

Tee To Green

JUL 03 2008

May/June 2008
VOLUME 38 NUMBER 1

Published by the Metropolitan Golf Course Superintendents Association



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TEE TO GREEN is published bimonthly by the Metropolitan Golf
Course Superintendents Association
49 Knollwood Road, Elmsford, NY 10523-2819
914-347-4653, FAX: 914-347-3437, METGCSA.ORG
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Tee to Green



Cover: Ardsley
Country Club.
Photography by
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President's Message



The million-dollar question right now among Met-area clubs is "How is your facility doing financially?" We had a little scare, ourselves, this year. We lost members over the winter, and that raised a few eyebrows. As a result, the club is running some reduced-price memberships and has enacted a "preview plan," where you can play for a period of time before committing to a membership. I'm happy to say that we've gained several new members, so our budget is under a little less scrutiny at the moment.

Of course, with the price of gas going through the roof and a sluggish economy, we're not totally out of the woods yet. But clearly, we're not alone. *The Met Golfer* ran a feature article recently about the budget crunches facing Met-area clubs. Increased utility bills and taxes, fewer Monday outings and overall rounds played, and escalating supply costs are apparently leading many clubs down a more conservative path, financially.

Maintenance budgets have also skyrocketed, in large part because of increasingly high member expectations. Hand raking no-plug bunkers. Consistent weed-free

Taking the Crunch Out of Your Budget

rough throughout the course. And not a fairway divot left unfilled.

You get the picture. While it's undeniable that these practices are good, there's a price to pay.

If you, yourself, haven't had to sharpen your pencil, you may be asked to do it soon. Best advice: Stay involved. You're the best person to make decisions for your facility. Your input is critical to the success of your operation.

Finding Economies

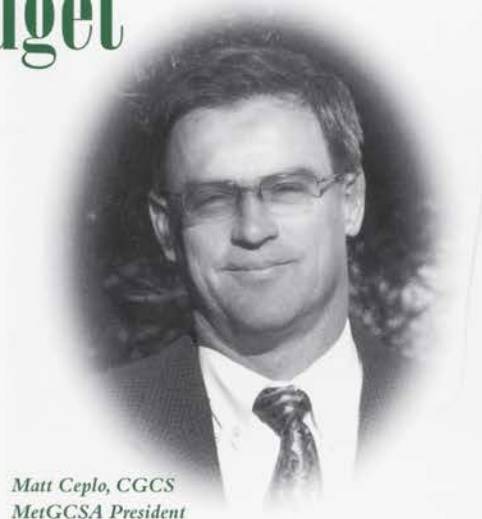
There are subtle ways to reduce costs, if your membership will support your efforts. At Rockland, we hand rake our bunkers three times a week and the rest of the time just touch them up. We purchased a new bunker rake this spring with a brush attachment. I'm hoping this will save us time and dollars. Speaking to a few guys at our monthly meeting about mowing patterns in fairways, it seems the old black-and-white style is making a comeback and, according to them, is a time-saver as well.

Another money-saver: Taking a more environmentally conscious approach to golf course maintenance. The trick, of course, is convincing your members to relax their expectations a bit.

Take weeds for example. If everyone could live with a few weeds in some out-of-play areas, you'll spare yourself the labor and chemicals required to eliminate them. And by the way, make it clear to members that handpicking weeds isn't the answer either since what you save on materials you'll spend on labor.

At Rockland, we've added a number of native areas to the course. This not only saves water, but also spares us the time and expense of fertilizing and mowing those areas. On some of the more in-play areas, we will send staff in to handpick weeds. Other areas we let go. The membership understands this.

I've also tried to communicate the benefit of these areas in providing a habitat for a variety of birds and wildlife. There are a number of good reasons to become more environmentally responsible. A budget is just one of them.



**Matt Ceplo, CGCS
MetGCSA President**

As with any endeavor, communication is a must. Any cost-saving ideas you have should be approved by your Green Committee and clearly communicated to your membership.

On Another Note

I want to say just a word about the image we project at our meetings. We've gotten quite informal at our monthly golf events. Society, in general, has gone that way. More clubs are offering casual dining; in fact, I wouldn't be surprised if jeans were allowed in club grill rooms before long.

I can relate to the office executive who wears a coat and tie to work every day wanting to put on a polo shirt and relax after a round of golf. But that's not us. We're not club members, there to socialize. We're guests, there on business.

Playing at a new course is great, and our host superintendents have their courses in such great shape that I often feel like I'm playing in a member-guest. But the reality is, it's not a member-guest. It's business, and as such, we should dress and conduct ourselves accordingly. In other words, we should be projecting a highly professional image at all our meetings. Our goal is to project the same professional image and command the same respect we've come to enjoy at our own clubs, and we need to remember this at *all* our meetings.

Well Wishes

I hope you'll all join me in wishing Jeff Wentworth a speedy recovery. Our thoughts and prayers are with both Jeff and Mimi.

**Matt Ceplo, CGCS
President**

The Need for Green Speed

What's New—and What's Not—Among Met Area Clubs

by Scott E. Niven, CGCS



he topic of green speed is probably one of the most intriguing, if not controversial, in all of golf. We first broached this touchy subject in 2001, when we surveyed Met members on their green speed philosophy and management practices. At that point, with greens Stimping at an average of 9'8", we thought we couldn't push our putting surfaces much further.

How wrong we were.

With the results in from our 2008 survey, it's crystal clear: Green speeds are up—and on the rise. In fact, since our last survey that charted the range of green speeds superintendents try to obtain daily, the average speed has risen four inches to 10', and on the high end of each course's green speed range, the average went up five inches to 11'6".

Nearly a mirror image of our first survey, this one was sent out to 128 MetGCSA superintendents. A total of 53—from clubs in New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut—were kind enough to reply (see list of survey participants on page 5). Our list of nearly 20 questions revealed not only greens maintenance facts and figures, but also respondents' sentiments on the increasing need for speed and the extra-special grooming practices that go along with it.

Here's a look at what respondents had to say, along with a careful tabulation of each and every one of their responses to give you

an idea of just how prevalent various practices are.

How do your greens Stimp up against the others? You be the judge.

Survey Snapshot

To start, the lion's share of our respondents share the same turf in common: Nearly 90 percent have either *Poa* or *Poa/bent* turf on their greens. That leaves only 10 percent with the more desirable bentgrass. And though more than 92 percent check green speeds at least once a week—slightly more than in the past—virtually no one is in favor of posting the numbers.

