

# Tee To Green

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# Tee To Green



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# President's Message

## What a Year It's Been

**A**s I sat down to write this message, I realized that one year of my presidency has come and gone. When time passes quickly, that usually means that whatever you are doing doesn't feel like a job. And that has certainly been the case for me. I truly enjoyed this past year and couldn't be more pleased to have the opportunity to lead this great association into 2014.

As I prepared for our Annual Meeting, I realized all the new initiatives the Board of Directors and I have embarked on and the many association programs and practices we continued to support. Here's a brief run-down on our initiatives over the past year and going forward, both inside and outside our association.

### Doings Inside the MetGCSA

- The new fiscal year (November 1 to October 31) began with a new format for our Annual Christmas party. Rather than the customary sit-down dinner, we created more of a cocktail party atmosphere, with buffet dining and small tables that promoted more circulating and kept the party going. Everyone who attended seemed to have a great time.

This year, the cocktail party theme won't change, but the venue will. Our holiday affair, set for December 7, will be held at the Avalon Hall on the 40th floor, offering views of New Rochelle and, in the distance, New York City. It promises to be a wonderful night, so I hope you all will plan on joining us.

- Our new executive secretary, Susan O'Dowd, is in the process of changing the software programming over to QuickBooks to aid in the speed and accuracy of invoicing and receivables. The board has also revamped the budget to make it even more transparent for the membership and is working to create a MetGCSA Foundation for greater tax incentives.

- Another change is our "refreshed" website, offering greater browsing capabilities and ease of use. We are also creating a communication system in which emails can be sent directly from committee chairs or officers, rather than through our executive secretary. This will allow members to more easily determine whom they might contact directly for further information or assistance.

- Along with the enhancements to our website and email communications, the



*Blake Halderman, CGCS  
MetGCSA President*

MetGCSA logo has been updated, with a more contemporary look and prominent golf ball graphic that offers a more obvious link to the golf industry.

- Another new development on the horizon: We are considering creating a new award category to recognize and honor a member's dedication to the association, industry, or charity. Watch for details!

- Other ongoing initiatives we support throughout the year are the Annual Bill Caputi Scholarship Raffle, our scholarship program, research, golf events, social events, meetings, and the Met Area Team Championship.

As always, we appreciate your support and attendance at these events and would like to hear from you if you feel any of our association activities or programs could be improved in any way. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me or the appropriate committee chair.

### Reaching Beyond the MetGCSA

- Last year as the holiday season approached, Hurricane Sandy devastated many shoreline areas, not the least of which was Coney Island, NY. On December 28, several MetGCSA members traveled to this section of Brooklyn, providing supplies to residents who were still suffering the effects of the superstorm. In addition to cooking up more than 1,400 hot dogs and chili and soup, Met volunteers dispersed supplies the MGA had collected from a number of local

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# Assistant Superintendents Take It to the Next Level

*Today's assistants rise to the challenge of an  
ever-changing industry*

*by Todd Salamone and Bill Cygan*



here's a new breed of assistant superintendent out there today. We're more highly educated, technologically savvy, and increasingly well versed in the management and communications skills required to assume responsibility for a crew and to communicate with club members and officials.

And we have to be.

Remaining in our positions longer these days—often for five years or more—we, like the superintendents we work for, are under increasing pressure to meet members' expectations for extraordinary performance, both on the course and in the clubhouse.

So what precisely is the skill set required of today's assistant superintendent? We compared notes with other Met area assistants and superintendents, as well as a few industry professionals, and we all seemed to agree on one basic premise: Assistants today wear many more hats than they did in the past. We're much more than just hardworking crew members. We're an integral part of our course's management team, and as the industry continues to grow and become increasingly complex, so does our role as an assistant superintendent. The assistants of today aren't what they used to be.

## We're Agronomists

Gone are the days when assistants can expect to do their job and then rise through the ranks to superintendent without a four-year degree.

"In the past, a certificate or associate's degree was enough to land an assistant's, and even a superintendent's, position. No more," says Brae Burn Country Club Superintendent Blake Halderman. "The minimum requirement listed in most job postings today is a bachelor's degree.

"A four-year degree is the steppingstone to not only a job interview but also a higher level of know-how—agronomic and interpersonal—that will ultimately put assistants in the position to succeed."

With the growing pressures and responsibilities being placed on superintendents today, we have become the watchdogs of the golf course. We work long hours to ensure golf course conditions meet today's high

expectations and standards. And that involves far more than just managing a crew to get the job done. We have to have the knowledge to back up the superintendent in developing and executing complex agronomic programs, from spraying and fertilizing to identifying insects and disease on the course before they become a serious problem. In addition, we have to stay equally in tune with all the day-to-day details of managing a maintenance operation so nothing slips through the cracks.

Confirming the need for a highly competent right-hand "man," Stanwich Club Superintendent Scott Niven, like many superintendents, puts a priority on hiring assistants who have the skills needed to do an exceptional job with minimal—or preferably no—mistakes. "I often remind our assistants," he says, "that given today's very high standards for course maintenance, if we keep the golf course perfect, we are just keeping up.

"Some prospective assistants," cautions Scott, "wrongly assume their role will be solely to manage staff along with some administrative duties. The reality is that those jobs are far and few between at 18-hole clubs. So it's imperative that, besides being able to manage people, they become talented in all aspects of course management, from course setup and spraying to irrigation repairs and equipment maintenance. Then they can more effectively teach those skills to new crew members both in their current

positions and when they manage a course of their own one day. I find that assistants who possess practical skills along with excellent communication skills make the most successful superintendents."

