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Tee to Green



Moshulu Golf Course

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President's Message

SERIALS

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Summer is fast approaching, and now the real fun begins. For those of us with winter damage, the upcoming months should prove to be interesting, to say the least. I happened to be perusing the *Tee to Green* archives, and I came across a past president's message with advice I felt was worth repeating—particularly in view of the season we endured last year. Here are a few words to the wise culled from one of the late Dave Mahoney's 2004 President's Messages.

#1: Don't shoot yourself in the foot!

Summer 2010 certainly should serve to remind us that getting too aggressive at the wrong time of year can be a recipe for disaster. The last thing you want to do is risk pushing your turf over the edge trying to impress golfers! Dead greens—no matter how fast they are—are not impressive.

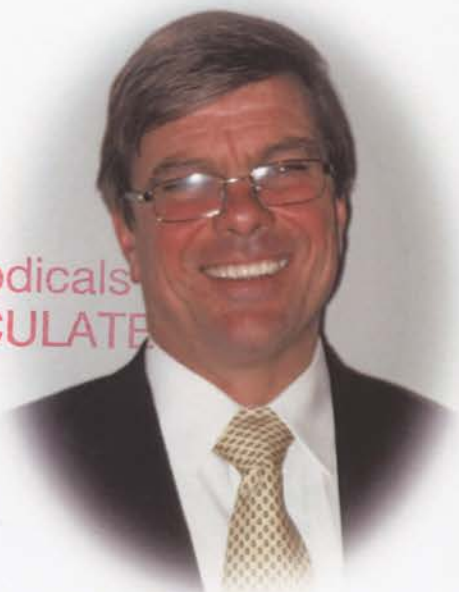
#2: Don't experiment! The heat of the summer is probably not the best time put new products to the test on your course. Better to do it in the early spring or fall, when environmental stresses are a bit lower—and your turf might have time to recover, should disaster strike.

The Net: if you're not sure how your turf is going to react to a product, July and August are not the time of year to find out.

#3: Don't let yourself get worn down.

The stresses of the job can really start to weigh you down in the middle of the season. A day off with the family, a night out with friends, an afternoon of golf on that one cloudy day can all help to relieve the daily stresses.

And you're in luck . . . coming up are two Met events that will take you away from it all for an afternoon or evening. Don't miss our Family Picnic at Bedford Village Memorial Park on Tuesday, July 19 and our ever-popular Summer Social on Tuesday, July 26 at Fenway Golf Club. Both promise to be the kind of forget-everything-and-enjoy events that will give you the charge you need to manage those everyday battles on the course.



**Bob Nielsen, CGCS
MetGCSA President**

#4: Don't become an island. The stress of the job is bad enough without isolating yourself from peers and friends. If you are having trouble, chances are there is someone else in the area having the same problems. Take advantage of our meetings and social events to compare notes and commiserate with friends and colleagues. That's what our association is all about . . . supporting one another in any way we can.

#5: Don't hate your job. The heat of summer can wear on anyone, but it can be especially harsh on golf course superintendents and assistants, who are toiling away 24/7 to keep every blade of grass picture-perfect. In our battle-worn state, we sometimes lose sight of the fact that many of the problems we stress about are barely noticed by the membership. With the proper communication, most members will understand that Mother Nature plays a big part in what we do, and they'll cut us some slack through those inevitable blips in course conditioning.

Hang on. The "season" does end, eventually!

Final Note

It's important to be on top of your game when it comes to managing turf in July and August, but it is just as important to take time to relax and enjoy the important things in life: our family and friends.

Here's hoping the weather's with us for the next eight weeks . . . so we can devote time away from work—without guilt or worry—to the people and things that really matter.

**Bob Nielsen, CGCS
President**

Summer Survival Plan: Advice Worth Repeating



From the Executive Director

Embracing Technology

I

would like to begin by expressing my gratitude to the MetGCSA board for not only hiring me as the association's executive director, but also for providing me with the guidance and support I've needed to become acclimated in my new role.

I'd like to extend a special thank you to Whippoorwill Superintendent Paul Gonzalez. As chairman of our Sponsorship and Website committees, Paul has worked with the board to increase support from our major sponsors (see back cover), while finding new ways to recognize their integral role in the MetGCSA.

Earlier this year, Paul also launched our new Internet platform. He and his committee will continue to pursue ways to improve the information that this critical communication vehicle provides.

This is just one of the ways that, as executive director, I will work with our board and membership to provide fresh, new information that will be useful to all of us. We hope you will visit the site often and contribute any ideas on how to make it better!

Shifting Gears

As golf course superintendents, you are all very much aware of how technology continues to transform your profession. With technological advances have come increasingly better course conditions and the ability to communicate more effectively with club and community members and with other professionals throughout the golf industry.

It is important that we embrace all that new technology has to offer—particularly in the way of communication. One of the primary functions of the MetGCSA, after all, is to share information with one another on best practices, new maintenance techniques, and educational events that are taking place throughout our region. And with the science of golf course management constantly changing as new research uncovers more effective, often turf-saving, maintenance practices, we need to be able to disseminate this information as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Just as none of you would consider using gang mowers to cut fairways or horse-drawn scrapers to do earthwork, "snail mail" will soon become a thing of the past. We need to adjust our thinking accordingly and begin



Ed Brockner
MetGCSA Executive Director

relying more on our online capabilities and improved website to share information with one another. This will also allow us to not only communicate news in a more timely manner, but also save on printing and mailing costs, allowing us to devote our resources to other areas.

Face Time

Of course, while online and electronic communications are the wave of future (as well as what the next generations of club members and green committees will come to rely on), there is no replacement for the face-to-face interactions that our member events provide.

While there is no doubt that it is often difficult to get away from your club or business for the day, our golf and education events provide priceless opportunities to learn from each other, while also promoting the camaraderie that will serve us well in our professional and personal lives.

As we work to make these events as informative and fun as they can possibly be, we hope that you will join us by participating in these important functions. We appreciate all of those who put so much into making these events successful and hope that we get even more of our members taking part in the future!

Once again, I want to thank all of you for the confidence that you have shown in me, and I look forward to a long and successful tenure as executive director of the MetGCSA. At the end of the day, it's the vision of our membership that will determine the course that we will follow, and I greatly appreciate any input you have that will allow our organization to be the best that it can be.

