



# TEE TO GREEN

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Metropolitan Golf Course  
Superintendents Association

## President's Message

### Spreading the Good Word

In my last President's Message, I discussed how we might enhance our image—and our staff's—at our clubs. Though challenging, a much larger task, I feel, is finding ways to communicate to the general public our role as environmentally responsible professionals.

GCSAA has worked long and hard at enhancing our image. But we—individually and together as an association—can also have an impact. Here's what the MetGCSA and many of our members are currently doing—or *can* do—to make a difference.

#### Earth Day

On April 20, the MetGCSA cosponsored a celebration of Earth Day at Lasdon Park and Arboretum in Somers, NY. The event is put on by the Westchester County Parks each year and features exhibits from environmental groups, a farmers market, children's activities, and many other programs. Education Committee Chairman Will Heintz and a group of other member superintendents manned a booth, entertaining questions and distributing literature provided by GCSAA to nearly 4,000 who attended the day's events. This gave us a forum for discussing—and changing people's misconceptions about—golf courses and their impact on the environment.

(continued on page 2)

## Special Feature

### Building a Winning Relationship With Your Pro

*Innis Arden Superintendent Pat Lucas Talks About His 20-Year Success With Golf Professional William A. Mitchell*

In your career as superintendent, there are few relationships more important to your success—and ultimately the club's—than the one you form with your golf professional. The pro, sometimes even more than a greens chairman, wields considerable behind-the-scenes power. Let's face it: With daily member contact, the pro can be your best advocate—or worst enemy.

In my many years as superintendent, I've seen countless counterproductive super/pro relationships, resulting from poor communication, personality clashes, a perceived need to "protect one's turf," and a whole host of other unfortunate circumstances.

But I've also had the good fortune of experiencing how a super/pro relationship can really work. I'm talking about my 20-year relationship with PGA Golf Professional William A. Mitchell here at Innis Arden.

There are many components to building—and maintaining—a good working relationship with your golf professional. But I think it all starts with mutual respect and a true appreciation for the

other person's day-to-day challenges and responsibilities. This is the foundation on which all other interactions are built.

From the beginning, "Mitch" showed, in subtle ways, that he respected the superintendent's role and that he and I were "in this thing together." For instance, not long after I joined the club as superintendent and I was thanking Mitch for lending me a helping hand, he responded by dubbing himself "Honorary Assistant Superintendent." Whenever we've had guests at the club, Mitch has always introduced me as "THE greatest superintendent (and after a slight pause) . . . in Old Greenwich." (My secret wish, of course, is that someday, someone will build another course in Old Greenwich so that my title will carry some weight!)

Having built a great give-and-take relationship, Mitch and I work hard in all decisions to create a win-win-win—an outcome that's good not only for the two of us, but for the club as well.

Here are some of the ways we've managed to sidestep those typical areas of conflict that arise (continued on page 4)

## Also in This Issue

- ② Special Golf Events and Qualifiers
- ③ Superintendent/Manager Tourney Goes to Rockland
- ⑦ Scarsdale Scores and Two-Ball Qualifiers



## Spreading the Good Word

### Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program

As most of you all know by now, the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program is a well-respected vehicle for validating and publicizing golf courses' environmental contributions. If you're not involved, you might consider it. After all, you're probably already putting into practice much of what the program recommends, so why not get the publicity for doing it among your club membership and community?

One of the program's qualifying criteria is to get the public involved in your efforts to enhance your course's wildlife. You might rally club members, area residents, your kids' classmates or school faculty or local boy scouts, girl scouts, or horticultural or garden club members to participate in your program. Enlist their help in monitoring nest boxes, filling bird feeders, or conducting wildlife inventories. The key is to spread the word about your respect for and knowledge of the environment—and your proactive approach to land management.

### Arbor Day

### Upcoming Events

#### Special Area Golf Events

##### The JAL Big Apple Classic

Thursday – Sunday, July 17 – 20  
Wykagyl Country Club, New Rochelle, NY  
Host: Steve Renzetti, CGCS

##### The Buick Classic

Saturday – Tuesday, July 19 – 22  
Westchester Country Club, Rye, NY  
Host: Joe Alonzi, CGCS

##### The Northville Long Island Classic

Friday – Sunday, August 8 – 10  
Meadow Brook Club, Jericho, NY  
Host: John Carlone, CGCS

##### The Walker Cup

Saturday – Sunday, August 9 – 10  
Quaker Ridge Golf Club, Scarsdale, NY  
Host: Tony Savone

##### The PGA Championship

Thursday – Sunday, August 14 – 17  
Winged Foot Golf Club, Mamaroneck, NY  
Host: Bob Alonzi, CGCS

a youth group—scouts, 4-H Club, etc.—to plant trees, either on the course or within your community. This offers another opportunity for you to show your interest, as a turfgrass professional, in the environment.