Pursuing continuing education is essential in staying on top of the latest and greatest chemicals and maintenance technology and government regulations. One of the hot buttons in maintenance these days is protecting our natural resources, particularly our water, and this task has become one of our most important responsibilities as assistants.

It is common to see an assistant superintendent with an infrared thermometer or moisture meter in hand, allowing us to judge exactly when and how much to syringe greens. Continuously monitoring greens moisture is an incredibly important skill for managing turf. Now that we have so many powerful monitoring tools, we can develop moisture programs that will ensure high-quality putting surfaces. Keeping adequate saturation at the root zone, while preventing excess surface moisture, is a critical skill for greens health and playability. Introduction to this technology early in one's career will give them an edge over those who still use the older, less accurate techniques.

## We're Managers and Educators

Beyond being skilled agronomists, a key part of our job has become managing and training crew members to get the job on the course done. We're expected to teach our crew members how to use the variety of complex machinery on the course, explaining not just how they operate, but also how to use them safely. This requires us to be proficient in all aspects of golf course maintenance and then be able to not only share our knowledge with our staff, but also guide them in developing the skills needed to ensure the operation runs like a well-oiled machine.

"My background in hotel and resort management gave me a good foundation in some of the key skills necessary to effectively train and manage staff members,"



*TDR 300 moisture meter and infrared thermometer: two of the tools in today's assistants' arsenal.*

*Photo Credit: Carlos Sanes, turf student intern, Fairview Country Club*

says Tom Reyes, senior assistant superintendent at Century Country Club. "Once on the job here at Century, I could see just how important those managerial skills are in ensuring that the golf course is maintained at its best."

This is an area where a few continuing education courses come in handy, because people management can be tougher than turf management. As assistants, if we can learn to not only teach, but also motivate our crew to be the best they can be, we've developed a skill set that will undoubtedly give us a leg up in the job market.

"One of the keys to motivating staff," says Fairview Country Club Superintendent Jim Pavonetti, "is to gain the respect of the crew. And the best way for assistants to do that is to lead by example. They need to show that they, themselves, are proficient in completing routine maintenance tasks, and the trust and respect will come, especially if they show respect to the crew members first."

North Jersey Country Club Superintendent David Dudones points to another

key management tool: "Good management comes down to good communication," he says. "It's important to tell crew members not just *how* to do something, but also *why* it's important. Give them a performance standard they should meet, whether it's a time-frame for completing an assignment or a specific approach to a task, and then if they've performed well, recognize their work with positive feedback. Recognition will go a long way in motivating staff to repeat the same high level of performance going forward."

## We're Communicators

Communication is a fundamental part of being not only a superintendent, but also an assistant. From interviews and board meetings to managing staff, supers have always been required to present themselves professionally. Today, it's become equally important that assistants jump on board. Granted, for most of us, our interaction with club members and officials is more limited, but when we have the occasion to speak to members about a concern on the course or in a committee meeting, we are expected to be able to handle ourselves with poise and tact, acting as a representative of not only our course, but our profession as well.

That means knowing why aeration is important or when pesticides should be sprayed is not enough. We must have the expertise necessary to explain these practices, and the variety of random concerns that invariably arise, to people who are unfamiliar with golf course maintenance practices.

"What I learned in school, coupled with the education I've gotten on the job, has given me the confidence to respond directly to members' concerns, rather than continually deferring to my boss," notes Scott Wiiki, senior assistant superintendent at Fairview Country Club. "Whether it's answering a question about the mowing height of our greens or correcting a misperception about our water or chemical use, I feel I've handled those concerns with accuracy and tact. I probably even earned the trust and respect of some of the members in the process."

A proponent of assistants assuming a lead role in the operation, North Jersey's David Dudones believes today's assistants are—and should be—an extension of the superintendent: "Provided with the proper direction and training, assistants should be able to not only run the facility while the superintendent is away from the course, but also handle basic communications with members, as well as interactions with the GM, green chair, and golf staff," says David.

"At the same time," he cautions, "it's very important that they don't overstep their bounds. As capable as long-term assistants can be, they don't have the insight that the



Winged Foot Assistant Superintendent Bill Cygan using an iPad to access Playbooks for Golf irrigation maps.

superintendent does about the inner workings of the club. They have to be able to decipher what information is for the members and what is for the staff."

## We're Technologically Savvy

Part of the industry's evolution has been the increased reliance on technology to get the job done. This is where assistants shine. Most of us were born with a keyboard and smartphone in our hands.

Aside from being well versed in a variety of computer software programs, like PowerPoint and Excel, which superintendents use regularly to produce green committee presentations, assistants are at ease with the web. In fact, the Internet, and all the communication devices the Internet has to offer, are an integral part of most assistants' daily lives, both on and off the course. We rely on the Internet, for instance, to gather current weather predictions and radar mapping that allow us to predict disease pressure with unprecedented accuracy. Websites that provide degree-day calculators and aggregate pest monitoring reduce error and increase the precision of our operation's pesticide applications.

In addition to making use of valuable websites, many of us contribute to the Internet through blogs and forums, or through social networking. Social networking is an invaluable communication tool that brings people together like never before. Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter do more than just preserve relationships, they deliver information at a frequency that is unprecedented in history.

Most assistants communicate with one another on a regular basis, helping each

## A Cautionary Viewpoint

Playbooks for Golf's Greg Wojick, who has conducted numerous assistant and superintendent job searches for the golf course industry, offers a word to the wise to current and prospective assistants who may have an overly idealistic version of what an assistant's role is or should be. He notes that while it's true that many assistants are being asked to assume more of a leadership role in their operations, there are still a good number of superintendents out there who are just looking for the fundamentals.