Ed Brockner
Executive Director



Feature

Taking the Guesswork Out of Regrassing Your Greens



*Eight Supers Share
Precisely What It Takes to
Rid Putting Greens of Poa
Annua, Once and for All*

by Scott Niven, CGCS



rying to decide whether to regrass your *Poa* putting surfaces? Anyone who's braved this process will tell you, it's not for the faint of heart. It takes courage and a lot of time and dedication to pull it off. But when well done, it's well worth the effort. At least that seems to be the consensus of the golf course superintendents I surveyed who, like me, have recently completed—or are in the midst of completing—the process right now.

We all seem to agree that with today's demand for higher green speeds and, as a result, more rigorous maintenance regimes—lower heights of cut, drier putting surfaces, double cutting, rolling, etc.—*Poa annua* isn't up for the job. Because it's notorious for succumbing to a variety of maladies—summer patch, anthracnose, hyperodes, seed head production, excessive wilting, and ice damage among them—we've all looked to reduce our risk of losing turf by converting to bentgrass, a more durable perennial grass that will provide golfers with high-quality putting greens for many years to come.

The USGA has supported golf clubs' decision to switch to the new, more superior bentgrasses, because aside from offering greater peace of mind, they're easier on golf course budgets and the environment by requiring fewer pesticides and less water and fertilizer than *Poa annua* to keep them alive and well.

Thanks to the superintendents who agreed to participate in the survey (see page 7), we've put together a must-read script for success in converting your greens from *Poa* to bent.

For those willing and able to take the plunge, our time—and turf-saving—insights follow.

Planning

Step #1: Create the Proper Growing Environment

Before embarking on a regrassing project, you have to be prepared to do what's necessary to ensure your greens get at least eight hours of sunlight each day to promote healthy bentgrass growth. If your course is heavily wooded, that could mean removing as many as a couple hundred trees.

If you have any doubt about which trees to remove, a company called ArborCom Tech-

nologies can help you make an informed decision. The company uses computer modeling to predict sun angles and visually depict which trees are obstructing light to the greens.

Despite the added expense of tree removal, all the superintendents surveyed echoed the importance of this step.

Step #2: Select Your Sod

Oddly enough, all the clubs surveyed used a blend of Penn A-1/A-4 or just Penn A-4 bentgrass sod on their greens. Clearly a good choice. Penn A-1 and Penn A-4 were developed at Penn State University and have become the industry standard for putting greens in recent years.

When combined, these cultivars give a broader genetic base in a turfgrass stand, which results in the best qualities of both grasses. Their dark green color is nearly identical, so they blend together perfectly on the greens, providing a fine leaf texture and smooth, grainless putting surface, as well as exceptional heat and cold tolerance, high density, disease resistance, and an aggressive growth habit. Furthermore, this combination of cultivars tolerates low mowing very well and, in fact, was developed for private golf clubs with a desire for fast green speeds.

Right now, there are at least a dozen or so of this style of bentgrass on the market to choose from, and many more are in development. Due to their excellent performance during the past 15 years, Penn A-1 and Penn A-4 have become the most popular and, consequently, are the ones most often grown by sod companies.

Step #3: Address Root Zone Mix/Sod Soil Incompatibility

The most common factor in sodding failures on bentgrass greens has been the incompatibility of the existing root zone mix with the soil attached to the purchased sod. Therefore, unless you can have your sod grown on the exact same root zone mixture as your greens, it's imperative that you buy washed sod to help guarantee that the new turf will root properly in your particular root zone.

Keep in mind: When purchasing washed sod, one of the most important considerations is thatch thickness: The thinner the better. While sod that's a half-inch or thicker is easier to handle during installation, it will take longer to eliminate the thicker-than-optimum thatch layer and establish desirable heights of cut.

All but one of the courses surveyed used washed sod, with Round Hill the only exception. Superintendent Sean Foley compensated for any soil incompatibility, however, by core aerifying six to eight times during the first three years, and ended up with very good results.



Initial rooting of washed bentgrass sod (10 days).

Step #4: Order Well in Advance

Most everyone we surveyed bought their sod from either Stormy Acres (no longer in business) or East Coast Sod Farm, both in southern New Jersey. Unfortunately, due to a lack of putting green sod to fill his order at East Coast during the fall of 2010, Ken Lallier at The Quechee Club ended up having to buy his sod from the Manderlay Sod Farm in Toronto, Canada.

Word to the wise: Don't wait until the last minute to put in your order. Do it at least one year in advance if at all possible, and put down a deposit to help assure that your sod will be ready when you need it.

Of course, sometimes, even the best-laid plans fail. At Stanwich, on the day we were scheduled to receive our first delivery of sod, we got a phone call from a lawyer instead, saying that Stormy Acres had just gone out of business. At that point, we had already torn up seven greens. I must admit that I had a few moments of serious trepidation after receiving that news. Fortunately for us, we had also bid the job with East Coast Sod Farm. Within a couple of hours, we signed an agreement with them and received a sod delivery the next day. What service and what a relief!

Step #5: Time It Right

A crucial step in the success of this project is to time it right. Most golf clubs in the Northeast can't afford the loss in revenue or member discontent that results from closing the course for an extended period of time. Sodding, therefore, is generally the method of choice for greens conversion.

When choosing a contractor for the installation, of which there are many, it's critical that your signed agreement specify your time frame. If the contractor isn't confident that the project can be completed under your terms, consider hiring two companies to split the work and guarantee finishing on time.

Among the clubs surveyed, the earliest start date was August 15, where at Eagle Oaks, superintendent Marty Sommerfeld opened all his greens for play during that same fall. He did his project in three phases

and actually opened each group of greens two weeks after starting the job.

The latest start date was October 12 at Stanwich, where due to favorable weather conditions, we completed the sodding by October 31 and were able to open the greens on April 10. The other survey respondents opened for play between mid-April and May 15. Depending on whether the club was shelling out the greens and installing USGA root zones or simply resodding, the job took between three weeks and three months. In the New York area, if you can install the sod by November 1, it will, in most cases, establish roots before winter settles in.

Preparing the Root Zone

Step #1: Remove Old Turf

Assuming all's well with your root zone, the first step in preparing greens for their new washed sod is to remove the old turf with a sod cutter. Key to your success in this part of the process is to be sure to excavate a thick enough layer of the *Poa* sod to ensure enough of the seed bank has been removed and the *Poa* doesn't come back.

