Wykagyl Country Club

New Rochelle, NY

Superintendent Host: Mike Scott

Assistant Host: Alan Bean

### **Annual Meeting**

*November*

Date & Site OPEN

### **MetGCSA Christmas Party**

*December*

Date & Site OPEN

## Educational Events

### **The 6th Annual Dr. Joseph Troll Turf Education Fundraiser**

*Thursday, October 8*

The Ranch

Southwick, MA

In its sixth year, this now-annual golf event is sponsored by the Alumni Turf Group (ATG) to raise funds for education and research at the University of Massachusetts.

Entry forms and additional information on this event will be available online at [www.alumniturfgroup.com](http://www.alumniturfgroup.com). Please plan to attend this worthy fundraiser, and watch for details.

### **6th Annual GCSANJ Crystal Conference**

*Tuesday–Wednesday, November 10–11*

Crystal Springs Resort, Vernon, NJ

Join fellow turf professionals for a day of golf at Black Bear Golf Club and a day of educational sessions at the Minerals Hotel. For further information, contact GCSANJ at [www.GCSANJ.org](http://www.GCSANJ.org) or 866-427-2651.

### **Empire State Green Industry Show**

(Formerly the NYSTA Turf and Grounds Exposition)

*Tuesday–Thursday, January 12–14, 2010*

Rochester Riverside Convention Center  
Rochester, NY

The Empire State Green Industry Show offers an excellent opportunity to network, obtain research updates, and visit the trade show, featuring hundreds of exhibitors. As always, key speakers representing all segments of the green industry will be featured.

For further information, call the show office at 800-873-8873 or 518-783-1229 or visit the website at [www.nysta.org](http://www.nysta.org).

### **MetGCSA Winter Seminar**

*Wednesday, January 20, 2010*

Westchester Country Club, Rye, NY

Plan now for our upcoming Winter Seminar, and watch for details. For further information, call our Education Chairman, Rob Alonzi, at 914-472-1467.

## Member News

Please join us in welcoming the following new MetGCSA members:

**Michael Donahue**, Pheonix Environmental Care LLC, Suffield, CT, Class AF

**Jim Easton**, Knollwood Country Club, Elmsford, NY, Class SM

**Ken Gentile**, Executive Turf Products, Stamford, CT, Class AF

**James F. Grover**, Brae Burn Country Club, Purchase, NY, Class C

**Jessie Shannon**, Manhattan Woods Golf Club, West Nyack, NY, Class C

### **Birth**

Congratulations to Rye Golf Club Superintendent **Chip Lafferty** and his wife, Clare, on the birth of their daughter, Jessica Anne, on August 1.





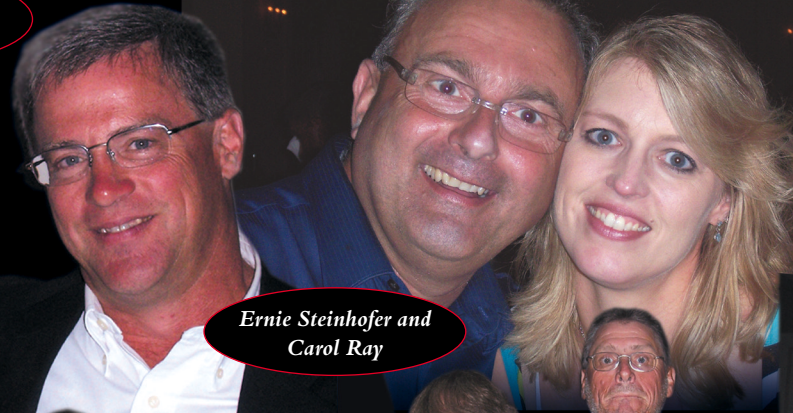
# Grins & Giggles at the MetGCSA Summer Social!