### Athletic Fields

In many towns, the ball fields are in tough shape. Often, upgrading them requires proper equipment and a little care.

Why not donate the use of a piece of equipment—or better, a little of your time—to improve the conditions; you might even recommend an IPM approach to bolstering the turf. This will give you positive exposure in the community and can only help in elevating your image as a steward of the environment.

These are just several examples of what we can do to enhance our image *outside* the industry. If we give it a little thought, each of us could probably add to this list. So why not make an effort—and make a difference.

JOHN J. O'KEEFE  
President



### Upcoming Association Events

#### MetGCSA Championship/Met Area Team Championship Qualifier, Round 1

Tuesday, July 22  
Pelham Country Club, Pelham Manor, NY  
Host: Jeff Wentworth

#### MetGCSA Championship/Met Area Team Championship Qualifier, Round 2

Tuesday, September 2  
Country Club of Purchase, Purchase, NY  
Host: Bob Miller

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## Over the River and Down 9W to Rockland Country Club We Go

**J**ust five days after the season opener at Scarsdale Golf Club, MetGCSA members reconvened—this time at Rockland Country Club in Sparkill, NY—for the annual Superintendent/Manager Tourney. Host Superintendent Matt Ceplo had the course in pristine condition, and players were treated to a sunny spring day—the perfect opportunity to view Rockland in year three of a comprehensive four-year master plan to refurbish the entire golf course.

Among the major undertakings completed so far are two reconstructed greens—#15 and #17—and newly renovated sand bunkers. Says Matt about their initial work: “We took a tremendous gamble doing something as risky as reconstructing two greens first. Had this not worked out well, we could have doomed the project.”

As with any proposed change, the membership was not unanimously in favor of Rockland’s four-year plan. But so far, so good. “Comments have been very positive about our work to date,” says Matt, with a great sigh of relief. But he’s quick to point out that behind the project’s success is a dedicated and hard-working crew. “I’m lucky to have the crew I’ve got,” he says. “They’ve been great through all this.”

Matt’s next challenge is to rebuild every tee, which will entail removing two acres of woodland. “Once we have the tee reconstruction well underway, we’ll begin work on our irrigation pond,” notes Matt. “Aesthetics and playability will be improved, but of course, the main reason for the pond restoration is to expand our water holding capacity.”

Perhaps the biggest change planned for the course will be the Par 3, eighth hole. As Matt describes, “Currently the hole is a straight-away Par 3 with the irrigation pond on the left. To bring the water back into play, we are building a peninsula-type green with six new tees positioned side-by-side around the water. Distances will range from 85 to 180 yards, depending on the tee.”

Though this renovation plan is undeniably ambitious, Rockland is no stranger to change. In the club’s 90

years, the course has grown from nine to 18 holes, and those 18 holes have been entirely rebuilt over the years. Henry Stark, the greenskeeper at Englewood Country Club was responsible for building the original nine in 1907, while PGA Founder Robert White designed the back nine in the 1920s.

The most dramatic modification, however, came in 1962 when the club sold land that included holes 8 and 9 to the Palisades Parkway Commission. The increasingly busy Route 9W crossed through both holes, making play in that section of the course too dangerous. Rockland purchased acreage adjoining the southern part of the course and hired Al Tull to redesign the affected holes.

### The Business is in His Blood

By the time Matt was 12, his career course was virtually set. He, along with his five brothers and three sisters, spent many of their waking hours working—and playing—at the family business: the Afton Golf Club, a public course his parents owned for nearly 18 years in Matt’s upstate hometown, Binghamton, NY.

“I started out gassing up the golf carts,” remembers Matt, who was able to have a hand in every aspect of the golf course operation—everything from selling greens fees and tending bar to actual golf course maintenance.

After high school, Matt naturally decided to pursue a two-year turf degree at Delhi and, in 1982, left the fold to accept a position on the crew at Kutsher’s, a large resort course in the Catskills.

From there, Matt took the assistant’s job with then superintendent Ed Walsh at Ridgewood Country Club in New Jersey and, four years later, landed his first superintendent’s job at Westchester Hills Golf Club in White Plains, NY. He stayed at Westchester Hills until 1995, when he moved on to Rockland, which Matt refers to as a “real a sleeper.” “It’s nice to be at a club that wants to improve,” he says.

### Work Outside of Work

With all the improvements that are going on at Rockland, it’s hard to believe that Matt has a moment for anything else.



**Matt Ceplo, CGCS, hosts MetGCSA Superintendent/Manager Tourney.**

But he does manage to carve out time for his work with the MetGCSA. He’s served on the Met board since 1990, managing *Tee to Green* advertising and chairing the Tournament and Field Day committees. Right now, Matt’s prime responsibility is to promote the association’s merchandise and fund-raisers.