Fortunately, some excellent research has been done on this subject. Layers of *Poa* sod were cut from a green in quarter-inch increments and then grown in a greenhouse to see how much of the *Poa* seed was still viable. As you might have guessed, with just a quarter-inch removed, you can still grow a beautiful stand of *Poa annua*. But when one inch of soil was removed, very little *Poa* seed germinated, indicating that more than 90 percent of the seed bank had been removed.

With access to this information, the five clubs—Eagle Oaks, New Haven, Patterson, Stanwich, and Westchester—were able to retain their existing root zones and remove at least one inch of the old sod from their greens. No one reported that this minor disturbance significantly altered existing putting green contours.

To further guarantee that little viable *Poa* seed remained in the existing root zones, Joe Alonzi at Westchester Country Club hired a firm to apply Methyl Bromide to sterilize the root zone prior to sodding. Keep in mind: This option is not available in every state due to licensing requirements, but is an excellent method for killing viable *Poa* seed if you're able to have it done.

Step #2: Remedy Poor Root Zones

There are times when existing root zones can't support new sod. At this point, shelling out each green and starting over with a high-sand root zone mixture may be the only way to go.

Three of the clubs surveyed—the Round Hill Club, Vesper Country Club, and The Quechee Country Club—opted to go this route before sodding. Round Hill and Vesper installed a USGA root zone mixture, while

Quechee opted for a California-style mix.

To help guarantee that all putting green contours remained the same, those clubs who did a complete rebuild also paid to have all the green contours mapped before the regrassing took place. In some cases, however, they took this opportunity to make a few modifications, softening excessive slopes.

This process does not come cheap, often approaching the \$1 million mark. The five other clubs that simply resodded, spent a more reasonable \$200,000 to \$300,000, depending on green size and how much sod was installed out in the approaches.

Step #3: Make Improvements

With the turf removed, this is the ideal time to take care of any shortcomings in your greens. Needless to say, if your greens already have a USGA high-sand root zone, they'll require little preparation beyond removing the sod and smoothing the surface.

At New Haven Country Club, Jason Booth seized this opportunity to install internal drainage (XGD) in all of his greens.

At Stanwich when the sod was removed, we added some USGA root zone mix to two of our recently rebuilt greens to increase the contours in a couple of areas. We did this within the tolerances of the USGA specifications, which calls for a 12"-deep root zone \pm 2".

At Westchester, Patterson, Vesper, and Stanwich, we decided to recapture or add some new pin placements by adding some expansions at the edges of various greens before the new sod was installed.

Step #4: Get the Soil Ready

If you have push-up style greens, you'll want to aerify and topdress as a final step before sodding. In fact, all the clubs surveyed did quite a bit of aerifying and topdressing to improve drainage before sodding.

Methods vary. Experience has shown that you can pull some cores from your greens on top of the old sod and fill the holes prior to sod removal. Core aerification can also be done on the bare soil after the sod is removed, but if you're not careful, the soil will pull out in chunks. You can prevent this from happening by using solid tines in the bare root zone and then filling the holes with sand topdressing. This can be done multiple times.

At Stanwich, we aerified on top of the sod twice with 3/4"-deep tines (10") and once with 5/8" solid tines and then filled those holes with sand. Then once the sod was removed, we aerified again three times with the 5/8" solid tines and filled those holes. When all was said and done, we'd used 200 tons of topdressing on 14 greens (70K sq. ft.), which has resulted in the best drainage we've ever had.

Next, prior to laying the sod, we double verticut and then raked and rolled the soil surface multiple times to achieve pool-table smooth-

ness. Most clubs then applied an organic fertilizer amendment, such as Gro-Win, and raked that into the top inch or so.

Installing and Cultivating

Step #1: Lay the Sod

When installing the washed sod, it's best to work off of plywood to protect the smooth root zone surface. Because it lacks soil, the sod should be irrigated immediately after it's laid down. Survey respondents used different methods for sodding their collars, borders, and approaches.

When it came to collars, some stuck with their old collars while others sodded with a different type of bent, such as Penn Trio (Penncross/Pennlinks/Penneagle). Still others used the A-1/A-4 throughout the green and collar.

The Kentucky bluegrass border was also handled in different ways, from just adding a new strip or two around the edge to resodding the entire green surround.

If the approaches were highly populated with *Poa annua*, everyone agreed it was best to sod with something like Penn Trio to varying distances out in front of each green. Obviously, the idea here was to eliminate the potential for future *Poa* contamination by removing as much *Poa* in close proximity to the new bent surface as possible.

Step #2: Keep It Damp

Keeping the sod damp until it freezes is critical during the first fall. You want to avoid any desiccation and promote root growth and the closing of the sod seams. At Stanwich, when it got cold in November, we scheduled the irrigation to come on for three minutes at 10 p.m., 2 a.m., and 6 a.m. to help reduce frost during the nighttime hours.

Step #3: Roll It

Before the first cutting, it's important to roll the sod—multiple times—to encourage a smooth surface that won't scalp too much when mowing begins. Just be sure to wait until the roots have penetrated into the soil so the sod won't shift during rolling.

There were many different approaches to getting this job done. At The Patterson Club, John Garcia first used a vibratory tamp on top

of a half-inch piece of plywood before rolling. He then used the club's greens mowers in the raised position with heavy rollers strapped to the top of the cutting unit. Other equipment used for this purpose: a Ryan tennis court roller, Salsco and Tru-Turf rollers, and a Hydroject aerifier. All types did an adequate job.

Step #4: Prepare for Winter

The most important factor at this point in the process is to get the turf well rooted and healthy going into winter. So resist pushing for a lower height of cut that may put your turf in jeopardy.

The first cuts at the clubs surveyed varied from .150" to .250", depending on the amount of thatch in the sod and the weight of the mowers. Then depending on the date of installation and the weather, some superintendents applied topdressing and lowered the height of cut carefully to avoid any scalping before the ground froze. The various heights of cut going into the winter ranged from .150" to .200".

Some clubs topdressed all sod seams, while others just added sand to the seams that needed it, but all clubs applied a heavy topdressing after the last mowing and a dormant fertilizer at .5 to 1 lb. N/1000.