Summer Social Hosts  
Mary Pat and Mark  
Millett



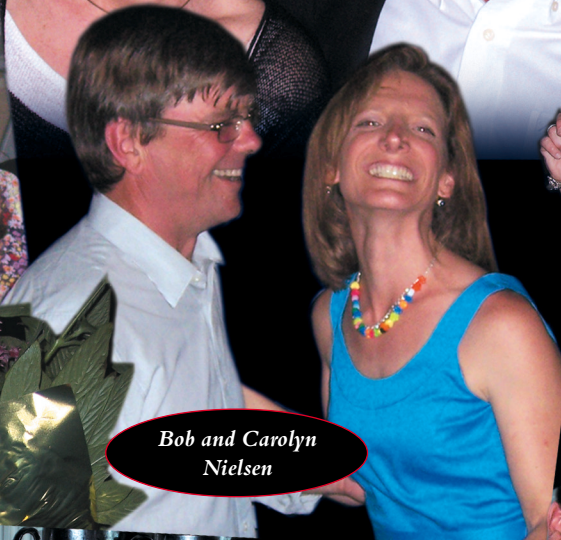
Matt and Jasmine  
Ceplo



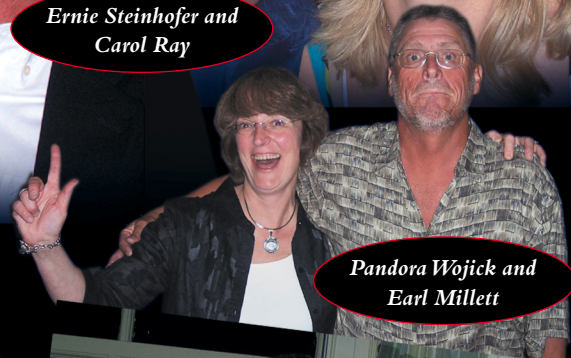
Ernie Steinhofner and  
Carol Ray



Tony and Christine  
Girardi



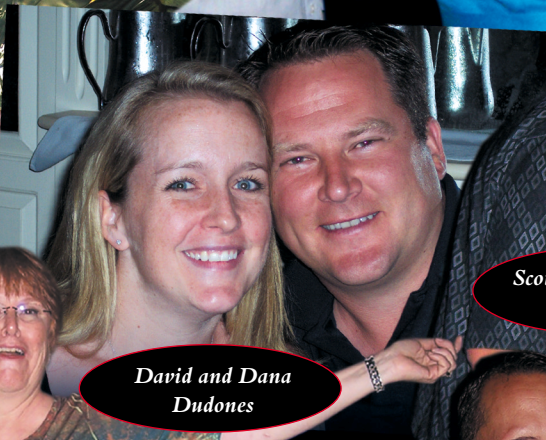
Bob and Carolyn  
Nielsen



Pandora Wojick and  
Earl Millett



Glen Dube with a smile  
planted on his face



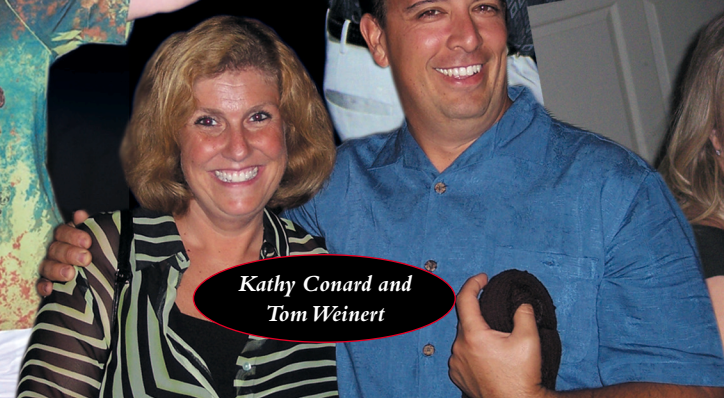
David and Dana  
Dudones



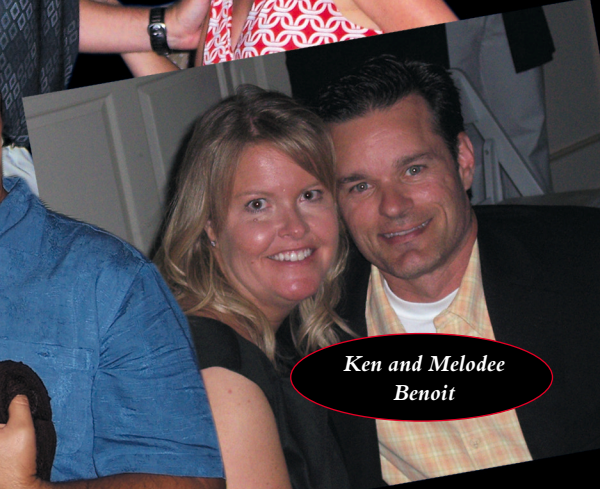
Scott and Jacqueline  
Apgar



Birdie Rappoccio and  
Kim Alonzi ... girls  
gone wild!