Speaking of green speeds, to keep those greens Stimping up to member expectations—11' at their best for Tournaments and Member/Guests—respondents are stepping up their cultural practices. One of the biggest changes noted since 2001 is the average height of cut. Seventy-five percent of the respondents report cutting heights of less than 1/8" (.125) or lower versus 55 percent in 2001.

Commenting on this practice in his book *The Superintendent's Guide to Controlling Putting Green Speed* (see article page 6), Dr. Thomas Nikolai, turfgrass academic specialist at Michigan State University, cautions superintendents about extremes in cutting height.

Not only does the law of diminishing returns kick in as we lower heights of cut to attain greater green speeds, but the quality of turf also declines the shorter we go, he says. His recommendation: Keep the height of cut at 1/8", and use rollers and/or double mowing to bump up the speed.

Interestingly, however, it seems that superintendents are favoring rolling over double-cutting to attain fast, smooth putting surfaces—another significant change in practices over the past seven years. To be precise, 90 percent of respondents are rolling their greens, with two-thirds rolling three times a week or more.

Also on the rise is the use of Plant Growth Regulators (PGRs), with more than 90 percent of respondents incorporating them into their green's maintenance repertoire versus just 61 percent seven years ago.

Notable, too, is the jump in fertility levels. Right now, 53 percent of respondents are applying at least 3 lbs. N/1000 sq. ft. per year. In 2001, only 9 percent of clubs applied that much nitrogen. Fertility levels have climbed for a couple of reasons. First, new research shows that small increases in fertility levels do not appreciably slow green speed. And if they do, superintendents are compensating by lowering height of cut and rolling.

Second, and probably most significant, is that nitrogen use has proved effective in reducing the incidence of both anthracnose and moss. Dr. Bruce Clarke's research at Rutgers University showed that nitrogen levels at 3 lbs./1000 sq. ft. or higher greatly reduce the incidence of anthracnose, while Dr. Frank Rossi's moss trials at Cornell showed similar results. Obviously, superintendents have been listening.

In the end, what's most important is how superintendents and their members feel about the green speeds on their courses. Right now, the vast majority of superintendents—more than 90 percent—feel that the speed they're achieving is about right for their particular greens.

Three-quarters of the clubs surveyed, however, report having at least one green that can't accommodate their typical green speed, with the average being three per course. In 2001, the average was four greens per course. Interesting. You'd expect that with green speeds escalating, this number would climb, rather than decrease. One explanation might be, however, that close to half the respondents have recently rebuilt at least one of their greens to reduce slope.

Overdone, however, the practice of stripping greens of their slopes and contours can render them nearly flat and, as Golf Course Architect Forrest Richardson will tell you... boring. Known for building some of the wildest greens in recent times, Richardson echoes the sentiments of most architects

when speaking about the pressing need among members for speed:

"I feel green speeds have hurt the creativity we can inject into greens. There has become a disconnect between visual green undulations and the need for softer, more subtle undulations as a result of increased speed. What the eye sees is therefore less interesting, harder to read, and probably less fun. The shadows and aesthetic side of green contours are essential. As we mellow out the green, we are mellowing out the visual interest of golf."

While most clubs still clearly profess a need for speed, the good news is that fewer than in the past are actually willing to sacrifice turf to get there. Smooth, consistent, high-quality greens seem to be taking precedence over extra speed.

Nevertheless, as green speeds have risen, those who must keep their greens "on the edge" the majority of the time admit to feeling the strain. In fact, the percentage of supers who noted feeling stressed by the escalating demand for faster greens is up from 17 percent in 2001 to a full 40 percent today.

The Truth and Consequences of Green Speed

As part of our survey, we asked respondents to comment on their feelings, philosophies, and approach to the growing need for speed on courses in the Met area. Here's a sampling of what they had to say:

On Speed Plans and Philosophies...

Glen Dube, CGCS

Centennial Golf Club, Carmel, NY

At Centennial, we have very undulated greens. If the speeds are too severe, some greens become unplayable or lead to four- and five-putting. That, in turn, leads to higher scores, longer rounds, and general customer dissatisfaction. Plus, the owners love grass on their greens. They don't want turf health compromised for higher green speeds. We did manage to get some decent speeds on the greens throughout last season while maintaining the aesthetic integrity of the greens. In my short tenure here, I haven't found green speed to be a huge issue.

**Brian Benedict, The Seawane Club
Hewlett Harbor, NY**

Our membership is more concerned with quality, aesthetics, and smoothness. We've gotten our greens fast in the past with the appropriate weather conditions, and members complained they were too fast. We also have the micro-climate of wind off the bay to consider. Two Richardson Invitationals ago, we had the greens at 13, and the balls were being moved on the green by high winds that day. Of course, we're probably unique in that regard.

Mark Fuller, CGCS

Connecticut Golf Club, Easton, CT

I have a management plan that calls for a 10 to 10.5-foot speed, day in and day out, with a higher speed for tournament play or when it's not detrimental to the turf.

Peter Rappoccio, CGCS, Silver

Spring Country Club, Ridgefield, CT

We try to have a program of green speeds at 10 to 10.5 on a daily basis. Our club is more concerned with healthy turf than really fast greens.

**Mike Reeb, CGCS, Country Club of
New Canaan, New Canaan, CT**

Green speed is a vocal issue among a relatively small part of the membership, but we do seem to talk about it more each year. Our Greens & Grounds Committee currently supports an operating standard within the range of 9.5 to 10.5 for daily play and accepts up to 12" more for certain events. Consistent, healthy putting surfaces are preferred above risky green speeds.

Richard Spear

Piping Rock Club Locust Valley, NY

Our greens were built in 1912. I'm not quite that old, but I suspect they were rolling way south of 6' at that time. Neither the soil profiles nor the contours work well at present-day green speed expectations. We attempt to keep them high 9's to mid 10's, but we've lost plenty of hole locations, and the input quantities (labor and materials) are high and getting higher. Predicting the future is tough, but I believe things will change. Financial and/or environmental issues will force us to back off at some point.

**Steven Wirth, Cherry Valley Country
Club, Skillman, NJ**

Turf comes before green speed. I, fortunately, have the authority to adjust as I see fit, depending on conditions.

**Blake Halderman, CGCS, Brae Burn
Country Club, Purchase, NY**

Our contours, here, are tricky, so most members are happy with green speeds at around 10. Any faster than that, and it could get too gimmicky. We have very few members who are between 0 and 5 handicaps, so keeping it fun for the majority is the priority—except during major tournaments, of course.