"First and foremost, the superintendents I've worked with want to hire an assistant with a strong work ethic: one who is dependable, honest, and will do whatever it takes to get the job done," says Greg. "One of the worst mistakes an assistant can make when interviewing or when newly hired for a job, is to try too hard to prove themselves. Offering suggestions that imply you know more than the superintendent can be off-putting, and you may find yourself being kept at arm's length."

"You have to get your feet wet on the job first," he continues. "Observe. Really understand the inner workings of the operation. Once you've proved yourself, earned the superintendent's admiration and respect by doing the basics well, then—*maybe* then—your suggestions and attempts to assume a more active management role will be well received."



*Scott Wiiki, Fairview Country Club senior assistant superintendent, monitors data from the club's irrigation system sensors.*

*Photo Credit: Carlos Sanes, turf student intern, Fairview Country Club*

other daily with advice and encouragement. According to Fairview's Jim Pavonetti, his assistants use text messaging to consult with their local counterparts on various course-related issues. "There have been instances," says Jim, "where we started looking for wilting greens because we learned that one of my assistant's friends at a nearby club was hand-watering greens. Remaining in constant contact with others in the industry can also be useful for receiving alerts for potential turf issues and for comparing rainfall/weather data."

Social media is also useful for disseminating information to our club members about course conditions, tournament information, and so on.

As our society becomes increasingly enveloped in technology, it's important for golf course industry professionals to embrace technological advances to remain current and competitive. Assistants have a head start. As we become the superintendents of tomorrow, technology will be the link that allows us to work together to enact growth in the industry in a meaningful way. It's a future we eagerly look forward to.

## We're Older and Wiser

According to recent research data provided by GCSAA, the average age for an assistant superintendent these days is 35. That's not to

say there aren't any younger assistants out there. It's just that an increasing number are staying put for 5 to 10 years, not by choice but by virtue of the fact that superintendent opportunities are far and few between.

"This is the biggest change I've seen in the assistant superintendent position," says Spring Lake Golf Club Superintendent Joshua Reiger. "Looking back 10 years when the golf course industry was booming and new courses were popping up all over, the opportunities seemed endless. Now with a slow-to-recover economy and a number of golf clubs closing their doors there are increasingly slim pickings in the job market."

With older and, as a result, wiser assistants more common in the industry, they are being entrusted with more responsibility. Pinnacle Turf's Steven Renzetti, a former superintendent, notes: "Assistants are not only staying in their positions longer, but they're also assuming more weighty responsibilities. They're far more involved in the important decision-making processes at their clubs than they ever would have been in the past," he says.

Though perhaps discouraging to assistants eager to take the next step, David Dudones sees new opportunity for long-term assistants. "I feel that there will soon be a strong case for career assistants," he says. "If an assistant, who has been on the job several

years, proves to be a strong asset to the club, why not offer that person the same type of recognition and financial reward as an assistant GM and encourage them to stay on? Certainly, long-term assistants can be as valuable to a club as assistant clubhouse managers, and if they're offered a similar pay scale, I think we would see a lot more career assistants out there. It would be similar in theory to what we are already seeing at large-scale clubs where there are one or more 'superintendents' working under a director of agronomy. Same job, different title."

## Final Note

Assistants who have been in the profession for any amount of time know we are part of a dynamic industry that, like life, doesn't stand still. It's continually changing and evolving to meet the challenges of new industry regulations and golfer expectations. And those of us ready and willing to rise to these new challenges will undoubtedly excel . . . and perhaps even set ourselves apart in a field saturated with competent, well-educated assistants vying for that handful of superintendent jobs available each year. Then too, as David Dudones notes, maybe the job market will expand to include a new tier of employment for assistant superintendents. And the assistant of the future will have the option of settling into a new, but comparable role in turfgrass management: the career assistant.

For now, we will continue to develop the skills needed to climb the industry ladder in hope that one day we will attain those lofty goals we've set for ourselves.

*Todd Salamone and Bill Cygan are members of the Tee to Green Editorial Committee. Todd is an assistant superintendent at Sands Point Golf Club in Sands Point, NY, and Bill is an assistant superintendent at Winged Foot Golf Club in Mamaroneck, NY.*

*Sands Point Assistant Superintendent Todd Salamone reminds his staff regularly of the importance of working together to accomplish tasks on the golf course.*



# How to Secure That 'Super' Job



Looking to leap over the herds of assistants vying for the same superintendent's job? We're happy to say, there may be hope.

Greg Wojick, whose company, Playbooks for Golf, provides job consulting services for professionals in the turfgrass management industry, offers a few pointers, here, for gaining a leg up in an impossibly competitive job market.

- **Put your best foot forward.** One of the best ways to increase the odds that your application will rise to the top of the stack is to create an eye-catching resume, portfolio, and personal website offering both a verbal and pictorial view of your skills and experience.
- **Note your accomplishments, not your job description.** Everyone knows the fundamentals of what an assistant does. Show how you've added value to the clubs you've worked for.
- **Keep it simple.** Too much information can be confusing and off-putting.
- **Be certain all your materials are flawless, continually updated, and ready to go.** If your portfolio is sloppy, how does an employer know your work isn't too? (In case you didn't know, GCSAA will review resumes free of charge.)
- **Don't get too personal.** Information about your hobbies, family, likes and dislikes don't have a place in your portfolio.
- **Be visible.** Attend MetGCSA meetings and industry events. Participate in GCSAA webinars. Write an article for *Tee to Green*. Volunteer your time to help tournament clubs prep for their major events. Introduce yourself to superintendents and sales reps. Do whatever you can to gain greater visibility, professional recognition, and a wealth of networking contacts.