The use of winter covers varied as well, with The Quechee Club and Round Hill covering all greens because they were hit with freezing weather before adequate rooting could take place. A couple of courses didn't use any covers, and some covered a handful of greens depending on rooting and winter exposure.

Step #5: Get Ready to Open

When spring arrives, there's always great pressure to open the greens as soon as possible, especially if the weather is nice. But it's best to resist giving players the "green light" until you have 3" to 4" of root growth. The last thing you want to do is put your newly sodded greens in jeopardy.

All survey respondents worked to ready the greens by gradually lowering the height of cut to a sustainable level, given the thickness of the thatch. The average heights for the first summer ranged from .110" to .155". These bench settings were used on a variety of mowers with varying front roller types (grooved, smooth) as well. The green speeds attained



Installation of washed sod working on plywood.

with these heights of cut ranged from 8'6" all the way up to the 13', with the average estimated to be between 10' and 11'.

Looking forward, when superintendents were asked to predict future heights of cut and green speed goals, the heights of cut ranged from .100" to .125", with the desired green speed for regular membership play averaging between 10.5' and 11.5'. These numbers were highly correlated with the severity of the slopes on each club's greens and the average handicap of the membership.

Care and Feeding in the First Year

None of the superintendents had any problems with their greens during the first year, with the exception of some minor bacterial wilt at Vesper Country Club that disappeared as soon as the weather cooled down.

As would be expected with bentgrass, all clubs had excellent root depths for the first season, exhibiting root lengths from 5" to 12", with the deepest ones being in the USGA greens.

Here's what's recommended to keep your greens alive and well in the first year:

Step #1: Aerify and Topdress

When greens are sodded, two of the most important cultural practices in the development of a high-quality putting surface are aerification and topdressing. These practices are particularly useful in reducing the negative effects of the thatch layer.

When asked his opinion on this subject, Norm Hummel of Hummel Associates soil testing labs noted that most sodding failures seemed to occur from too much cultivation during the first year of establishment. Consequently, he recommended taking a conservative approach to cultivation until the fall of the first year.

At Stanwich, we took his advice seriously. Using small solid tines (5/16") to keep the thatch open for adequate infiltration, we limited our aerification to every three weeks throughout the season. We coupled that with light topdressing each week all year long. And at the end of the season (10/19), we double-aerified with 3/8" solid tines on close spacing, along with a 3/4" x 8" deep tine; then we filled all the holes with sand. We began with that same process again this spring.

About half of the clubs in the survey took a different tack the first year, following an aggressive cultivation plan with multiple aerifications and heavy topdressings (filled holes) during the entire growing season.

At The Patterson Club, John Garcia injected sand with a Graden verticut machine in April, followed by coring with 3/8" to 1/2" tines every four to six weeks throughout the season. At New Haven Country Club, Jason

Today's New-and-Improved Bentgrasses

Here's a list of some of the best, fine-textured bentgrasses available today:

Penn A-1	Alpha
Penn A-2	T-1
Penn A-4	Kingpin
Penn G-2	Villa
007	Crystal Blue Links
Tyee	Mackenzie
Benchmark	Shark
Century	Authority
Declaration	Pinn up
V8	Bengal
Memorial	Independence

Booth cored with 5/8" solid tines in spring and then topdressed. Then he used 1/4" solid quad tines every three weeks through the summer and 3/8" hollow tines in September, filling the holes each time. Then in early October, he used 5/8" solid tines, following up with topdressing.

With the goal of reducing the amount of thatch, all of the superintendents aerified to a shallow depth of 1" to 2", and all were successful in bringing their new bent greens through the first season in a healthy condition.

Step #2: Watch the Water

As expected, A-1/A-4 bentgrass requires somewhat less water than *Poa annua* to thrive. During the spring and fall, it's common to go a number of days between irrigating, but during the hot months of July and August, fairly regular irrigation with some syringing is still necessary. Be on the lookout for wilt to avoid turf damage.

Step #3: Fertilize

You can expect that fertility requirements will be higher than normal due to the accelerated nutrient requirements needed for healthy turfgrass establishment. Though fertilizer use varied significantly from course to course, all clubs used a combination of full-analysis granular fertilizers along with a regular spray program. Total nitrogen for the year ranged from 3.5 to 6.5 lbs. per 1000 sq. ft. with the higher amounts used on the USGA greens.

Keeping the Poa Away

When undertaking a regrassing project of this scope, the most common question asked by decision makers is, "How are you going to keep the *Poa annua* from coming back?" The short answer: With today's tools and a strong

commitment to keeping the new bentgrass clean, it's highly likely that all of the clubs will be successful in maintaining a beautiful stand of pure bentgrass for quite some time. But moreover, the A-1/A-4 cultivars, with their dense, upright growth habit (see NTEP data), have been shown to crowd out *Poa annua* on their own.

Still, superintendents surveyed are using a variety of *Poa* control methods to guarantee success. Among them:

- **Plant Growth Regulators:** All superintendents planned to use the PGRs Cutless, Trimmit, and Legacy, with some adding in Primo at times. Ken Lallier at Quechee plans to use Cutless and Tenacity to minimize *Poa* in the surrounds and therefore limit intrusion into the greens.

One word of caution about Primo: Some studies show that Primo actually promotes *Poa annua*.

- **A Pre-emergent Herbicide:** A couple of clubs are using two or three applications of the pre-emergent herbicide, Bensulide, at 6 ozs./1000 sq. ft. in the spring and/or fall.

- **Handpicking and Plugging:** These are also common on the list of *Poa* control methods. At the Round Hill Club, Sean Foley reported that his crew spends at least 120 hours in early April and 120 hours again in early November handpicking and plugging.

- **Hand-dabbing With a Wick Applicator:** John Garcia at The Patterson Club has been controlling his *Poa* with a nonselective herbicide or growth regulator.

- **Indirect Control Method:** At Stanwich and Eagle Oaks, we use only solid tines when aerifying to avoid pulling up any potentially viable *Poa* seed. So far, so good.

- **Acidification of the Root Zone:** By using acidifying fertilizers, like ammonium sulfate, if the pH can be maintained between 5.0 and 5.5, the pressure from *Poa annua* will be greatly diminished.