On Educating the Membership...

**Tony Girardi, CGCS, Rockrimmon
Country Club, Stamford, CT**

We are trying to educate our membership on the benefits of reducing and/or maintaining green speeds in order to promote healthy turf. Over the past three years, as a result of trying to speed up our greens, we've seen an increase in anthracnose. We also discovered a high level of organic matter, which we need to displace at a rate of about 40 to 45 percent per year over the next three to five years in order to meet members' expectations for speed. The only other alternative would be to do a complete USGA rebuild on the 14 remaining "native soil-based" greens.

**Tony Grasso, Metropolis Country
Club, White Plains, NY**

No one has ever lost his job for slow greens. Superintendents have, however, lost greens and jobs for maintenance practices that cause stress to the turf, like underfertilizing combined with excessive mowing, rolling, and topdress dragging. The other often-overlooked factor: the weather. Memberships have to understand that green speeds will vary with weather conditions, or turf quality—and the superintendent, too—will suffer.

**John Ruzsbatzky, CGCS
Country Club of Farmington
Farmington, CT**

We've been very successful communicating the pressures of anthracnose when we go



Survey Results at a Glance

Number of Respondents

1. What kind of turf is on your greens?		
Bent	7	
Poa	5	
Poa/Bent	41	

2. Do you post green speeds?		
	2008	2001
Yes	3	5
No	50	29

3. How often do you check the speeds each week?		
	2008	2001
1 day	14	10
2 days	13	5
3 days	12	5
4 days	4	2
5 days	2	2
6 days	1	1
7 days	3	4
0 days	4	5

4. What is your average green speed?		
	2008	2001
8'6" - 9'	4	6
9' - 9'6"	4	4
9'6"	8	7
9'6" - 10'	9	4
10'	13	6
10' - 10'6"	2	2
10'6"	10	4
10'6" - 11'	1	1
11' - 11'6"	2	0
Total average daily speed =	10'	9'8"

5. What is your range of green speed?		
	2008	2001
Low end <8'	1	0
8'	8	8
8'6"	6	4
9'	15	14
9'3"	-	1
9'6"	15	3
9'9"	2	1
10'	5	1
Average low =	8'11"	8'10"

High end		
9'	2	1
10'	11	3
10'2"	-	2
10'6"	3	4
10'9"	-	1
10'10"	-	1
11'	18	8
11'6"	-	6
12'	15	3
12'6"	1	2
13'	2	1
Average high =	11'6"	11'1"

6. What is your usual height of cut?		
	2008	2001
0.080	-	1
0.090	1	-
0.093	1	-
0.095	2	-
0.100	1	-
0.105	3	-
0.110	11	-
0.115	3	1

Number of Respondents

0.117	1	-
0.118	1	1
0.120	3	2
0.125	13	14
0.130	2	3
0.135	4	-
0.140	6	2
0.150	1	3
0.156	-	1

Average = 0.120 0.130

Mower Type?		
Toro 1000	11	20
Toro Flex	19	-
Toro 800	1	-
Jac 422	5	8
Jac Flex	2	-
Jac E-Walker	4	-
John Deere	6	2
Ransomes	-	1
Triplex	5	-

7. How many times do you cut per day?		
	2008	2001
1x	44	17
2x	1	5
3x	1	1
1x or 2x	7	11

8. How often do you roll per week?		
	2008	2001
Occasionally	-	4
0x	4	5
1x	5	4
2x	10	11
3x	17	9
4x	15	-
5x	1	-
7x	1	1

8A. What kind of roller do you use?		
Speed roller	11	
Salsco	10	
Triplex	8	
Vibratory	11	
Smithco	2	
Tru Turf	1	
Greens Iron	1	

9. How often do you topdress?		
	2008	2001
Every week	-	1
Every 2 weeks	21	7
Every 3 weeks	9	5
Every 4 weeks	15	18
Every 8 weeks	-	2
With aerification	3	1
As needed	5	-

10. Do you use PGRs regularly?		
	2008	2001
Yes	48	21
No	5	13

11. Do you use groomers, brushes, verticutters?		
	2008	2001
Yes	45	31
No	8	3
How often?		
Every week	9	7
Every 2 weeks	15	11
Every 4 weeks	14	7
As needed	7	3
Spring/Fall	-	3

Number of Respondents

12. What is the moisture level of your greens?		
	2008	2001
Damp	8	6
Field capacity	18	14
Dry	25	14

13. What is your annual nitrogen fertility level?		
	2008	2001
Less than 1 lb.	0	3
1 - 2 lbs.	4	18
2 - 3 lbs.	21	10
3 - 4 lbs.	20	3
More than 4 lbs.	8	-

14. Do you feel the speeds you are asked to keep for your greens are appropriate for the relative severity of the contours?		
	2008	2001
Just right	48	24
Too fast	5	8

15. How many greens do you have with extremely limited cupping area?		
	2008	2001
0	12	6
1	4	3
2	8	4
3	9	5
4	4	6
5	4	2
6	3	2
7	2	1
8	3	2
9	2	2
12	1	-
18	1	1

Average = 3 greens/course (2008)
Average = 4 greens/course (2001)

15A. Have you rebuilt any greens to reduce slope?		
Yes	20	
No	33	
If so, how many?		
# of greens	# of respondents	
1	10	
2	3	
3	4	
4	1	
5	1	
7	1	

16. Will you sacrifice some turf for increased green speed?		
	2008	2001
Yes	10	10
No	43	24

17. How important are fast green speeds to your membership?		
	2008	2001
Very	23	16
Somewhat	24	16
Minimal	6	2

18. Does this issue give you more personal stress than any other?		
	2008	2001
Yes	21	6
No	32	28

below .125 with our bench settings. As a result, we've increased fertility and the amount of rolling we do, and we don't go below a .125 cutting height. We have consistent speeds and healthier greens. We do have some vocal members who want faster greens, so we satisfy them for major tournaments by using PGRs to keep speeds regulated. But the reality is that speeds of 10.5 to 11 are too fast for most players on our undulated, small greens.

Jim Weiland, Shorehaven Golf Club Norwalk, CT

Our members say and think they want firm, fast greens, but they also want green, lush-looking turf. Education about green speeds and turf health has been slow but steady. In general, as long as green surfaces are healthy, smooth, and consistent, speed complaints are minimal.

On Stress...

John Carlone, CGCS, The Meadow Brook Club, Jericho, NY

Our big, flat greens can accommodate higher green speeds, so we strive to keep them at 10.5.