- **Use social media to make a name for yourself.** Offer to set up and manage a blog promoting your course—and ultimately, yourself. Tweet about what's happening on your course. Follow and respond to other industry professionals' blogs and tweets. Get your name out there for members, club officials, and others in the industry to see. You never know how it may help you attract the attention of a prospective employer.

*One word of caution when it comes to blogs or tweets that can be read by the general public. Be sure not to mention things that might taint others' views of your competency, like broadcasting that your course has had a damaging disease outbreak. That type of commentary should be reserved for private communications with staff and members.*

- **Don't just make connections, nurture them.** When you develop an industry connection, be sure to maintain contact. Touch base from time-to-time, even if it's just through email or texts. You never know when you may need them.
- **Secure the support of your boss.** There is little better than having your boss make a call on your behalf—particularly if he or she has a connection to the prospective employer. Superintendents hold the key to many job opportunities.
- **If you don't have a connection at the club you're applying to, do the legwork to find one.** It could be a sales rep, contractor, golf course architect—anyone who knows someone who can put in a good word for you. More often than not, it's *who* you know, not *what* you know that gets you the job.

## Only Pedigrees Need Apply

"When members of country clubs are elected to become the Search Committee chairs to fill a superintendent's position, many times their first reaction is to look for a "pedigree" club on candidates' resumes versus the traditional experience and education," notes Fairview Country Club Superintendent Jim Pavonetti. "Gone are the days when assistants can expect to receive an invitation to interview for a great superintendent's position without an impressive track record, formal education, and a pedigree club or two on their resume."

"Does it have to be a Top 100 club? Not necessarily, but it should be a club that has achieved a notable reputation with good conditioning, year in and year out. If you're lacking any Top 100 experience, volunteer at one of those clubs when they host a major professional tournament."

Jim offers a few other "stand-out" tactics for pedigrees and nonpedigrees alike:

- **When applying for a superintendent's position, it's essential that you find out what the club is looking for.** Are they about to embark on an irrigation upgrade or large renovation project? Have they had problems with a certain pest? Do they want faster greens? Whatever it is, if you want to get your foot in the door, your best shot is to address these issues in your cover letter. Show how your past experience can help them meet their needs.
- **With your superintendent's support, write an informative article for your club's website or newsletter.** Include a photo of yourself doing something on the course. If you want to get somewhere in this competitive market, it helps to take measures like these to make yourself known to your membership and general manager. They may have an "in" at a club you're applying to.
- **Don't overlook the inside knowledge that your golf pros or starter can offer.** They tend to know the other clubs that members frequently play. Finding out whether a member has a "connection" to a club you're applying to can be invaluable.
- **Always maintain a good relationship with your pro.** It's not uncommon for golf pros to call each other to get the scoop on a superintendent candidate at their club.





# Nine and Dine: An Event Worth Waiting For

by Ed Brockner, MetGCSA Executive Director

The MetGCSA's Second Annual Nine and Dine: Superintendent/Guest Tournament was held on August 13 after a period of record-breaking heat and rain tied superintendents to their courses and delayed the event by nearly a month. Well worth waiting for, this year's Nine and Dine at Pelham Country Club drew a healthy crowd for some great golf and fine dining.

Superintendent Jeff Wentworth, Pelham Assistant and Met Class C Rep George Chavez, and the entire maintenance staff had the course beautifully conditioned, and the Pelham clubhouse and pro shop staff went

the extra mile to make this event a success. We'd also like to offer special thanks to Title Sponsor LaCorte Equipment for their great support of this event.

And finally, congratulations to the Gross and Net team winners:

### First Gross

34 Gale Stenquist, Eric Berg, Jim Calladio, & Jeff Sutphen of *LaCorte Equipment*

### First Net

27 Glen Dube of *Centennial GC*, Blake Halderman, Wes Mackie, & Dave Peterson of *Brae Burn CC*

# Spook Rock Provides Challenging Playing Field

by Tony Hooks, Tournament Committee Chair

The Met Championship, Met Area Team Championship Qualifier, and the Poa Annual Tournament were contested at Spook Rock on September 17. For this year's Poa, we joined forces with the Hudson Valley GCSA. Not only did we have a good turnout, but the weather was perfect. The golf course was in exceptional shape, and the greens were rolling fast and true. The only problem was that Dan seemed to confuse the Met Championship with the PGA Championship, placing the pins in some difficult spots. Everyone managed to finish, though, having lots of fun and laughs along the way.

### The Championship Results

Quaker's Tom Ashfield won low gross, shooting a 79. He was the only player in the field to break 80. West Point Golf Course's Steve Whipple and Hudson Hills' Grover Alexander rounded out the top three with respectable scores in the 80s.

In the Net Division, Mount Kisco's Greg Gutter took the top honor with a net 67. Kevin Doyle, GCSAA field staff member for the Northeast Region, and Pelham's Jeff Wentworth were second and third, scoring in the 70s.

### The Qualifiers

Now for the results of the Met Area Team Championship Qualifier: On the Gross side, Tom Ashfield, Jeff Wentworth, Sunningdale's Sean Cain, and Due Process Stable's Tony Hooks were the top four, with Plant Food's Tom Weinert being the first alternate. On the Net side, it was Greg Gutter, Centennial's Glen Dube, Redding's Brett Chapin, and North Jersey's Dave Dudones as the top four, with Brae Burn's Blake Halderman as the first alternate.