- **Future Poa Control Herbicides:** University scientists have confirmed that there are some excellent herbicides in the pipeline that will revolutionize *Poa* control in bentgrass putting greens. Let's hope they're right!

When All Was Said and Done

The final question of the survey was whether the memberships and the superintendents were happy with the results of their regrassing project. As you've probably guessed, the yeses were unanimous!

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

Sage Advice for Future Regrassers

When the superintendents in the survey were asked to note the most important pieces of advice they have to offer future regrassers, they responded with a host of valuable tips and techniques. Here's what they had to say:

Jason Booth, CGCS, New Haven Country Club, Hamden, CT

- Prepare for the unexpected.
- Make a new nursery beforehand.
- Always use washed sod, and order extra sod per green, using any overflow to beef up your nursery.
- Be sure to have adequate sunlight and air movement; major tree removal may be required.
- If the diminishing fall sun patterns are going to be a problem, start sodding on the north-facing greens and finish on the south-facing greens. The greens facing the south will be the first to warm up come spring.

Sean Foley, Round Hill Club Greenwich, CT

- A tree removal program geared toward maximizing sunlight to all putting surfaces is essential to the success of this project. If you can't get the capital funds approved to execute the necessary tree removal, you may want to reconsider regrassing.
- A regrassing project at your club is successful only if your membership perceives it to be, and it is your responsibility to make that perception a positive one through open communication. That means maintaining a sound line of communication at all levels within the club and during all phases of the project.

I found it important, for instance, to communicate why we were aerifying six to eight times for the first three years versus the two times we did in the past or how bentgrass is managed differently than *Poa* and requires weekly topdressing, verticutting, and brush mowing.

It takes time—years—to establish a mature

stand of bentgrass capable of withstanding all of the mechanical stresses we put on our turf during our never-ending quest for green speed. Communication is key to the long-term success of the project.

John Garcia, The Patterson Club Fairfield, CT

- Communicate, communicate, communicate project details to your membership.
- Be sure that each green location has been properly addressed for shade, drainage, irrigation, root zone modification, traffic flow, etc. You have one opportunity to establish the new grass and build a strong root system. Regrassing should be the last step in a comprehensive improvement plan.
- Do not underestimate the need for constant, aggressive mechanical thatch removal and reduction.
- Sod selection is extremely important, so start the process early. If possible, contract-grow the sod to your exact specifications. I personally don't care what the sod looks like on the surface when delivered, as long as there is little to no thatch.
- Be sure your sod has been aggressively washed. Even the thinnest "ribbon" of native soil can cause issues going forward.

Ken Lallier, CGCS, The Quechee Club Quechee, VT

- Figure out how to deal with the *Poa* populations in the surrounds, or renovate the surrounds as well as the putting surfaces to keep the new greens *Poa*-free for as long as possible.
- Keep lines of communication to the membership open. I ran weekly tours during the renovations for any member who signed up. I took at least 100 members around the nine holes we were renovating and answered their questions while educating them about the steps involved in the process and why we were doing some of the things we did. It was not only informative, but also a great way to gain advo-

cates and a good deal of support for the work being done.

Scott Niven, CGCS, The Stanwich Club Greenwich, CT

- Prepare each green site as well as possible, eliminating as much shade as you can by removing trees.
- Do everything necessary to establish an excellent root zone for the new sod with the best drainage (add XGD) and soil characteristics.
- Be sure to use washed sod, and buy the thinnest sod obtainable.
- During the first season, don't become too attached to a low height of cut you may be trying to achieve. Instead of worrying about the actual bench setting, use a prism tool to check turf height, and with your good judgment, find the height of cut that can be sustained throughout the first summer without any scalping damage. Then lower the height of cut as the thatch layer is reduced.
- Finally, do a comprehensive job communicating the entire process to the membership, step-by-step.

Joe Alonzi, CGCS, Westchester Country Club, Rye, NY

- Do plenty of research and ask a lot of questions. A lot happens in a very short period of time.
- Communicate the project to the membership before and during the project.
- A tree removal program with membership involvement will save a lot of aggravation.
- Secure the sod with a deposit as early as possible.

Marty Sommerfeld, Eagle Oaks Golf & Country Club, Farmingdale, NJ

- Do your due diligence.
- Know your club's expectations.
- Reserve sod in advance, and most important, use only washed sod.

Thank you, also, to Chris Morris of Vesper Country Club in Tyngsboro, MA, for participating in the survey.

Shaded green before tree removal.



Qualifiers in the Dave Mahoney Two-Ball Championship

by Sean Cain, CGCS

Skies cleared April 26 for the nearly 30 teams competing in the third annual Dave Mahoney Two-Ball Championship Qualifier held at Centennial Golf Club in Carmel, NY.

Golf Course Superintendent Glen Dube and his staff did an outstanding job getting the course in shape, despite the inclement weather we had leading up to the event. Many thanks to the entire staff at Centennial for making this a special day.

Here's a look at the day's golf results, starting with the Two-Ball Event.

Two-Ball Event Results

Low Gross Winners

70 Tom Ashfield/Andy Drohen
Quaker Ridge GC/Agrium Advanced Technologies

72 Matt Ceplo/Jim Swiatlowski
Rockland CC/Montammy GC

Low Net Winners

61 Dave Lippman/Matt Topazio
Westchester Turf Supply/New York CC

65 Charlie Siemers/John Wickes
Ira Wickes/Arborists

Closest to the Pin

Ernie Steinhofner, *Metro Turf Specialists*

Longest Drive

Dave Lippman, *Westchester Turf Supply*

Two-Ball Qualifier Results

Here's the lineup of Two-Ball Qualifiers, along with their first-round match assignments, which are underway:

First Flight

1) Sean Cain/Stephen Rabideau
Sunningdale CC/Wheatley Hills GC
1S.

16) Bye

8) Bert Dickinson/Chip Lafferty
Willow Ridge CC/Rye GC
1S.

9) Scott Niven/Larry Pakkala
The Stanwich Club/Plant Food Company

5) Tom Ashfield/Andy Drohen
Quaker Ridge GC/Agrium Advanced Technologies
1S.

12) Grover Alexander/David Dudones
Hudson Hills GC/North Jersey CC

4) Matt Ceplo/Jim Swiatlowski
Rockland CC/Montammy GC
1S.