The issue of green speed used to be a great source of stress for me, but PGRs and rolling have pretty much solved this problem.

Joe Tamborski, Hempstead Golf Club, Hempstead, NY

We have a younger contingent who feels the greens are never fast enough. Like most guys, I'm walking the line, trying to provide what golfers want and what the greens need to keep them healthy enough to ward off anthracnose. We have a challenging growing environment: small native, push-up soil greens that get a lot of play—30,000 to 35,000 rounds per year. There's really no place to hide turf loss. No room for error.

Food for Thought

Though survey results show more superintendents are pulling out all the stops to increase the speed of their greens—heights of cut are lower, nitrogen fertility is up, and there's an increase in rolling and in the use of Plant Growth Regulators—is this stress being self-imposed? If you listen to our survey participants' individual commentary, it seems that what members really want these days are healthy, true, consistent greens... over the fastest speed possible.

Scott Niven, a member of the Tee to Green Editorial Committee, is Superintendent at The Stanwich Club in Greenwich, CT.

Special thanks to Stanwich assistants Ryan Segrue and Jim Schell for their help in preparing the data for this article.

Green Speed Today and Into the Future

Over the past half-century, green speeds have increased at a steady and predictable rate: about one foot per decade. How long can we keep this going?

Historical Green Speed Escalation

Year	Perceived Fast Green Speeds
1950s	6 – 7'
1960s	7 – 8'
1970s	8 – 9'
1980s	9 – 10'
1990s	10 – 11'
2000s	11 – 12'
2010s	12 – 13' ???

Here's how Met area courses are Stimping, according to our 2008 survey.

For Regular Membership Play

Current Speed Chart for Met Area Courses (2008)

11'6"	=	Fast
10'9"	=	Medium Fast
10'	=	Medium
9'6"	=	Medium Slow
9'	=	Slow

Special Thanks to Our Survey Participants

Bob Alonzi, CGCS, Fenway GC, Scarsdale, NY

Phil Anderson, Village Club of Sands Point Sands Point, NY

Harry Bahrenburg, Huntington Crescent Club Huntington, NY

Michael Barton, CGCS, Burning Tree CC Greenwich, CT

Brian Benedict, The Seawane Club Hewlett Harbor, NY

Mike Benz, Middle Bay CC, Oceanside, NY

Sean Cain, CGCS, Sunningdale CC, Scarsdale, NY

Tony Campanella, Hampshire CC, Mamaroneck, NY

Peter Candelora, Cold Spring CC

Cold Spring Harbor, NY

John Carlone, CGCS, The Meadow Brook Club Jericho, NY

Matt Ceplo, CGCS, Rockland CC, Sparkill, NY

Bob DeMarco, The Powelton Club, Newburgh, NY

Glen Dube, CGCS, Centennial GC, Carmel, NY

Dave Dwinell, CGCS, Wollaston GC, Milton, MA

Richard Evans, Town of Wallkill Golf Course

Middletown, NY

Steve Finamore, CGCS, Alpine CC, Demarest, NY

Mark Fuller, CGCS, The Connecticut GC, Easton, CT

John Gallagher, Race Brook CC, Orange, CT

Tim Garceau, The Tuxedo Club, Tuxedo Park, NY

Joe Gardner, Dellwood CC, New City, NY

Tony Girardi, CGCS, Rockrimmon CC, Stamford, CT

Paul Gonzalez, CGCS, Whipoorwill Club

Armonk, NY

Tony Grasso, Metropolis CC, White Plains, NY

Blake Halderman, CGCS, Brae Burn CC Purchase, NY

Lyman Lambert, CGCS, Nassau CC, Glen Cove, NY

Neil Laufenberg, Innis Arden GC, Old Greenwich, CT

Dan Madar, Spook Rock GC, Suffern, NY

Darrell Marcinek, CGCS, Neshanic Valley Golf Course, Neshanic Station, NJ

Tim Moore, Knollwood CC, Elmsford, NY

Bob Nielsen, CGCS, Bedford Golf & Tennis Club Bedford, NY

Scott Niven, CGCS, The Stanwich Club, Greenwich, CT

John O'Keefe, CGCS, Prekness Hills CC, Wayne, NJ

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Pelham Manor, NY

Steve Wirth, Cherry Valley CC, Skillman, NJ

Jason Ziesmer, Manhattan Woods GC, West Nyack, NY

In Search of the Ideal Green Speed

The problem with green speed may very well be superintendents' attitude toward it. At least that's what you might take away from Michigan University's green speed guru Thomas Nikolai, who authored the well-known book *The Superintendent's Guide for Controlling Putting Green Speed*.

According to Nikolai, the long debate over green speed persists because it's perpetually been treated as an annoyance instead of an important topic worthy of scientific research.

In the past, superintendents looking for answers to their members' green speed demands have come across articles that inform them to:

- Tell their members that "speed kills"
- Get members to lower their expectations
- Avoid telling members the truth about their green speed

"While this information is well intentioned," says Nikolai in a recent *Grounds Maintenance* article, "it's time to face the obvious fact that this approach has not produced positive results."

"The biggest problem," he continues, "is that article after article warns of the perils of fast green speed without giving advice on how to satisfy the majority of golfers' green speed requests."

The result, according to Nikolai: Superintendents believe they can manage for green speed or manage for healthy turf. Not both.

The Morris Method at Work

In his book, Nikolai not only debunks this myth, he offers prescriptive advice, backed by solid research, on how superintendents and green committees can work together to manage their courses toward an "ideal green speed." To arrive at that ideal speed, Nikolai advocates the widely publicized Morris Method.

Developed at Crystal Downs Country Club in Frankfort, MI, by Superintendent Mike Morris, this method involves a system for rating member satisfaction to determine a golf course's "ideal green speed."

Here's how it works:

1. Daily green speed measurements must be obtained on at least one green (two is preferred) every day. And it's generally best to take these measurements twice a day: once in the morning and once in the afternoon.
2. Golfers, without any knowledge of what the measured green speed is, are given a card at the end of their round and asked to rate the speed of the greens.

Afterward, the daily green speed measurements and golfer survey responses are put into a database. The process is repeated for several months to determine each individual course's ideal green speed.