An environmentalist at heart, Matt hopes to spend more time promoting the virtues of golf courses—and the turfgrass maintenance business. “Like anything else, golf courses hit the press when something negative happens,” says Matt. “We have to find ways to publicize how golf courses benefit the environment.”

“I’ve spent much of my life on golf courses,” he continues, “and I feel great. If I ever felt that I was endangering my health or the welfare of my wife, Jasmine, or daughters, Allison and Megan—or even my border collie, Strider—I’d get out of the business,” he says.

“Chemical companies have worked hard at developing environmentally friendly products,” he continues. “We, the end applicators, along with chemical manufacturers, the USGA, GCSAA, and other associations, need to continue to work together to educate people about the safety and actual benefits of these products. I think I’ll start the ball rolling by changing my “Pesticides Applied Today” sign to read, “Plant Health Care Products Applied Today.”

SCOTT C. APGAR  
Metro Milorganite, Inc.



# Building a Winning Relationship With Your Pro



Working around Mitch on a Monday (1987).

between professionals and superintendents—and arrive at a solution that's good for everyone.

**Potential Conflict:** Rain and other weather-related delays.

**Scenario:** Here's where conflicting priorities can cause problems. The golf pro wants to promote as much play as possible to keep members satisfied and revenues up. The superintendent, though also interested in pleasing the membership, is equally concerned about protecting the turfgrass, being keenly aware of the inherent dangers of sacrificing the long-term well-being of the course for any perceived short-term gain.

**Win-Win-Win Solution:** Mitch is well informed of the agronomic risks of allowing golfers on the course after a heavy rain or frost. By the same token, I understand that if play is restricted waiting for perfect conditions, both member satisfaction and club revenues suffer.

With that in mind, when there's, say, a heavy rainfall, Mitch and I talk—sometimes we even tour the course together—to appraise the conditions and discuss, jointly, how we might set up a “track” that will allow members to use as much of the course as practical.

When possible, we give Golf Shop staff advance warning about weather conditions that may affect the course's playability. Frost is one situation that we can generally predict, with the help of weather channels and satellites. By advising Mitch and his staff the night before an event about a possible frost

delay, they have ample time to decide how best to accommodate the delay, whether it be to change the format or the shotgun. The morning of the frost, we also inform the Golf Shop about our progress in preparing the course for play.

**Potential Conflict:**

Temporary greens.

**Scenario:** As we all

know, play and revenues drop off dramatically when temporary greens are instituted for the winter. Mitch and I have looked closely at this situation and have arrived at a comfortable middle ground.

**Win-Win-Win Solution:** Basically, we've extended the playing season in the late fall and early spring by giving members at least some track of regular greens to play on. To do this, I evaluate each of our greens individually. Those with optimum soil and growing conditions stay open longer than those with poor conditions. For example, our #14 green is low and pocketed, with a northern exposure, heavy soil, and poor drainage. It's the first to freeze and the last to thaw. So we agree that it's the first green to close in the fall and the last to open in the spring.

When the bad weather begins—around November—that's the time we start to shrink the number of open greens from 18 to maybe 15 or 12, depending on the conditions at the time. The track of regular greens continues to shrink until they're all closed and only alternate greens are in play. This sequence is reversed in the spring, with #14 green being the last to open.

**Potential Conflict:** Golf outings.

**Scenario:** Working cooperatively to plan and schedule events really pays off—particularly in May, which at Innis, like other golf courses, is the busiest month of the year. It's a time when many critical programs come together: hiring and training new employees, restoration of course construction, winter damage repair, chemical controls, irrigation start-up, and list goes on.

**Win-Win-Win Solution:** To facilitate these critical start-up programs, Mitch, our general manager, Bill Brinkmann, and I proposed to the club board that we not schedule any outings on Mondays in May. With the board's approval, we also agreed that Monday outings held after May would not be scheduled for the morning. This allows us essential time to repair damage from heavy weekend play and to get a head start on the routine maintenance for the week ahead.

**Lending a Helping Hand**

Mitch and I also work cooperatively by helping each other out now and then. Being well versed in mechanics, my crew will help Golf Shop staff repair bag racks, mount score boards, or get a dead cart going again.

In return, the Golf Shop staff helps us by lining up caddies to pitch in and fill divots on Mondays, by marking the course, routing traffic away from an irrigation break, or answering member queries about the course. Keep in mind, however, you can't expect Golf Shop



Mitch's show of support for one of our irrigation projects (1983).



staff to be mind readers; you've got to keep them informed about course conditions before the questions roll in. Arming Mitch with critical information has, on many occasions, been a lifesaver.

#### Beyond a Good Working Relationship

I've been fortunate to have a terrific working relationship with Mitch, but probably even more meaningful to me is the close personal relationship we've formed. As you read this article, my friend William A. Mitchell is battling cancer. And our prayers are with him.