Kathy Conard and  
Tom Weinert



Ken and Melodee  
Benoit



## John Carlone and Meadow Brook to Host Tripleheader

by Eric O'Neill

September 28 will prove to be a busy day on the par 72, 7,120-yard Meadow Brook Club as Superintendent John Carlone plans to host not one, not two, but three noteworthy events: the Met Championship, the Met Area Team Championship Qualifier, and NYSTA's Poa Annual Tournament.

But this is small potatoes for a club that's hosted a large number of highly visible events, starting with all of the Metropolitan Golf Association's and Met PGA's major championships. Among them: the Met Open, Met Amateur, The Ike, the Met PGA championship, the Head Pro championship, Assistants championship, and the LI PGA championship. In the early 1980s, the club also hosted the LPGA Golden Lights championship and then from 1987 to 2002 the Champions TOUR event, with World Golf Hall of Famers Lee Trevino, Gary Player, and Raymond Floyd among the winners.

### Meadow Brook in the Making

But this is the Meadow Brook we know today. Rich in history and tradition, the Meadow Brook Hunt Club, as it's still officially known, has been through several transformations in its 125-plus years. Incorporated in 1881, it began as a polo and fox-hunting club in Westbury, NY. In 1894, members added a nine-hole golf course that they ended up abandoning in 1905 in favor of polo.

But with a resurgence of golf some 11 years later, Meadow Brook leased the J. Clinton Smith estate across the road and hired Devereux Emmet to design a new 18-hole course. It was on this course that Meadow Brook's tradition of hosting championship tournaments began. The Goodall Round Robin staged at Meadow Brook in 1953 was won by Cary Middlecoff, while Sam Snead took top honors in 1954 and 1955.

It was about this time that the club learned it would have to make way for the Meadow Brook Parkway, which would connect the middle of Nassau County with the south shore beaches. The club picked up and moved once again—this time to its current site in Jericho, NY. Architect Dick Wilson was hired to build an 18-hole, championship-

style course on the club's new 450 acres.

It opened in 1955 and remained largely the same until 1967, when the club sold 180 acres to developers, taking three of its golf holes with it. Dick Wilson's protégé, Joe Lee, was hired to rebuild the three holes the club lost and reroute the existing holes on Meadow Brook's current 270-acre site.

Today, the course boasts several dogleg-left par 4 and par 5 holes, thick 3.5" primary rough, and beautiful, wide-open rolling terrain. But it's the large putting surfaces at Meadow Brook that earn the course its championship status. Totalling 4 acres, they average just over 7,500 square feet, with the largest being the 12,200-square-foot number one green.

"Meadow Brook is devoted to golf," says John, as if to justify the course's many extraordinary features. "There's no tennis, pool, or even dinner service in the clubhouse. The membership," he adds, "is made up of serious golfers, many with single-digit handicaps."

### John's Tour of Duty

As if hiring in their own image, the members at Meadow Brook recruited John—a serious golfer and an even more serious golf course superintendent—in December 1996. He quickly became part of club history, as he prepped the course for the next six years—from 1997 to 2002—for the Champions TOUR Long Island Classic.

"I thoroughly enjoyed the challenge of preparing for those events, even if the tournament was always held late July, early August!" says John.

Hooked on the game of golf at age 11, John played competitively at the junior level, becoming a member of his Portsmouth, RI, high school team, which never lost a regular season match.

"We were 44-0 for the four years I was on the team," remembers John. "We did lose the state championship all four of those years," he laments, "to another Rhode Island team that included Brad Faxon, who went on to become a PGA Tour player."

John continued to play golf three years into college at the University of Rhode



John Carlone, CGCS

Island, and though he toyed with the idea of becoming a touring pro, John found his way into turf management with the help of the late Dr. Skogley, then a professor in URI's Plant Science Department.

While earning his B.S. in Turf Management, John did his placement training at Westchester Country Club in Rye, NY, working for then superintendent Ted Horton. After graduating in 1983, he worked as an assistant for Scott Niven at The Stanwich Club in Greenwich, CT. Then, two-and-a-half years later, in November of 1985, John accepted his first superintendent's position at Middle Bay Country Club in Oceanside, NY, where he stayed until moving to Meadow Brook.

Over the past 12 years, John has continued to enhance the course. He installed XGD subsurface drainage in all 18 greens, reconstructed and enlarged all range tees, and rebuilt and laser-leveled 10 of the course's 18 tee complexes. In the fall of 2006, John worked with Architect Tripp Davis to reconstruct all greenside bunkers and to exchange sand and install drainage in every fairway bunker. You'll have the opportunity to see all this, and more, on the 28th.