To give you an idea of the value of this method, here's what a Michigan-area superintendent, Sean O'Connor of Forest Akers Golf Course, had to say after putting the Morris Method into practice:

"The Morris Method has allowed me to take control of green speeds by determining what the customer feels is the ideal green speed for our course. It has taken a subjective topic and quantified it. Too often, we work on assumption. I assumed that our customers wanted green speeds in the area of 11 feet to 12 feet. However, that was based on feedback from a very vocal minority. The majority of golfers at our facility actually wanted greens at 9.5 feet to 10.5 feet based on our survey results. Monitoring green speeds will be an ongoing component of our daily maintenance practices."

When Green Speed Goes Awry

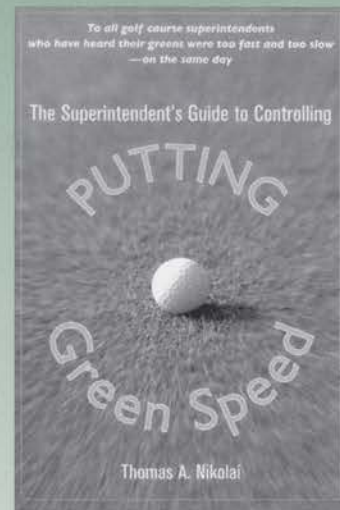
Interestingly, the optimal speed determined for Crystal Downs was 9'6" to 10'6" or an average daily green speed of 10 feet, which

happens to be the current average for those who responded to our own green speed survey. This speed seems to be optimal for average golfers—and for the superintendents in our survey, who report being better able to maintain healthy turf while keeping the course "fun" for the majority of members.

By contrast, U.S. Open venues like Oakmont and, of course, Augusta National create speeds right up there with a pool table's, which Stimps at roughly 15 feet. Unfortunately, putting greens are not flat like a pool table. They have contours, and as Nikolai states: "Green speed and green contour should be inseparable."

The entire golf community got to see what happens when green speed goes awry during the U.S. Open at Shinnecock several years ago when excessive speed rendered some of those greens nearly unplayable.

Now whether you use Morris's precise data collection method or not, just the concept of trying to find the optimal speed for your particular course's greens will go a long way toward satisfying your membership. And according to Nikolai, the best way to do that is to use the Stimp meter as it was intended: to determine consistency from green to green and the ideal pace for ball roll on *your* greens and for *your* membership. The Stimp meter is not—and never should be—a tool used to compare one golf course to another. What's good for one golf course, as we've all seen, is not necessarily good for another.





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GCSAA's Spring Board Meeting Smooths the Way for a Successful Year Ahead

by John O'Keefe, CGCS

This year's GCSAA Golf Industry Show kicked off an exciting new era for me as a director on the GCSAA board. As most of you know, I was appointed to the board of directors, filling the remaining year of James Fitzroy's term, created by his election to secretary/treasurer.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the MetGCSA for supporting my campaign for GCSAA director. Special thanks to Matt Ceplo, who as president, nominated me. I am especially grateful to my wife Margaret, Jim McNally, and Ken Kubik for their tireless work in promoting my campaign.

As a director, I am pleased to be involved as the chairman of the Assistant Superintendent Committee and the Certification Committee and to serve as co-chair of the Professional Development Committee. Both the Assistant Superintendent and Professional Development committees are relatively new and very active. Certification, a well-established committee, is always involved in a variety of ongoing activities. Needless to say, I'll be busy.

Inside the Boardroom

One of my first involvements as a GCSAA director was to attend the Spring Board Meeting held in Santa Fe, NM, from March 27 to 29. To keep you all in touch with what's going on in our national association, I thought I'd share some of the decisions and discussions that developed.

First and Foremost

Having selected Mark Woodward, CGCS, as GCSAA's next chief executive, we used our 2008 Spring Board Meeting to concentrate on creating a smooth transition to new leadership.

While Mark was focusing on conducting a successful U.S. Open, we were working to guarantee that service to GCSAA members did not suffer during the interim period. Mark will be stepping into his new role at GCSAA headquarters as you read this.

Chapter Delegates Meeting to Preview Convention Site

The board voted to conduct the 2008 Chapter Delegates Meeting in October in New Orleans, rather than at association headquarters. This change will allow chapter delegates to see firsthand—and then communicate to fellow chapter members—the impressive

rebuilding and renovation efforts that New Orleans has undertaken since Hurricane Katrina. The board has been impressed with the city's revitalization, and we're anticipating a very successful GCSAA Education Conference and Golf Industry Show there next February.

GCSAA Offers Chapter Support

By holding our Spring Board Meeting in New Mexico, board members and staff had the opportunity to interact with Rio Grande GCSA leaders and industry representatives, as well as the staff of the Sun Country Amateur Golf Association. Chapter President Glenn Denney presented the challenges facing the Rio Grande GCSA and sought counsel from GCSAA on how to best increase membership and retention, improve communication among chapter members, and raise funds to boost the association's profitability.

Matt Williams, executive director of the Sun Country Amateur Golf Association, announced that his association and the Sun Country PGA Section have agreed to work together to build a Golf House, and he invited the Rio Grande GCSA to consider locating its headquarters there too. The group discussed how the organizations might model their Golf House after our own Golf House in Elmsford, NY, as well as the Golf Houses in Chicago and Kentucky.

Regional Representative Plan Unveiled

The board approved the continued development of the association's field staff program, announcing its plans to hire a GCSAA regional representative to live and work in Florida. The regional staff member will serve as a link between GCSAA and the state's 12 chapters and will act as a resource for individual members and for Florida chapters and student chapters.

The new regional rep will be charged with growing shared membership numbers and penetration rates in the state, boosting Florida member participation in the Golf Industry Show and GCSAA/external education programs, and increasing the "net promoter score" for GCSAA and its website among Florida member superintendents.

We hope to have the new rep up and running this coming fall.



John O'Keefe,
CGCS

The Golf Industry Show: The Spring Meeting's Strategic Topic of Discussion

A standard agenda item at our board meetings is strategic discussion. This year's strategic discussion was the Golf Industry Show. In preparation for the discussion, we reviewed attendance, participation and exhibit sales figures for the past nine years, going back to 2000 when GCSAA was last in New Orleans, along with that results of the 2008 attendee and exhibitor satisfaction surveys and a survey of previous attendees who did not go to the 2008 event in Orlando.

Facilitating the discussion was Steven Hacker, who shared his perspectives as both a certified association executive and as an exhibition organizer. He was quite impressed with both the strategic direction that GCSAA took in developing the Golf Industry Show and the quality of the standard operating procedures established to ensure effective and efficient operations.