I've included a couple of photos that I feel capture some of the good memories Mitch and I have had. In closing, Mitch, let me just say, you're the best.

To my fellow colleagues, I hope this article presents ideas that might help you enhance your working relationship with the golf professional at your club.

PATRICK A. LUCAS, CGCS  
Innis Arden Golf Club

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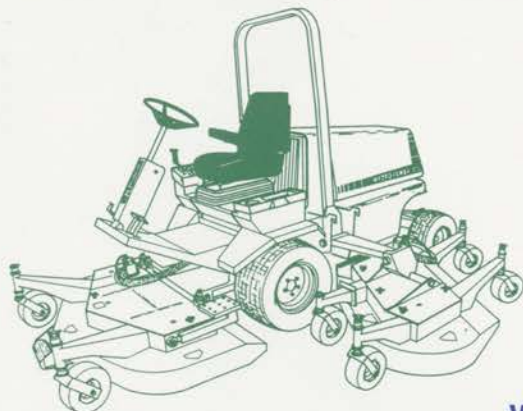
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## Scarsdale Ushers in Spring for the Met

In one of the truly first nice days of a cold spring, 85 Met golfers enjoyed a perfect round at the Scarsdale Golf Club. Herb Waterous had his golf course in fabulous shape, despite the late spring. Greens were firm and fast, and the turf from fairway to rough was full.

The event for the day was a Two-Man Best Ball, with qualifying for the yearlong Best Ball Tournament. It was pretty obvious from our scores that we've been working too hard and playing too little. A tough course coupled with strong winds blew the scores upward. Players keeping the ball under the wind and having the touch on the slick greens were:

### Two-Man Best Ball

#### Low Gross Winners

74	Matt Severino, <i>Scarsdale GC</i>	76	John Gallagher, <i>Racebrook CC</i>
	Nick Lerner, <i>Lakeover Natl GC</i>		Peter Bly, <i>Brooklawn CC</i>

#### Low Net Winners

62	Tony Girardi, <i>Rockrimmon CC</i>	64	Gary Arlio, <i>North Jersey CC</i>
	Jim Calladio, <i>Milbrook Club</i>		Bob DeMarco, <i>Powelton Club</i>
66	Tom Marmelstein, <i>Scotts Pro-Turf</i>		
	Sean Moran, <i>Scotts Pro-Turf</i>		

#### Longest Drive

Bob Johnston, <i>Scarsdale GC</i>	276 yards
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#### Closest to the Pin

Jeff Wentworth, <i>Pelham CC</i>	7'6"
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### Two-Ball Qualifiers and First-Round Matches

#### Class A Qualifiers/First Round Matches

#1	Scott Niven, <i>The Stanwich Club</i>	#7	Steve Sweet, <i>Mill River Club</i>
	Larry Pakkala, <i>Woodway CC vs.</i>		Jeff Wentworth, <i>Pelham CC vs.</i>
#16	Dave Mahoney, <i>Siwanoy CC</i>	#10	Herb Waterous, <i>Scarsdale GC</i>
	Dennis Petruzzelli, <i>Lakeover Ntl.</i>		Peter Waterous, <i>Westchester Hills</i>
#2	Jim Calladio, <i>Milbrook Club</i>	#8	Jim McNally, <i>Greenrock Corp.</i>
	Tony Girardi, <i>Rockrimmon CC vs.</i>		Wayne Remo, <i>Rock Spring Club vs.</i>
#15	Steve Renzetti, <i>Wykagyl CC</i>	#9	Chuck Martineau, <i>Whippoorwill</i>
	Bert Dickinson, <i>Willow Ridge CC</i>		Fred Scheyhing, <i>Mount Kisco CC</i>
#3	Gary Arlio, <i>North Jersey CC</i>		
	Bob DeMarco, <i>Powelton Club vs.</i>		
#14	Bob Alonzi, <i>Winged Foot GC</i>		
	Joe Alonzi, <i>Westchester CC</i>		
#4	Rick Schock, <i>Wee Burn GC</i>		
	Gregg Stanley, <i>Hudson Natl. GC vs.</i>		
#13	Mark Millett, <i>Old Oaks CC</i>		
	Scott Tretera, <i>Elmwood CC</i>		
#5	Peter Bly, <i>Brooklawn CC</i>		
	John Gallagher, <i>Racebrook CC vs.</i>		
#12	Tony Grasso, <i>Metropolis CC</i>		
	Greg Wojick, <i>Greenwich CC</i>		
#6	Jim Fulwider Sr.		
	Jim Fulwider, <i>Century CC vs.</i>		
#11	Pat Sisk, <i>CC of Fairfield</i>		
	Jon Jennings, <i>The Patterson Club</i>		

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