### He's About More Than Growing Grass

John's the kind of guy who doesn't just believe in the profession and the industry's professional organizations, he wholeheartedly supports them . . . as a committee member, a board member, and a leader.

Anyone who's been around a while knows John dedicated 18 years of service to the MetGCSA board, which he estimated, in a humorous farewell-to-the-board speech, involved at least 370 trips across the Throgs Neck bridge and \$1,665 in tolls! "When I went off the board and asked for reimbursement, I was respectfully declined," says John

*Continued on page 16*



## Giddy-Up to the Superintendent/Green Chairperson Tournament at Sleepy Hollow

by Kevin Collins

As I exited my Jeep at Tom Leahy's maintenance facility, I was met at the gate by Mitzie, Tom's border dachshund. Mind you, I am not normally nervous around dogs, but I believe that this particular breed can be quite provocative and is not a dog you should turn your back on. I can't tell you how relieved I was when Tom came out to greet me. I didn't take my eyes off Mitzie for a second while I talked to Tom about Sleepy Hollow and his plans to host the October 19 Superintendent/Green Chairperson Tourney.

### First, a Little History

Sleepy Hollow Country Club is rich in history. Like many grand old clubs, this one was first an estate—338 acres with a palatial mansion, now the clubhouse, built in 1893.

In 1910, William Rockefeller and Frank Vanderlip bought the estate only to sell it one year later to the organizers of Sleepy Hollow Country Club.

Charles Blair Macdonald and his engineer, Seth Reynor, designed and built the golf course during the summer of 1911. Then, in the late 1920s, A.W. Tillinghast was engaged to give the original layout a major facelift, expanding the course to 27 holes.

In the early 1990s, Rees Jones had a hand in renovating the bunkers, and recently, Architect Gil Hanse had been charged with bringing the course back to its core Macdonald/Raynor design. He left his mark on nearly every aspect of the course: bunkers, tees, fairways, ponds, and drainage.

In addition to Sleepy Hollow's championship golf course, the club offers just about every recreational outlet: horse stables, tennis, paddle tennis, and pool facilities.

The club also comes with a bit of lore—the legends of Sleepy Hollow, and the Headless Horseman, that is. For the uninitiated, the ghost of a Hessian soldier beheaded by a cannonball during the Revolutionary War supposedly haunts the bridge that now connects tee to green on the third hole. Good thing you won't be traveling that bridge after dark!

### Early Tom

Tom was raised in Oneonta, NY, and was first

exposed to golf in a kind of unconventional way: "My grandfather, Dr. John Leahy, was a veterinarian with his clinic on a 40-acre spread that bordered Oneonta Country Club," recalls Tom. "He boarded race horses, and golfers would hop the fence now and then to try to take them for a ride—without much success."

At a young age, Tom experienced a bit of that country club life firsthand. "My father became a member of Oneonta Country Club for a short time in the late '60s," says Tom, "until he decided being a teacher, a town judge, and a dad didn't leave him much time for golf."

When Tom was in high school, he just naturally gravitated toward golf course work. He started by running the pro shop at Woodhaven Golf Course in West Oneonta. Then one day, when the maintenance crew needed an extra hand prepping the course for a member-guest, he was called out to the course and never came back inside.

### From College to Career

At that point, Tom still didn't realize his destiny as a turfgrass manager. "I went to Hartwick College in Oneonta, graduated in 1989 with a bachelor's degree in Arts/Anthropology, and then went to work for UPS." Bad move. Seven months later, Tom returned to Woodhaven. He enrolled in the turf program at SUNY Delhi, interned with then Wykagyl Superintendent Vin Sharkey, and graduated in 1993 with an associate's in turfgrass management.

Tom jumped right in to an assistant's position at Sleepy Hollow. He worked for Joe Camberato, who in four years prepared Tom well enough to assume the reigns as superintendent when he retired.

### The Not-So-Sleepy Sleepy

In his 12-year tenure as Sleepy's super, Tom's managed project after project after project. In addition to the Gil Hanse renovation, hundreds of trees have been removed, a new practice facility was built that houses a teaching center, more paddock spaces were added to the stables, and then there's the ongoing pond dredging.

"The Gil Hanse renovation took about



Tom Leahy, CGCS

two years, and the teamwork exhibited on all sides allowed the project to go smoothly," says Tom proudly. "Our green chairman, George Sanossian, did a great job keeping the club members positive; my guys, Andrew Agnew and Brett Richards, were invaluable in keeping the maintenance work on track; and Geoff Porteus, our rough-and-tumble contractor, got the job done. Everything came together largely because of our mutual trust."