Dues Decisions

During the spring meeting, the board also set the dues for Affiliate, Associate, and International Superintendent Members to align with the dues increase approved at the Annual Meeting for Class A, SM, C, and other membership classes. Affiliate member dues are \$320, to equal Class A and SM dues approved in Orlando, while dues for Affiliate Corporate Company Representatives (for multiple staff of Affiliate-member companies) are \$260. Associate and International Superintendent Member dues are \$160, equal to the Class C dues approved in Orlando.

Stay Tuned

If any of you want to discuss these, or any other GCSAA-related issues, please don't hesitate to give me a call. I hope to continue these updates to keep you informed about GCSAA activities as the year goes on.

John O'Keefe, a director on the GCSAA board, is director of golf course management at Preakness Hills Country Club in Wayne, NJ.

Two-Ball Qualifiers Flock to Dellwood

We had a large field and great weather for our annual Two-Ball Qualifier held this year on April 24 at Dellwood Country Club. The course was in tremendous shape—thanks to Joe Gardner and his staff—and the entire Dellwood team was a pleasure to work with. Many thanks to everyone at Dellwood for hosting our event.

As always, with such a large field of contestants vying for a spot in the Two-Ball competition, some teams weren't able to qualify. Please be sure to visit our website at www.metgcsa.org for the lowdown on not only who qualified for the Two-Ball, but also how the teams are faring in Round One of the competition. Many of the teams have already completed their first round matches.

If you are playing in the event, note that all matches should be completed by the following dates:

Match 1 ~ June 22
Match 2 ~ July 27
Match 3 ~ August 29
Final ~ September 28

This promises to be another exciting season-long event. Good luck to one and all!

In the meantime, here's a look at the day's golf results:

Event of the Day Results

Low Gross Winners

- 73 Mike Benz/Mark Chant
Middle Bay CC/Colonial Springs GC
- 74 Sean Cain/Jeff Wentworth
Summingdale CC/Pelham CC
- 75 Tom Ashfield/Andy Drohen
Quaker Ridge GC/Agrium Advanced Technologies

Low Net Winners

- 64 Jon Barlok/Kevin Seibel
Turf Products Corp./Century CC
- 64 Dennis Granahan/Jim Schell
Navesink CC/The Stanwich Club
- 64 Scott Apgar/Brett Chapin
Metro Turf Specialists/Redding CC

Closest to the Pin

- #3 Brian Benedict, *The Seawane Club* 6' 3"
- #9 Chip Lafferty, *Rye GC* 6' 11"
- #13 Jeff Thrasher
Second Nature Tree & Landscape Co. 10' 10"
- #18 Tom Weinert, *Plant Food Company* 16'

Longest Drive

- #5 Andy Drohen
Agrium Advanced Technologies
- #10 Ken Benoit, *Glen Arbor GC*

— Ken Benoit, CGCS

Member News

New Member

Please join us in welcoming new Met-GCSA Class C member **Brendan French** of Willow Ridge Country Club in Harrison, NY.

Members on the Move

- **Rob Alonzi** is the new superintendent at Fenway GC in Scarsdale, NY. Previous position: Superintendent at St. Andrew's GC, Hastings-on-Hudson, NY.
- **Don Asinski** is the new superintendent at Marine Park GC in Brooklyn, NY. Previous position: Assistant superintendent at Pelham CC, Pelham Manor, NY.
- **Justin Gabrenas** is the new superintendent at Lake Waramaug CC in New Preston, CT. Previous position: Assistant superintendent at Silver Spring CC, Ridgefield, CT.
- **Rob Milar** is the new superintendent at St. Andrew's GC in Hastings-on-Hudson, NY. Previous position: Assistant superintendent at Westchester CC, Rye, NY.

In Sympathy

We would like to offer our condolences to **Blake Halderman** of Brae Burn Country Club. Blake's mother, Sandi Halderman, passed away on April 29.

Superintendent/Manager/Guest Tournament

On June 3, Pelham Country Club hosted this year's Superintendent/Manager/Guest Tournament. Though it was a limited-field, Tuesday-afternoon event, a whopping 68 superintendents, managers, and guests enjoyed the fine weather and great conditions. This is a testament to host Superintendent Jeff Wentworth and his staff.

Here's how the golf panned out:

Superintendent/Manager Team Results

Net Team Winners

- 65 Rick Schock/Charles Torrence
Aspetuck Valley Country Club
- 68 Tim Garceau/Keith Branche
The Tuxedo Club

Gross Team Winners

- 75 Chad Esposito/Pete Maier
Highland Golf Club
- 76 Glen Dube/Scott Klemme
Centennial Golf Club

Member/Member or Guest Team Results

Net Team Winner

- 60 Tony Girardi/Dave Wallace
Rockrimmon Country Club/Tee & Green Sod

Gross Team Winner

- 71 Blake Halderman/Matt Plosila
Brae Burn Country Club

Closest to the Pin

- #5 Mike Galluzzo, *Willow Ridge CC* 15'
- #8 Bob Huet, *Guest* 4'
- #10 Frank Benzakour, *Middle Bay CC* 9' 2"
- #18 Blake Halderman, *Brae Burn CC* 6' 3"

Longest Drive

- #12 Tony Hooks, *Pelham/Split Rock CC*

— David Dudones/Ken Benoit, CGCS

Summer Social on the Hudson

Ardley Country Club and Matt DuTremble to Host Met's Social Event of the Year

by Kevin Collins

On Wednesday, July 30, Ardsley Country Club and Superintendent Matt DuTremble will host the MetGCSA's 2008 Summer Social. What better setting for this special event—one of the Met's most popular of the year—than the picturesque and historic Ardsley Country Club, which offers spectacular, panoramic views of the Hudson River.

The clubhouse, where this gala event will take place, is perched on top of North Mountain, commanding superb views west across the Hudson Valley to the Palisades and mountain range beyond.

Just 20 miles from New York City, the club first opened in 1895 as "The Ardsley Casino," with the support of some of the most notable and successful men in the U.S.: Cornelius Vanderbilt, J.P. Morgan, and William Rockefeller among them.

Back then, the clubhouse was located on a bluff overlooking the Hudson River and had a private dock to accommodate the yachts of Casino members. It also boasted a private railroad depot, enabling its wealthy members to arrive in style.

Noted as "the finest and longest golf course in the world," Ardsley was designed by golfing great of that era, Willie Dunn, who was hired as the club's first golf pro.

As the club acquired more land, the course was moved away from the river and redesigned in 1919 by Donald Ross and, again in 1928, by Dr. Allister Mackenzie.