13) Bob DeMarco/Fred Montgomery
Powelson Club/Syngenta

6) Tony Hooks/Jeff Wentworth
Pelham/Split Rock CC/Pelham CC
1S.

11) Mark Chant/Mike Benz
Colonial Springs GC/Middle Bay CC

3) Tony Grasso/Scott Tretera
Metropolis CC/Metro Turf Specialist
1S.

14) Guy Gurney/Ernie Steinhofner
Orange CC/Metro Turf Specialists

7) Glen Dube/Blake Halderman
Centennial GC/Brae Burn CC
1S.

10) Ryan Batz/Scott Blough
John Deere Golf/Trump National GC/NY

2) Dave Lippman/Matt Topazio
Westchester Turf Supply/New York CC
1S.

15) Bob Lippman/Steve McGlone
Westchester Turf Supply/Siwanoy CC

Second Flight

1) Ken Benoit/Greg Gutter
Glen Arbor GC/Mount Kisco CC
1S.

16) Bye

8) Bob Nielsen/Bill Perlee
Bedford Golf & Tennis/Apawamis Club
1S.

9) Eddie Binsse/Dan Cancellari
Life A/Life AF

5) Paul Boyd/Matt Leverich
Greenwich CC/Playbooks for Golf
1S.

12) Rob Alonzi/Bill Bartels
Fenway GC/Tanto Irrigation

4) Kevin Collins/Nick Lerner
Aquatrols, Inc./Bonnie Briar CC
1S.

13) Dennis Flynn/Peter Rappoccio
Class 1A/Silver Spring CC

6) Brett Chapin/Greg Wojick
Redding CC/Playbooks for Golf
1S.

11) George Corgan/Trapper Van Dunk
Steven Willand/Leewood GC

3) Tony Girardi/Glenn Perry
Rockrimmon CC/Rolling Hills CC
1S.

14) Mike Cook/Chris Alonzi
The Care of Trees/Elmwood CC
1S.

7) Joe Alonzi/Frank Amodio
Westchester CC/Valley View Greenhouses
1S.

10) Jake Green/Mike Reeb
CC of New Canaan

2) Jim Calladio/Mark Fuller
LaCorte Equipment/Connecticut CC
1S.

15) Kevin Seibel/Bob Wolverton
Century CC/Edgewood CC

For those who qualified to play in the Two-Ball, please remember to complete your matches by the following deadlines:

Round 1 ~ June 24

Quarter-Finals ~ July 29

Semi-Finals ~ September 2

Finals ~ October 7

Also note that the winning team from each match is required to report its score to Sean Cain, Tournament Committee Co-Chair. Check the website for deadline reminders, updated match results, and Sean's contact information.

Fenway Promises a Mighty-Fine Time at Summer Social

by Ed Brockner, MetGCSA Executive Director

On Tuesday, July 26, Superintendent Rob Alonzi will host the MetGCSA's 2011 Summer Social—one of the association's most popular events of the year. What better setting for this special event than Fenway's picturesque English Country Manor-style clubhouse. Built in the 1920s, the manor was once part of a 40-acre Scarsdale estate called "The Orchards," after the numerous apple trees on the grounds. With its high ceilings and antique charm, the mansion-turned-clubhouse is the perfect spot for an evening of fine dining and dancing with colleagues and friends.

This will be Rob's second event since assuming the superintendent's position in 2008. He co-hosted the Met's Invitational in June that year with his father, Bob, who was transitioning from Fenway's superintendent into retirement.

A Family Tradition

For Rob, turfgrass management has always been a family affair, with his father Bob Alonzi (LA member), his uncle Joe Alonzi (Westchester CC), and his cousin Chris Alonzi (Elmwood GC), working in the business.

Spending time with his father at work from the time, as Rob puts it, he was "knee-high to a grasshopper," he learned early on what goes into maintaining some of the finest courses in the area, seeing first-hand, his father's handiwork in prepping for two major championships at Winged Foot: the U.S. Open in 1984 and the PGA Championship 1997.

Like his father and uncle, who are past presidents of the MetGCSA, Rob is an active member of the association. He was elected to the Board of Directors in 2004, accepting, first, the position of co-editor of the *Tee to Green* and then advertising manager. Rob continues to serve on the board as chair of the Education Committee.

Making a formidable family foursome, Rob,

Bob, Joe, and Chris were recognized in 2005 by the Met Golf Writers Association. Awarded the organization's Family of the Year Award, the Alonzis were the first superintendents bestowed with this prestigious honor.

Branching Out

After starting out as a business major at Iona, Rob later transferred to UMass where he earned a B.S. in plant and soil science. He spent two summers interning with Bruce Cadenelli at Caves Valley in Maryland.

"Working as an intern at Caves Valley was a great experience," says Rob. "It let me see what went into maintaining courses in a different part of the country and branch out into a new area."

Eventually returning to the Met section, Rob gained valuable experience working as an assistant, first at Wykagyl (1995-1998) with then Superintendent Steve Renzetti and, then, at Tamarack under Superintendent Jeff Scott (1998-2000).

In January 2001, Rob landed his first superintendent's position at St. Andrews Golf Club, which enjoys the distinction of being the oldest club in the U.S., dating back to 1888. Charged with raising the level of playing conditions at the club, Rob led a number of projects in his seven-year tenure to enhance both the course's conditioning and architecture.

In 2008, Rob assumed his current position as superintendent at Fenway Golf Club.

Opened in 1924, Fenway is known as one of architect A.W. Tillinghast's finest efforts. Not a particularly long course, it provides all that you can handle with deep bunkers that protect the severely undulated—and superbly conditioned—greens.

Shortly after signing on at Fenway, Rob undertook several projects with architect Gil Hanse to enhance the course and restore many of its classic Tillinghast features.



Rob Alonzi

"Starting in September," says Rob, "we'll begin the installation of an all-new Toro irrigation system."

At Home With a New Generation

Rob and his wife, Ann Marie, have been married for the past 11 years and live in Greenwich with their two children: Nicholas, 9, and Sarah, 6.

Rob is very involved with his children's burgeoning interest in sports, both soccer and baseball (still T-ball for his daughter). A bit of a sports enthusiast himself, Rob enjoys both watching and, when time permits, coaching Nicholas and Sarah's practices and games.

Will we be adding another Alonzi to the growing line of superintendents? Only time will tell.