Believe it or not, there's still more work to be done . . . on the cart paths, the driving range, and on the collars and chipping areas, which are being expanded. (Good thing Tom's still a young guy.)

### The Family Guy

Tom married his high school sweetheart, Jennifer, in 1996. Their courtship started in high school and then continued in a kind of on-again-off-again fashion through college.

Finally, a summer or two went by when they didn't see each other. An assistant at Sleepy, Tom realized how much he missed Jen. "I called Jen's mom to see where she was living," recalls Tom. "I found out she was in Connecticut, so I drove up to see her. We had lunch and things got serious."

Married, now, for 13 years, Tom and Jennifer have two sons: Ty, who is 10, and Ian, 8. And then there's Tom's extended family . . . his friends. Among his closest of "kin" are Matt Dutremble (Ardsley), Mark (Old Oaks) and Earl (Ridgeway) Millett, and the big man, Tony Grasso (Metropolis). "My friends mean a lot to me. I can grab my cell any time and commiserate, ask advice, or just vent."

For those of you who haven't had the good fortune of playing Sleepy, don't miss this meeting. Aside from possibly catching sight of the infamous Headless Horseman, you'll no doubt enjoy this magnificent golf course. And what a treat it is to be able to see the masterwork of three of golf's greatest architects: Macdonald, Reynor, and Tillinghast.

Kevin Collins, a member of the Tee to Green Editorial Committee, is Mid-Atlantic and Northeast territory manager for Aquatrols Corp. of America and the owner/president of DrySect Northeast/TurfPounders.

# Bean's Counting on a Full Field at Wykagyl

by Scott Olson

**M**etGCSA assistant superintendents will be heading to Wykagyl Country Club in New Rochelle, NY, for the October 20 Assistants Championship. Hosting this year's annual event will be Wykagyl's Assistant Superintendent Alan Bean (no relation, I'm told, to British comedian Mr. Bean).

## From Past to Present

Tournament goers are in for a treat when they play this more-than-century-old course that's had a less-than-decade-ago facelift. Established in 1898 as a nine-hole course, the club was first known as Pelham Country Club and was located in Pelham Manor, NY. After moving to its current site in New Rochelle, club member Lawrence Van Etten designed a brand-new 18-hole golf course, which opened for play in 1905.

During the 1920s, the club contracted for two separate redesigns, hiring golf course architect Donald Ross for the first and A.W. Tillinghast for the second. By the 1970s and '80s, Wykagyl rose in prominence, hosting several LPGA tournaments and then becoming a permanent LPGA tour stop.

Wykagyl's latest redesign was all-encompassing. Completed, amazingly, in less than a year, the project involved rebuilding three greens and 80 bunkers, renovating all tees, expanding fairways and greens, and installing a new irrigation system and miles of drainage. The project's been met with rave reviews.

## Alan's Story

Alan's been with the club for six years, and as Wykagyl Super Mike Scott will tell you, he's been an integral part of the maintenance department's success. In addition to managing the day-to-day maintenance activities of a crew of 22, Alan served as project manager for Wykagyl's recent golf course redesign. "Alan kept close tabs on just about every aspect of the construction process to see that the design was carried out precisely as intended," says Mike.

Alan also oversaw the installation of a new irrigation system, evaluated where drainage needed to be installed, and directed an aggressive tree removal program.

During Alan's tenure, he's also had the good

fortune of working several major tournaments. From 2004 to 2006, Wykagyl hosted the LPGA when the Sybase Classic came to the club, and despite the ongoing course construction, the club held both the LPGA HSBC Woman's World Match Play and the Metropolitan Amateur Championship.

Clearly bitten by the tournament bug, Alan also sought out a number of volunteer opportunities, working the 2004 U.S. Amateur, 2006 U.S. Open, and the 2008 Senior PGA.

## Making His Way

Growing up in Maine, Alan originally had dreams of becoming a professional golfer, not a golf course superintendent. During his high school years, he played in the Maine Amateur and, after graduating, moved to Melbourne, FL, to take a job in Baytree National Golf Links' pro shop.

Alan quickly decided folding clothes and answering the phone all day were not for him. Looking for a change, he accepted a position as assistant superintendent at True Blue Golf Club in Myrtle Beach. Within two years, Alan was hooked on a career in turfgrass management and enrolled in Horry Georgetown Tech in South Carolina to pursue an associate's degree in Agriculture Technology.