Ardley Country Club is Born

In 1936, the old Casino clubhouse was torn down, and the club assumed its current name, The Ardsley Country Club. Thirty-three years later, in 1966, the ever-evolving club moved its clubhouse one last time to its present location, the former Frank Jay Gould estate. The course, too, was altered—this time by Robert Trent Jones, who eliminated the last two holes along Broadway and turned Mackenzie's 15th into today's striking par 4 first hole with its 135-foot-elevation drop from tee to fairway.

Ardley's renovation work didn't stop there. In the mid-'90s, the course was

tweaked again under the watchful eye of Marvin Armstrong, and in 2003, the club embarked on a major Ken Dye renovation, which offered Matt his entrée into the club, first as renovation project manager and, nearly a year later, as Ardsley's superintendent.

Matt's Launch Into Golf Course Management

A New England boy at heart, Matt fondly recalls his childhood as one of seven children: "My parents both worked in education. My dad was a principal and my mom a teacher and librarian. We were raised in Connecticut and moved to Vermont when I was 13. My parents are both great people," says Matt. "They gave all of us the independence to chart our own course with a lot of love and support."

The course Matt chose to chart—from the time he entered high school—was turfgrass management. "My neighbor, an assistant at the Quechee Club in Vermont, told me they were looking for crew members. I worked there every summer throughout high school. Then as soon as I graduated, I approached Quechee Super Ken Lallier and told him, 'I want to go to school for this. I want to be treated like an intern.' Ken replied, 'Okay, you're working every weekend from here on out.'"

Certain about his career path, Matt enrolled in the UMass turf program in 1994, interning at Westchester with Joe Alonzi. "I worked for Joe for three summers and a couple of winter breaks, making friendships there that will last forever," says Matt.

Life After UMass

In 1998, Matt graduated from UMass more than ready for his first position as assistant super at Sleepy Hollow. "Sleepy was a great place to work," remembers Matt. "I worked with Tom Leahy for five years. He gave me and Paul Gursky, also an assistant at the time, a lot of responsibility while we were preparing for the USGA Women's Amateur in 2002. Not only did I learn a lot from Tom, but I also found in Tom a great friend."

Matt DuTremble

In addition to being the launching pad for Matt's career, Sleepy served another, more important purpose in his life. "I met my wife, Kristen, while at Sleepy," says Matt, explaining that she was the club's food and beverage manager.

"One day, as I was walking into the clubhouse with Paul Gursky, I spotted her. One look is all it took," he continues. "I turned to Paul and said, 'I'm going to marry that girl one day.'" And that he did, with Tom Leahy playing an important role in the setup of Matt's marriage proposal.

"Under the pretense of teaching Kristen to play golf," remembers Tom, "Matt had her out on the course. He instructed me, beforehand, to place an engagement ring in the cup on the 4th hole. I hid in the woods until I saw them tee off and ran up to the green to deposit the ring."

"The rest is history," Matt happily reports, adding, "Kristen and I have been together for 10 years and married for almost six. We have two great kids, Joey, 3, and James, 9 months."

Ardley Beckoned

January of 2003 is when Matt left Sleepy to become project manager for the sizable Ken Dye renovation at Ardsley. "The project was huge," recalls Matt. "We rebuilt all of the tees and bunkers and expanded or recontoured 14 of the existing greens. We shortened and rebuilt the 18th hole, dug four new ponds, reconfigured the driving range, and added a practice facility. This was all done while play was still going on."

In less than a year, Matt had proved his mettle, and Ardsley offered him his first and current superintendent's position.

Be sure to come on over to Ardsley July 30 for a relaxing and fun-filled evening with fellow Met members.

Kevin Collins, a member of the Tee to Green Editorial Committee, is Northeast territory manager for Aquatrols Corp. of America.



Upcoming Events

Don't Miss These Upcoming Events!

Be sure to mark your calendars with the following upcoming golf and social events. For further information, please contact the appropriate committee chairmen. For professional events, contact either of our Tournament Committee co-chairs: Blake Halderman at 914-946-1074 or Ken Benoit at 914-241-0700. Our Social & Welfare Committee co-chairs are Tom Leahy (914-941-8281) and Bob Nielsen (914-234-3779). Both are available to discuss any upcoming social events.

Summer Social

Wednesday, July 30
Ardsley Country Club
Ardsley-on-Hudson, NY
Host: Matt Dutremble

Education Meeting

Wednesday, August 6
Leewood Golf Club
Eastchester, NY
Host: Trapper Van Dunk

Family Picnic

Tuesday, August 26
Site TBA

Met Championship and Met Area Team Championship Qualifier PLUS

Poa Annual Tournament

Monday, September 29
The Seawane Club, Hewlitt Harbor, NY
Host: Brian Benedict

Superintendent/Green Chairperson Tournament

Tuesday, October 21
Rockland Country Club, Sparkill, NY
Host: Matt Ceplo, CGCS

Annual Assistants Championship

Monday, October 27
Trump National Golf Club
Bedminster, NJ
Hosts: Mike Brunelle, director of grounds
Tyler Ortero, golf course superintendent
Gregory Eisner, assistant superintendent

Met Area Team Championship

Monday, October 27
Winged Foot Golf Club/West Course
Mamaroneck, NY
Host: Matthew Burrows

Annual Meeting

November
Date & Site OPEN

MetGCSA Christmas Party

Friday, December 5
Metropolis Country Club
White Plains, NY
Host: Tony Grasso

Educational Events

University of Connecticut Inaugural Turfgrass Field Day

Tuesday, July 22
UConn Plant Science Research and Education Facility, Storrs, CT

To commemorate the 10th anniversary of its Turfgrass Science Program, the University of Connecticut's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources will host its first Turfgrass Field Day. The field day will focus on current research projects conducted in the areas of professional and residential turfgrass management.

Turfgrass managers will also have the opportunity to attend a variety of workshops, visit with turfgrass vendors, and view demonstrations of the latest equipment used to manage fine turf.

For further information, contact John Kaminski at 860-486-0162, or visit www.turf.uconn.edu/fieldday08.

Rutgers Turfgrass Research Field Day (Golf & Fine Turf)

Tuesday, July 29
Horticultural Farm II, New Brunswick, NJ
The field day offers the opportunity to tour turf plots showing research trials being con-

ducted at the university. Tour runs from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., with lunch at the tour's end.

Call 973-812-6467 or visit www.njturfgrass.org for further information.