See you all at the big event on the 26th. Be there or be square!

Erik Feldman Hosts All-New Scholarship Awards Event at Mosholu

by Ed Brockner, MetGCSA Executive Director

When MetGCSA members convened at Mosholu Golf Course nearly four years ago, it wasn't to play golf, but rather to conduct association business at our November 2007 Annual Meeting. This summer, on August 4, members will return to Mosholu for an all-new event honoring this year's MetGCSA scholarship recipients.

Designed with family fun in mind, participants—a member and son or daughter—will be invited to play in a nine-hole shotgun event (see page 11 for event details) on the 2,400-yard, par 32 public course that has been virtually reborn, with nearly \$5 million devoted to renovating everything from the golf course to maintenance facility and clubhouse.

About the Course

Interestingly, Mosholu was originally an 18-hole course, thought to be designed by golf course architect John Van Kleeck, who had his hand in designing more than half of the 13 public courses in New York City. Mosholu is located in the Bronx's sprawling 1,146-acre Van Cortlandt Park, which is also home to another golfing facility: the Van Cortlandt Golf Course, built some 20 years earlier as the first public course in the country.

In the 1980s, the course was reduced to nine holes to allow for the construction of a driving range, while additional holes along busy Gun Hill Road were converted into open parkland.

More recently, the course has undergone another transformation: In 2001, it became home to The First Tee of Metropolitan New York, a nonprofit youth development initiative intended to help inner city children build character and life-enhancing values through exposure to the game of golf.

From the very beginning, the MetGCSA, along with The First Tee's founding partners at the MGA and MetPGA, supported the new organization at Mosholu. Under then

MetGCSA President John Carlone, Met members offered agronomic counsel and pitched in with their crews to help spruce up the course. "It wasn't a matter of *if* we would get involved," says John Carlone, "but rather *how* we would get involved in this special effort."

Soon after The First Tee assumed management of the course, Erik Feldman was hired as superintendent. Before he could get his feet wet on the job, he learned another change was in the works: The City's Department of Environmental Protection approved the construction of a 13-story, underground water filtration plant where Mosholu's maintenance facility, driving range, and clubhouse were located. Mosholu was forced to go back to the drawing board and, with golf course architect Stephen Kay's guidance, rebuilt the course on a smaller footprint.

"The course was reconfigured," explains Erik, "with a focus on making it more fun and strategic, not just for the kids, but also for the general public who have really enjoyed our improvements. We also addressed a few safety issues," adds Erik, "by eliminating some blind shots, and we added a number of new bunkers, tees, and greens with more interesting contours."

The work that's been completed on the course has matured beautifully, with Erik and his small crew dutifully maintaining this hidden urban gem. In the next few years, the complex will boast an all-new driving range, built on top of the underground water treatment facility due to be completed in 2013.

"Mosholu may be in the Bronx," says Erik, "but despite a few tall buildings you see around the course, it has a beautiful natural setting where people feel like they are escaping from the City."

Training Ground

When Erik graduated from high school in his Huntington, NY, hometown, a career in turf-grass management was probably the farthest



Erik Feldman

thing from his mind. After attending Roger Williams College, he worked a number of different jobs from stockbroker to restaurant manager before finding himself at Bethpage Black working alongside Craig Currier. "After about a day there, I was hooked. I wanted to become a golf course superintendent," Erik says.

He got himself up-to-speed in the industry quickly. While continuing to work at Bethpage Black, he pursued a degree in horticulture at SUNY-Farmingdale and assisted Cornell's Dr. Frank Rossi with his field research on Evaluation of Turf Management Systems with Reduced Chemical Pesticide inputs. After just two years with Craig Currier, Erik was offered his first—and current—superintendent's job at Mosholu, where in his eight-year tenure, he's received nothing but high marks.

On a Personal Note

Though Erik's work is never done, he carves out time for fun. "I like being outside," he says, "golfing, mountain biking, fishing. But these days," he adds, "I spend most of my free time with my family and working on the house we bought recently." Erik currently lives in Oyster Bay, NY, with his wife, Shelley, and their three sons: Ryan, 7, and Devin and Andrew, 4-year-old twins.

We thank Erik for hosting our new Scholarship Event on August 4, allowing other members of the MetGCSA to see first-hand how all of his work at Mosholu has really paid off!

FREE Family Fun at New Awards Event

by Ed Brockner, MetGCSA Executive Director

For years, the MetGCSA has awarded scholarships to members' children through a rigorous selection process by our committee, and 2011 will be no exception. This year, however, we are having an extra-special event devoted to recognizing our scholarship recipients: an afternoon of golf at the Mosholu Golf Course's newly renovated nine-hole course, followed by an informal reception and awards ceremony.

The event, scheduled for August 4, will be FREE to all participants, and registration won't begin until 3 p.m. That means there's no need to miss a full day of work.

Hosting the event will be Erik Feldman, Mosholu's superintendent for the past eight years. Home to The First Tee of Metropolitan New York, Mosholu is centrally located in the Bronx, just a driver and five-iron from the Deegan Expressway.

The Way It Works

A MetGCSA member and one of their children, will compete in a nine-hole shotgun scramble so that all levels of golfers can enjoy the day. Mom or Dad can be there to bail them out in the scramble format if they get into trouble out on the course!

Once our Scholarship Committee determines this year's recipients, priority will be given to MetGCSA members whose children have received scholarships. The remainder of the field—there's space for 40 golfers—will be filled with other association members and their children.

Any scholarship recipients unable to attend the nine-hole shotgun are still welcome to join us later for food and drinks at the reception and scholarship presentation.

Please send Ed Brockner an email at edbrockner@hotmail.com to reserve your place in the field. You will receive a notice to remind you to sign up for this family-fun event.

Below is the schedule for the day:

3:00	Registration
4:00	Nine-Hole Shotgun
6:30	Reception and Scholarship Presentation

We look forward to this being the start of a great tradition each summer, helping our members' children in their pursuit of higher education, while providing the opportunity to spend time away from work with family and friends!

Upcoming Events

Don't Miss These Upcoming Events!