The day was a success, and we hope to join the Hudson Valley group again in the future.

# Winning Results at Sunningdale

by Ed Brockner, MetGCSA Executive Director

Sunningdale Country Club hosted an outstanding Superintendent/Green Chair or Guest outing on October 8. Superintendent Sean Cain had the course in excellent condition, and Met members and their guests had the fortunate opportunity to see, firsthand, the renovation work that has brought to life the course's original Seth Raynor design.

### In the Net Division . . .

Glen Dube and David Leibowitz of Centennial took home the low net with a 63, followed by Matt Ceplo and John McFadden of Rockland County with a 68.

### In the Gross Division . . .

Tony Hooks and Lou Buttermark of Due Process Stable won the top prize with an impressive 71, followed by Montammy's Jim Swiatowski and Mark Shirvan with a 74.

### In the Open Division . . .

In the Open Division for AF members and guests, Bob Steinman of Pocono Turf Supply and Jim Biordi of Robert Dogwood Knolls came out on top with a net 60. Keith Greenburg of Salem Golf Club and Quaker's Tom Ashfield tied for Long Drive, while Mike Duncan of Siwanoy and Woody Garavente of Canoe Brook were Closest to the Pin on #8 and #12 respectively.

Many thanks to Sean, his staff, and everyone at Sunningdale for a great day!

# GCSAA Chapter Delegates Look to the Future

by Bob Nielsen, CGCS

Once again, I traveled to Lawrence, KS, for the GCSAA Chapter Delegates Meeting, which was held October 1–2. These meetings have drawn delegates from chapters across the country for the past 21 years. This is the ninth year I've gone to represent the MetGCSA. This year's meeting, however, was different from any other. For the first time since 1999, the entire function was conducted in Lawrence, KS, with the majority of the time spent at the association's headquarters. In addition, the focus was not so much on the current state of affairs, but rather on the future of the association and our profession.

The meeting did still involve updating us on GCSAA programs and initiatives, and as always, we were able to meet and greet the candidates for the 2014 board of directors. But the true focus of the event was on getting feedback on what the profession would look like in the future, targeting the range of 2020 to 2025.

As GCSAA President Patrick Finlen noted, it had become obvious to the board through discussions with those in the golf industry, including members, that the profession is experiencing rapid change. Superintendents are being asked to do more, and the tools and resources we use to do that job are changing. Just look at what is happening with technology. The game of golf may not be changing much, but how we manage it is, he told all the delegates.

### Building a Future

To kick off the discussions, we were all shown a video of various GCSAA members sharing their thoughts on what the future would entail for members and how GCSAA might be of assistance. They represented different membership classes, years of service, ownership structure, and budget size.

All the chapter delegates then spent time in breakout sessions to delve deeper into how membership classes and professional development opportunities should look in the future. Tim O'Neill, past president of both the MetGCSA and GCSAA, chaired a com-



mittee that presented the following:

- whether it would be advantageous for GCSAA to simplify or narrow membership classes
- if it made sense for GCSAA to enhance Class A standards
- what would motivate a member to achieve Class A status
- a timeline for implementing any changes that might be made

When all was said and done, the delegates were strongly in support of the need to more narrowly define membership classes and enhance standards. However, opinions varied as to what the standards would look like and the timeline for implementing them. Finlen told us that the next step would be for the board to engage GCSAA members and others outside the membership in the coming months to get a greater diversity of input.

### On the State of the Association

Finlen and GCSAA Chief Executive Officer Rhett Evans also devoted a portion of the meeting to briefing us on various programs and services, noting that the 2014 GCSAA business plan would continue to focus on the following priorities:

- Enhance technology to allow GCSAA to better serve members and provide them with tools that provide on-course solutions
- Complete the implementation of the field staff program and the extension of member services to regions/chapters

- Dedicate additional resources to advocating on behalf of members to golfers, employers, and policymakers
- Enhance educational programming and evaluate membership classifications to remain relevant in the marketplace
- Explore ways to increase revenues through traditional and nontraditional sources
- Continue to be prudent in exploring and implementing programs and services that expand GCSAA's contribution to growing the game worldwide

### Meet the Candidates

Last but not least, we all had the opportunity to hear from those members running for national office and to participate in small breakout sessions to learn more about candidate platforms and philosophies. The slate of candidates includes:

#### For President

Keith A. Ihms, CGCS, Country Club of Little Rock, AR

#### For Vice President

John J. O'Keefe, CGCS, Preakness Hills Country Club, Wayne, NJ

#### For Secretary/Treasurer

- Peter J. Grass, CGCS, Hilands Golf Club, Billings, MT
- Bill H. Maynard, CGCS, Country Club of St. Albans, MO

### **For Director (electing two)**

- Rafael Barajas, CGCS, Hacienda Golf Club, LaHabra Heights, CA
- Mark F. Jordan, CGCS, Westfield Group Country Club, Westfield Center, OH
- John Walker, Bentwater Country Club, Montgomery, TX

There are three candidates running for two open director's positions this year. Rafael Barajas has been a long-term delegate and very active in the environmental arena, and I have served with Mark Jordan on the Government Relations Committee. John Walker has been involved in many committees and served as president of the Texas chapter. All three of these gentlemen are well equipped to represent our industry at the national level.