UMass Turf Open House

Thursday, July 31
UMass Joseph Troll Turf Research Center
South Deerfield, MA

Join UMass faculty at the Joseph Troll Turf Research Center for its first-ever evening open house. Attendees will be offered a guided first-hand look at research projects and other items of interest in the field. In addition, they will have the opportunity to hear faculty speak on the most current issues facing today's turfgrass managers.

For further information, contact the UMass Extension Turf Program office at 508-892-0382 or visit www.umass turf.org and select "Conferences & Workshops."

University of Rhode Island 77th Annual Turfgrass Field Day

Wednesday, August 20
C.R. Skogley Turfgrass Research Facility
Kingston, RI

The field day offers the opportunity to tour turf plots showing research trials being con-

ducted at the university. In addition, attendees will have access to the largest gathering of regional product distributors outside the New England Regional Turfgrass Conference and Show.

For further information, call 401-874-2791 or visit www.uriturf.org.

The 5th Annual Dr. Joseph Troll Turf Education Fundraiser

Monday, September 29
Lyman Orchards Golf Club
Middlefield, CT

Superintendent Mark Pelky and Lyman Orchards Golf Club will be hosts to this year's Joseph Troll Turf Classic on September 29. In its fifth year, the 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 and the ATG are available online at www.alumniturfgroup.com. Also feel free to contact ATG President Steve Curry at 413-329-4912.

Trapper Van Dunk and Leewood Welcome Met Education Meeting

by Greg Wojick

Trapper Van Dunk. "Hmmm... interesting name," I thought, when I was asked to interview our August 6 Education Meeting host—a young and relatively new golf course superintendent.

His unusual name conjured up all sorts of images... A tall guy who could easily dunk a basketball and drive a van at the same time... *Not!* A young guy who was more than likely nicknamed Trapper when he interned on a golf course and excelled at raking traps. *Well, that's not exactly how it went.*

The fact is that Trapper got his nickname from his uncle, after he and his father spent the day with him hunting and the very young Hermen—yes, that's Trapper's real name—had the job of guarding the traps. The nickname really took hold when Trapper would go to work with his father, Burgess, and began raking bunkers at The Tuxedo Club in Tuxedo Park, NY. A member of the New York State's Ramapough-Lenape Indian tribe, his dad has worked 40+ years in a variety of capacities at The Tuxedo Club, from caddy to golf course maintenance department mechanic.

Trapper Finds His Calling

From a very young age, Trapper felt he was destined to become an attorney. He never considered golf course work a career. "I did odd jobs at The Tuxedo Club just to spend time with my dad," says Trapper. Then in 1994, Jay Mottola, executive director of the MGA, approached Trapper about a job with GOLFWORKS, a brand-new intern program initiated by the MGA Foundation to introduce high-school-aged students to career possibilities within the golf industry.

Trapper was one of the original 12 GOLFWORKS interns who kicked off what has proved to be a very successful effort by the MGA. The experience gave him a new perspective on the turfgrass management industry. "I finally had a real job. I was working under Tuxedo's superintendent at the time, Carney McGrady, and between him and my dad, I began to learn a lot and wanted to excel," he recalls.

Trapper's diligence caught the attention of Al Radko, the former director of the USGA Green Section Committee, who at the time, was consulting at Tuxedo. It was Radko who

introduced Trapper to the idea of pursuing a career in turfgrass management. And the idea stuck. Trapper entered the Turfgrass Management Program at Penn State University in 1995.

Penn State and Beyond

"Penn State was a big adjustment," says Trapper, "but an even bigger surprise was how much science was taught as a part of the curriculum. The only reason I got by was because I could relate what I was learning to situations on the golf course. Somehow, I feel turf programs should factor hands-on experience into the curriculum. I also think turf schools should make Spanish a requirement. It's critical, these days, in communicating with most maintenance staffs."

Trapper's education certainly didn't stop at Penn State. After earning a B.S. in turfgrass science in 1999, he went to work at The Golf Club at Mansion Ridge in Monroe, NY, for then Superintendent Ed Walsh. In 2001, he worked for David Pughe at Rockaway River Country Club in Denville, NJ, and the following year, for Joe Smythe and then Gabe Girillo at Manhattan Woods Country Club in West Nyack, NY. At each club, Trapper learned new skills and also came to grips with the demanding workload and schedule that is required of superintendents.

"Not only is this job hard on you physically, but the hours don't leave you much of a social life," Trapper laments. "At that point, I was young and felt I needed to step back and reevaluate if I wanted to do this the rest of my life. So I decided to take some time off."

Trapper stayed in touch with Ed Walsh and current Tuxedo Superintendent Tim Garceau while he contemplated his career path. Says Walsh, "I saw Trapper as a smart kid who could make it in our business."

Absence must make the heart grow fonder, because it wasn't long before Trapper decided to return to the industry—fully committed.

Leewood Bound

Trapper accepted a job as assistant superintendent in February 2003 at Leewood under longtime Superintendent Pete DiRollo, who allowed Trapper to assume a good deal of

Trapper Van Dunk

responsibility. As a result, by the time Pete left Leewood in the fall of 2006, Trapper felt comfortable applying for the job. "I knew, firsthand, the cooperation that exists between the membership and the department heads," says Trapper. "At Leewood, you're part of a team. The superintendent, general manager, and golf professional meet almost daily. It makes us all better able to do our jobs."

And at Leewood, Trapper does have quite a job ahead of him. In his short tenure as superintendent, he's already improved conditions with some tree removal, fairway contouring, and a rigorous program to enhance the health and welfare of his greens. He'll continue with many of these maintenance regimes while also working to improve the club's irrigation system and crew development.

Giving Back

As with many superintendents faced with today's more demanding member expectations, Trapper has a love/like relationship with the profession. "It's tough but rewarding work," says Trapper.

"Keeping in close contact with colleagues offers great relief," says Trapper, who is quick to acknowledge the counsel he's received over the years from Ed Walsh, Tim Garceau, and more recently, Fenway's Bob Alonzi, Pelham's Jeff Wenworth, Rye Golf Club's Chip Lafferty, and Scarsdale's Matt Severino.

Eager to give back to an association—and industry—that's been so supportive to him, it's no surprise that Trapper and Leewood agreed to host the MetGCSA's Education Meeting. Of course, Trapper did need a little nudging from Education Chairman Glen Dube. According to Trapper, Glen called and said, "You can host the Education Meeting in August, right?"

"And what could I say," says Trapper, "except 'yes!'"

Greg Wojick, a member of the Tee to Green Editorial Committee, is the principal in Communitool, LLC, and founder of Playbooks™.

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