Family Picnic

Tuesday, July 19
Bedford Village Memorial Park
Bedford, NY

Summer Social

Tuesday, July 26
Fenway Golf Club, Scarsdale, NY
Host: Rob Alonzi

Scholarship Awards Event

Thursday, August 4
Mosholu Golf Course
Bronx, NY
Host: Erik Feldman

Met Championship and Met Area Team Championship Qualifier PLUS The Poa Annual Tournament

Tuesday, September 6
Fresh Meadow Country Club
Scarsdale, NY
Host: Joe Gardner

Superintendent/Green Chairperson Tournament

Monday, October 3
Mt. Kisco Country Club, Mt. Kisco, NY
Host: Greg Gutter

Annual Assistants Championship

Thursday, October 6
Redding Country Club, Redding, CT
Assistant Host: Steve Kubicki
Superintendent Host: Brett Chapin

Met Area Team Championship

Tuesday, October 25
Galloway National Golf Club
Galloway, NJ / Absecon, NJ
Host: Scott McBane

MetGCSA Christmas Party

Friday, December 9
Sunningdale Golf Club
Scarsdale, NY
Host: Sean Cain, CGCS

Industry Events

Rutgers Turfgrass Research Field Day (Golf & Fine Turf)

Tuesday, July 26
Horticultural Farm II
New Brunswick, NJ

Save the date, and watch for details. Call 973-812-6467 or visit www.njturfgrass.org for further information.

The 8th Annual Dr. Joseph Troll Turf Classic

Tuesday, October 11
The Country Club
Brookline, MA

Superintendent Bill Spence will host this year's UMass Alumni Turf Group fundraiser in support of turf education and research at the University of Massachusetts.

The event, \$450 per person, will include golf, a cocktail reception, dinner, and awards ceremony, which, this year, will honor our meeting host, Bill Spence.

Please plan to attend this worthy fundraiser, and join us in honoring a deserving fellow superintendent. Entry forms and additional information will be available online at www.alumniturfgroup.com.

36th Annual New Jersey Green Expo Turf and Landscape Conference

Tuesday-Thursday, December 6-8
Trump Taj Mahal Resort & Casino
Atlantic City, NJ

Watch for details!

Round Hill Club Honored With Arthur P. Weber MGA Environmental Award

by Matt Ceplo, CGCS

On Tuesday, March 22, the MGA Foundation honored the Round Hill Club in Greenwich, CT, with the annual Arthur P. Weber MGA Club Environmental Award.

Presenting the award at the 2011 MGA/USGA Green Chairman Education Series and Awards Luncheon were Gene Westmoreland of the MGA and MetGCSA Environmental Chair and GlenArbor Super Ken Benoit, who also holds the distinction of being last year's award recipient.

Designed to recognize an MGA member club that has demonstrated environmental stewardship through golf course maintenance, construction, education, and research, the award was accepted by Round Hill Club's superintendent, Sean Foley, and assistant superintendent, Zach Brooks. Also there to enjoy the honor was Round Hill Club Manager Dennis Meermans, who Sean was quick to credit with initiating a variety of conservation measures inside the clubhouse.

The club's multi-tiered approach to revamping its environmental policies began with a full-facility audit and resulted in fundamental

changes to clubwide policies, ranging from new recycling methods to power conservation.

"It's been a total team effort," says Sean, adding, "The whole club has embraced becoming more aware of environmentally responsible practices."

Sean provided his maintenance staff with training that has not only heightened their environmental awareness and responsibility, but also reaped financial rewards for the operation.

"By increasing the club's native areas and adjusting our watering practices, we've reduced water use and electrical costs by 15 to 17 percent," says Sean, noting he's also reduced chemical applications by working to control weeds with spot-spraying. "I also try to steer clear of old chemistries like Dursban that kill everything," says Sean. "From the members' perspective, the less toxic the chemicals we use, the better."

The award, now in its fifth year, is named in honor of past MGA President Arthur P. Weber, who died in 2008. Weber wrote an Environmental Code of Conduct for golf course maintenance at his home club nearly two decades ago that many Met area clubs still use as a



Round Hill Club Manager Dennis Meermans (left), Assistant Super Zach Brooks, and GlenArbor Super Ken Benoit (right) join MGA Environmental Award winner Sean Foley (with plaque) at the Awards Luncheon.

model. Weber was a longtime member of the USGA Green Section and helped found the MGA Green Committee and the Tri-State Turf Research Foundation.

Congratulations to Sean Foley and the entire Round Hill Club staff for their hard work and dedication to our all-important environment. Kudos, also, to two clubs that received honorable mention at this year's awards ceremony: Manhattan Woods in West Nyack, NY, where Jesse Shannon is superintendent, and Newton Country Club in Newton, NJ, where Les Carpenter is superintendent.

Matt Ceplo, a member of the Tee to Green Editorial Committee, is superintendent of Rockland Country Club in Sparkill, NY, and a past president of the MetGCSA.

Certified Supers Recognized by GCSAA

Four MetGCSA superintendents were recognized, along with 45 other GCSAA members, for reaching their 25th year of certified status and completing their fifth set of renewal requirements.

"Twenty-five percent of GCSAA's Class A members have achieved the highest level of recognition through the CGCS professional designation," said GCSAA President Robert Randquist, one of the 45 superintendents honored for 25 years of CGCS designation. "This program requires the demonstration of a higher set of competencies in golf course management through testing and practical

application. Employers can feel confident they've hired a career professional who has made a strong commitment to professional development."

Congratulations to:

- **Joseph Alonzi** of Westchester Country Club in Rye, NY
- **Steve Finamore** of Alpine Country Club in Demarest, NJ
- **Scott Niven** of The Stanwich Club in Greenwich, CT
- **Michael C. Reeb** of Country Club of New Canaan in New Canaan, CT

New Member

Please join us in welcoming new Met member **Fred Montgomery, CGCS**, Class AF, of Syngenta Crop Travel in Ballston Lake, NY.

Member on the Move

Josh Reiger is the new superintendent at Spring Lake Golf Course in Spring Lake Heights, NJ. Previous position: Assistant Superintendent at Wee Burn Country Club in Darien, CT.

Well Wishes

Wishing retired Waccabuc Superintendent **Eddie Binsse** a speedy recovery. He is home recuperating after suffering a stroke on June 6.

In Sympathy

We would like to offer our sincere condolences to **Greg Wojick** of Playbooks for Golf. His mother, Amelia Wojick, passed away on June 15 after a long illness.

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