He interned at Siwanoy Country Club in Bronxville, NY, under the late Dave Mahoney. "Dave had a huge impact on my career," says Alan. "Working for him, I grew to love the high expectations and knew that I wanted to get back to the Met area."

After graduating, that's just what Alan did, accepting an assistant superintendent's position at Stanton Ridge Country Club in Stanton, NJ. After one season there, Alan made the move to Wykagyl Country Club, where Mike Scott hired him to fill an assistant superintendent's position. The rest is history.

## How to Hit 'Em

Both Alan and Mike had a few words to the wise for the assistants who plan on going low the day of the tournament. Mike stressed playing well on holes 9 through 13, where you'll find three par 5s and two par 3s.

Alan's advice: "Be sure to play well on the par 3s ... and be here on October 20!"



Alan Bean (left) and Mike Scott

## And Now, a Word—or Two—From Our Host Superintendent

Mike Scott has been Wykagyl's superintendent since 2003. He got his start in the industry at Newark Country Club in Newark, DE, after spending three years in the Army, an experience he feels helped him develop leadership skills he still finds useful on the job today.

Mike received his turf degree from Penn State in 1995 and developed a true passion for the industry while working at Oak Hill the year the club hosted the Ryder Cup. Though toiling to prep the course under the toughest of circumstances—no rain for three months, a single-row irrigation system—Mike loved the excitement of the tournament. "I remember hearing the roar of the crowd when Corey Pavin chipped in on the 18th hole to win a match. I knew, then, exactly what I wanted to do with the rest of my career," says Mike.

After Oak Hill came Merion, Winged Foot, The Ridge at Backbrook, and finally, the superintendent's position at Wykagyl.

"I couldn't be more pleased to welcome Met-area assistant superintendents to Wykagyl for some friendly competition and camaraderie," says Mike, who, himself, values the relationships he's built over the years with colleagues and longtime friends. In addition to nurturing these relationships, Mike feels his single greatest responsibility to the industry is to mentor his people. "My goal for the turf guys who work for me is to teach them everything I know and properly prepare them for the future," says Mike.

"I have a lot of respect for my staff and the job they do," he says, adding, "Alan's been invaluable. He's got great people skills, and he knows what it takes to keep the crew happy and motivated."

Scott Olson, our Class C representative on the board, is assistant superintendent at Scarsdale Golf Club in Hartsdale, NY.



*Spotlight continued from page 13*

with a chuckle. John, of course, served as president and past president before leaving the board in 2003.

For the past 12 years, John also served on the board of the Tri-State Turf Research Foundation and is currently vice president. He was also a member of the LIGCSA Board of Directors since 2001, leading the group as president from 2006 to 2008.

Since 1991, he has served on many GCSAA committees, including Election, Education, Tournament, Membership, Communications, and Chapter Relations. He's also served as chapter delegate for both the MetGCSA and LIGCSA.

Some might say John's driven. But there's more to John than immediately meets fellow turf professionals' eyes. John has the unusual gift of being able to set his goals and ambitions aside long enough . . . and often enough . . . to tend to what's really important: his relationships with family, friends, and even acquaintances. A rare and valuable quality.

John's been married 22 years to his wife, Leslie. They have three children: Emily 19, a sophomore at his alma mater, the University of Rhode Island; David, 17; and Daniel, 14. John likes nothing more than to watch his sons play sports. "This fall," says John, "they're both playing on the Jericho High School varsity football team. David's a senior and will be starting as wide receiver and defensive end; Daniel, a freshman this fall, will be playing offensive tackle and middle linebacker.

When John's able to steal a little time for himself, he enjoys—aside from golf—jogging and biking, the kind you pedal and the kind that propels itself: a Kawasaki Vulcan 1500.

## Fair Warning

John has two recommendations for playing Meadow Brook: "Keep your golf ball in the fairway. They're quite wide, some as wide as 40 yards. Hitting in the deep rough could mean a wedge out to the short grass. Also, hit your approach shots close to the pin. With our large greens, hitting greens in regulation at Meadow Brook is not a sure two-putt."

As The Terre Company's Byron Johnson noted about the size of the greens the last time he played the course at a Met meeting in 2001: "Meadow Brook is the land of 100-foot putts!"

Forewarned is forearmed!

*Eric O'Neill, a member of the Tee to Green Editorial Committee, is superintendent at Towers Country Club in Floral Park, NY.*

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