Peter Grass has one year remaining in his term, and Bill Maynard, the other candidate for secretary/treasurer, is at the end of his director term. Should Pete win, Bill Maynard will have to be nominated from the floor to run for director, and Keith Ihms will have to appoint a director to fill the vacancy created by Peter. If Bill wins, Pete will remain on the board to finish his two-year term.

Darren Davis, of Olde Florida Golf Club in Naples, FL, will remain on the board with one year left in his two-year director term.

Patrick Finlen, CGCS, of The Olympic Club in San Francisco, CA, will serve on the board as immediate past president during 2014, and Sandy Queen of the City of Overland Park, KS, will retire from the board.

### **Hope for the Future**

At this year's delegates meeting, more than just the content and format were different. I sensed, more than ever, optimism and a clear vision for the future. The work done in the past is having an impact. We just have to figure out how we can build on that momentum for the future. I think there was a time GCSAA and the members were on the defensive, just holding on to what we had. Now I feel we are on the offense. GCSAA and its members are doing good things, and our profession is being recognized for it.

Rhett Evans is motivating as CEO of the organization, and the staff seems to be energized by his leadership. The GCSAA board is focused on the future and their chapters, and this can only mean good things for all of us.

*In addition to being the MetGCSA's Chapter Delegate, Bob Nielsen is our association's past president and superintendent at Bedford Golf & Tennis Club in Bedford, NY.*

### *President's Message continued from page 1*

clubs, such as food, clothing, toiletries, and other needed supplies. More than five truckloads of donated goods were distributed from the MGA, MetGCSA, and several of our association members. The Coney Island residents' show of appreciation made our trip seem more than worth the effort.

- We continue to drive home a positive message about the game and role as stewards of the environment throughout our communities and states by participating in the development of a BMP initiative for New York State Golf Courses. A website launch is planned for early 2014, and with the help of the MGA, we are advertising our efforts through The Met Golfer.

We are also participating in writing brief articles in The Met Golfer EXTRA and in the MGA's E-Revision Newsletter, which in addition to publicizing the BMPs, features a "Superintendent's Spotlight." This is an article written by an area superintendent, highlighting an aspect of golf course maintenance—anything from syringing and aeration to weather-related challenges—and is designed to elevate the general golfing public's understanding of and appreciation for all that goes into our profession.

- To help offset the cost of this and other endeavors, the Met joined forces with the GCSAA to organize Rounds 4 Research, which is a fundraising effort that is being used to support the New York Best Management Practices Initiative and other research-based programs. We appreciate all who have supported this effort.

- While attending the Advocacy Day in Albany, NY, the Met was invited to be part of a Turf Advisory Council sponsored by Senator Greg Ball. This council, which includes superintendents, professors from the state universities, and industry leaders,

provides an opportunity for all of us to work through issues and concerns before they become legislation.

- Beginning this year, the Nor'easter Event at the Golf Industry Show in Orlando, FL, is being organized by the MetGCSA. It will take place on February 5 at B.B. King's Blues Club starting at 6:30 p.m. We hope to see you there.

- Last but not least, we continue to indirectly support a variety of industry organizations by attending such events as the NYSTA Advocacy Day, turf school field days, seminars around the Northeast, and other great events throughout the season.

### **A Promising Future**

Reflecting on this past year, I am pleased with all that we've accomplished as an organization and with the initiatives we've planned going forward. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of our Board of Directors, these initiatives can only enhance our chapter—and our image as environmentally responsible professionals.

Finally, as always, I urge all of you to become involved in our association and industry: Come to meetings and family social events, join a committee, and just as important, stay abreast of laws and regulations that can affect your course—and ultimately, your livelihood. At the chapter, state, and national level, your involvement can make a difference.

Please feel free to contact me or one of the board members with any thoughts you might have for furthering any aspect of our association. I look forward to the year ahead as your chapter president.

**Blake Halderman, CGCS**  
*President*

# Wickstrom and Quaker Rolled Out the Red Carpet for Assistants Championship

by S. Addison Barden

Although the weather forecast didn't look too promising, it turned out to be a beautiful fall day for the Assistants Championship, held this year on October 23 at Quaker Ridge Golf Club.

Superintendent Tom Ashfield and Assistant Super Stephen Wickstrom and their staff set up a challenging course for the sizable field of assistants who came out to enjoy day of camaraderie and friendly competition. (See results on page 11.)

A classic A.W. Tillinghast course in Scarsdale, NY, Quaker is often referred to as "Tillie's Treasure," receiving numerous recognitions over the years, including the Number One Course in Metropolitan New York in 1989 and a Top 100 Course ranking by *Golf Digest* in 2013.

According to famed architect Pete Dye, "Quaker Ridge has some of the greatest golf holes ever seen," while 31-time PGA Tour event winner Jimmy Demaret has touted Quaker Ridge as worthy of hosting any tournament, including a U.S. Open and PGA Championship. Quaker has, in fact, hosted its share of events, including the 1997 Walker Cup and a number of Met Opens, Met Amateurs, and, yes, Met PGA Championships.

Opened in 1918, Quaker is renowned not only for its world-class golf conditions, but also a history that includes the American Cincinnatus himself, George Washington, who during his command as general in the Revolutionary War was rumored to have bedded down under an oak tree that still stands today on Quaker's 10th hole.

Coincidentally, the Assistants Championship was held the very same week Washington spent that restless night at Quaker Ridge 237 years ago!

### Movin' on Up

Our assistant host first joined Tom Ashfield at Quaker in 2007 as a summer intern. The two met when Steve attended a seminar at Michigan State University, where Tom was invited to speak to turf students. At that point, Tom was in the process of moving from Canoe Brook to Quaker and, after chatting with Steve, invited him to do his



Our Assistants Championship hosts (from left to right): Steve Wickstrom, Dan Lusty, Tom Ashfield, and Aaron Archambault.

internship with him. A year later, after completing a two-year degree in turfgrass management from Michigan State, Steve was invited back to Quaker—this time as one of Tom's assistants. That was six seasons ago.

Steve grew up in the Detroit suburb of Utica and enjoyed playing golf in and around the Detroit area. When he was out of high school, he took a summer job working for his uncle, Bruce Cline, who at the time was a superintendent at The Grand Traverse Resort in Traverse City, MI. There, Steve's love for working on the links inspired him to pursue the degree that has launched him into a career in turfgrass management—and his position at Quaker, where he's quick to tell you he's gained invaluable experience.

During his years at Tillie's Treasure, Steve has been a part of numerous course enhancement projects, including a complete bunker renovation, full greens expansions, and the rebuilding of six greens to full USGA specifications using 3D-scan technology to perfectly match previous and current greens undulations. "Whether it's irrigation and drainage installs or full greens renovations, I enjoy every opportunity to expand my knowledge and expertise," says Steve. "And I find it tremendously rewarding to see hard work pay off in a completed project."

Working alongside Steve are Quaker's additional assistants, Aaron Archambault

and Dan Lusty. Both have built impressive resumes early in their careers. Aaron earned his degree at Penn State and completed his internship across the street from Quaker Ridge at Winged Foot Golf Club before landing his current position. Dan is another Michigan State alum who started as an assistant at Quaker Ridge after two back-to-back internships—one under Tom and the other at Shady Canyon Golf Club in Irvine, CA. While at Shady Canyon last winter/spring, Dan had the fortunate opportunity to be part of a multimillion-dollar renovation.

### Just for Fun

A diehard Detroit sports fan, Steve enjoys spending his free time catching Lions and Tigers games. He was able to make a trip down to D.C. earlier this year to watch the Lions get their first win ever in Washington that proved to be a last-second nail biter. Steve and his wife of three years, Tina, reside in City Island, NY.

### Great Day for All

"Aaron, Dan, and I enjoyed spending a relaxing day away from work with fellow assistants," says Steve, who was also pleased to share the course's many improvements with the tournament-goers.

# Quaker's Super More Than Happy to Host

Orchestrating the show at Quaker Ridge Golf Club since 2007 is Superintendent Tom Ashfield. Tom began his career in turfgrass management at Oakland Hills Country Club in Birmingham, MI, where he worked on the grounds crew during the summer of 1987 after a three-year stint in the army. Having had a longtime passion for law enforcement, Tom decided to take a brief hiatus from turf and joined the Bloomfield Hills Police Department as a dispatcher. It didn't take him long, however, to realize that turfgrass management was his true calling.

He enrolled in the two-year turf program at Michigan State University while working as an assistant at Franklin Hills Country Club, in Franklin, MI. After completing the program, Tom decided to further his education, earning a B.S. in Crop and Soil Science.

Degree in hand, Tom accepted an assistant's position at Oakland Hills Country Club, where he had the opportunity to host the 1996 U.S. Open. The following year, Tom was offered the superintendent's position at Edgewood Country Club in Commerce Township, MI, and then two years later, headed East to the New York Metropolitan area's Canoe Brook Country Club. He remained there for seven years before landing his current position at Quaker Ridge.

Tom is grateful to have such a hardworking team of assistants. "They're dedicated, knowledgeable, and extremely sharp," he says, adding, "I trust them to run much of the day-to-day golf course operations."

Steve appreciates the vote of confidence. "I'm grateful for the responsibility Tom and our GM Bob Musich have been willing to give us," says Steve. "It's made my job here at Quaker all the more enjoyable."

Steve, Aaron, and Dan weren't the only ones who enjoyed welcoming the Met's

Class C members to Quaker. Tom was equally, if not more pleased to host this annual event. "The Assistants Championship is a great opportunity to give back," says Tom. "Assistants are the backbone of the system. This is my way of recognizing and saying thank you for the job assistants do to

make us all look good. It gave me great pleasure seeing everyone enjoying themselves out here on the links."

*Addison Barden, a member of the Tee to Green Editorial Committee, is an assistant superintendent at North Jersey Country Club in Wayne, NJ.*

## Scorecard

### Assistants Enjoy a Mighty-Fine Day at Quaker

by Ed Brockner, MetGCSA Executive Director

Thanks to Superintendent Tom Ashfield and Assistant Superintendent Stephen Wickstrom and their staff, the Assistants Championship went off without a hitch, offering the Met's Class C members the perfect respite from the daily grind.

Special thanks to George Chavez, our Class C board rep, for arranging this special event and to Quaker's GM Bob Musich, Golf Shop Manager Maureen Vershure for making this a day to remember!

Last but not least, we'd also like to recognize Title Sponsor Westchester Turf for supporting this event and making the day possible.

Here are the day's results:

#### Low Gross Team Winners

- 74 Ian Hamilton, *The Patterson Club*
- Kevin Haglund, *Redding CC*
- 78 Maxwell Lenz, *Siwanoy CC*
- Josh Haugh, *Willow Ridge CC*
- 80 Kyle Hillegass, *Nassau CC*
- Tyler Wesseldyk, *Nassau CC*

#### Low Net Team Winners

- 63 Brian O'Malley, *Edgewood CC*
- Jesse Bulaga, *Edgewood CC*
- 64 Keith Carper, *Sterling Farms GC*
- Tom Bakis, *Sterling Farms GC*
- 66 James Decarvallo, *Siwanoy CC*
- Greg James, *Liberty National GC*

#### Individual Gross Winner

- 77 Ian Hamilton, *The Patterson Club*

#### Individual Net Winner

- 68 Brian O'Malley, *Edgewood Country Club*

#### Closest to Hole

- #5 Todd Salamone, *Sands Point GC*
- #10 Corey Risedorf, *GC at Mansion Ridge*

#### Longest Drive

- #16 Mike Guinan, *Blind Brook Club*

# Don't Miss the Event of the Year . . .

### The MetGCSA Christmas Party

*WHEN?* Saturday, December 7, 7–11:30 p.m.  
*WHERE?* Avalon Hall, 40 Memorial Highway, New Rochelle, NY

Be sure to join fellow Met members for this festive annual event being held this year on the 40th floor of the Avalon Hall, offering picturesque views of New Rochelle and, in the distance, New York City! Enjoy dinner and dancing to the sounds of DJ Stiltz, door prizes, and more!

### Members on the Move

- **David Dudones** is the new superintendent at Westchester Country Club in Rye, NY. Previous position: Superintendent at North Jersey Country Club, Wayne, NJ.
- **Mike Scott** is the new superintendent at Edgewood Country Club in Riverdale, NJ. Previous position: MS Turf consulting business.

### Births

Congratulations to:

- **Brian Chapin**, superintendent of Paramount Country Club, and his wife, Zoya, on the birth of their daughter, Nika, who was born 8 lbs. on November 11.
- **Steven McGlone**, superintendent of Siwanoy Country Club and his wife, Margie, on the birth of their daughter, Sydney Elizabeth, who was born 7 lbs. 3 ozs. on September 12.

### New Members

Please join us in welcoming the following new MetGCSA members:

- **Kenneth Barber**, Class AF, of Ken's Tree Care in Northvale, NJ
- **Jesse Bulaga**, Class C, of Edgewood Country Club in Riverdale, NJ
- **Brian Delsanter**, Class C, of Woodway Country Club in Darien, CT
- **Jamie Devers**, Class A, of Canoe Brook Country Club in Summit, NJ
- **Brian Gjelsvik**, Class AE, from Seeton Turf Warehouse in Mt. Laurel, NJ
- **Ian Hamilton**, Class C, of The Patterson Club in Fairfield, CT
- **Kyle Johnson**, Class C, of Winged Foot Golf Club in Mamaroneck, NY
- **Lucas Knudson**, Class SM, of Rockville Links Country in Rockville Centre, NY
- **Wes Mackie**, Class C, of Brae Burn Country Club in Purchase, NY
- **Charles Nowicki**, Class A, of Golf Club at Mansion Ridge in Monroe, NY
- **Jeffrey Stein**, Class AF, Stein Golf Construction in Bedford, NY
- **Kyle Zarnetski**, Class C, of Upper Montclair Country Club in Clifton, NJ

## Educational and Social Events

### MetGCSA/CAGCS Fall Educational Seminar

*Wednesday, December 4*  
The Patterson Club  
Fairfield, CT  
Host: Jason Meersman

Starting at 8:30 a.m., you will hear a series of informative talks from five industry experts. The speakers and their topics:

- Mowing and Rolling: Beyond Green Speed

*Dr. Michael Richardson, University of Arkansas*  
• Using Plant Growth Regulators for Golf Turf: What's New?

*Dr. Cale Bigelow, Purdue University*

- False Green Kyllinga and Other Difficult Weeds of Turf and Non-Turf Areas

*Jim Skorulski, Senior Agronomist, USGA*

- Technology for Golf Course Management Is Coming at You Fast

*Dr. Michael Richardson, University of Arkansas*

- Efficient Irrigation of Golf Turf in the Cool-Humid Region: Evapotranspiration and Crop Coefficients

*Dr. Scott Ebdon, University of Massachusetts*

### 38th Annual New Jersey Green Expo Turf and Landscape Conference

*Tuesday – Thursday, December 10 – 12*  
Trump Taj Mahal Resort Casino  
Atlantic City, NY

The New Jersey Green Expo offers a comprehensive educational program providing cutting-edge applications and tactics to guarantee green industry professionals' suc-

cess on the job. Offering one of the largest trade shows in the tri-state area, the expo also provides attendees with the opportunity to view the latest and greatest products and services on the market.

For further information, call 973-812-6467 or visit [www.njturfgrass.org](http://www.njturfgrass.org).

### MetGCSA Winter Seminar

*Wednesday, January 15, 2014*  
Westchester Country Club  
Rye, NY

Join industry professionals for a day of education and the opportunity to peruse the products and services of our trade show vendors. Here is a preview of the speakers of the day:

- Dr. Ben McGraw of SUNY Delhi
- Herb Stevens of Grass Roots Weather
- Chava McKeel, GCSAA associate director, government relations
- Dr. Michelle DaCosta of UMass
- Dr. John Kaminski of Penn State

### 2014 Nor'easter Ski Day

*Friday, January 17, 2013*  
Killington Ski Resort  
Killington, VT

Watch for details on this no-to-be-missed multi-association event that includes a day of fun—and a ski race competition—on the Killington slopes. For further information, contact Andy Drohen of Agrium Advanced Technologies at 413-531-6401 or [adrohen@agriumat.com](mailto:adrohen@agriumat.com).

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