

Tee to Green

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Tee To Green



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Country Club

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Lessons Learned From a Tough Summer

Now that our last golf event of the season is behind us, it gives us some time to reflect on the past year's events, make any necessary changes for 2019, and begin to focus on the many outstanding educational opportunities available during our off-season.

Kicking off the long list of upcoming educational events was our joint MetGCSA and Connecticut AGCS Fall Seminar held at The Patterson Club on November 8. The hot topic of this year's seminar was native or natural area management.

Adding natural areas is beneficial to the environment and makes the course look outstanding with the green/brown color contrast, but as we all know, these areas are far from maintenance free. After adding more than 30 acres at Westchester, I am always looking for new ideas on how to keep it thin and wispy, manage weeds to keep maintenance to a minimum, and make these areas playable enough that balls won't get lost and bog down play.

This year's wet, hot, humid conditions compounded the difficulties of maintaining native areas. It was such a struggle for me, in fact, that I had to break out my copy of *Weeds of the Northeast* to identify some things I hadn't seen in our native areas in years.

The breakdown of our pre-emergents in our rough and fescue areas was more notice-

able this year than I can ever remember. I had staff repeatedly handpicking and spot-treating weeds, which turned out to be a great rainy day assignment. And of course, there were plenty of rainy days. In fact, 30 of the 94 days between mid-July and mid-October received measureable amounts of rain, so the conditions for germination were perfect.

Kudos to Education Chair Mike Brunelle, who recruited some of the best in the business for this year's seminar. Between PhDs, USGA agronomists, and successful superintendents, the program offered all who attended the latest and greatest methods for success on their courses.

How Much Rain?

Speaking of a challenging summer, I thought you might be interested in a few weather stats that will illustrate in numbers just how miserable those 94 days were. These figures were gathered from our weather station at WCC. And if nothing else, they will serve as evidence of the type of season we all had. And imagine, in some member locations, these figures were far worse!

- 30 out of the 94 days between mid-July and mid-October received measurable rain. In fact, it rained 1 out of every 3 days!!
- 16 of those days received at least .5 inches, 14 days above .75 inches, and 10 days above



David Dudones
MetGCSA President

1 inch.

- More than 22 inches of rain fell from July 15 through to mid-October when the average is normally about 12 inches.

Now, when you factor in the type of prolonged heat and humidity we had during this stretch, well, let's just say I think everyone understands that grey leaf spot can be pretty devastating to your rough!

Check out the article on page 11 by Atlantic Golf and Turf's John Garcia, where he discusses the summer's challenges and how they can help us improve our operations. As difficult as this summer was, it's a prime example of how good things actually can come out of bad situations. Many of us are now taking the time to reexamine our growing conditions and maintenance programs and work with our clubs to establish plans for improving our infrastructures and success, even in the face of challenging weather conditions.

David Dudones
President

Native areas at
Westchester
Country Club.

Caption?

Feature

Volunteer for a Tournament?

***YOU'D BE CRAZY
NOT TO!***

*Assistant Superintendents Find Unpaid
Tournament Work Pays Off*

by Andrew Baxter



here's more to becoming a tournament volunteer than hard, slogging work. When you sign up to lend a helping hand at one of the many local or national tournaments, you're opening the door to a world of skill-building and networking opportunities within the golf industry. What's more, when you volunteer, you show not only your commitment to the industry, but also that you're equipped to work in high-level, high-stress situations typical of the profession. The Met area has its share of large events, with clubs hosting everything from Mid-Amateurs to U.S. Opens. Yet assistants have been known to travel far and wide to have the opportunity to work a major tournament at a top-ranked club.

Is the payoff worth the time and effort? We spoke to both volunteers and superintendents who have hosted these events, and all agree the benefits far outweigh any sacrifice. But don't take our word for it. Here, we bring you the inside scoop—straight from the tournament hosts and volunteers themselves.

What Are Tournament Hosts Looking For?

Having qualified volunteers during tournament week eases the burden of host superintendents and their crews. Though quite a number of courses in the Met area host tournaments that depend on volunteer help, there's no guarantee that those who apply for a volunteer slot will be selected. In fact, most tournament hosts screen potential candidates by having them fill out a short survey on what they can do with confidence during the week of the tournament. This is an easy and successful way for superintendents to make sure they have a pool of qualified help on board.

Todd Raisch, fresh from hosting the Northern Trust at Ridgewood Country Club, confesses, however, that the competition for quality volunteers is so strong in the Met area, that he doesn't turn many away.

"While we like to have volunteers trained in a wide range of skills," says Todd, "we are happy to have anyone willing to work. We have jobs that even lesser-skilled volunteers

can easily do—everything from raking bunkers and filling divots to checking to see that the turf around green surrounds isn't matted down.

That being said, Todd is quick to note that having cross-trained volunteers pays dividends when a series of unfortunate events with the tournament or the weather work against you. "It is rare to get through the week without some sort of calamity," says Todd. "Not having to sort through qualifications when you're in a pinch and need to find the right person to fix a damaged hole, operate a chainsaw, or just fill in for a no-show, takes a lot of pressure off managing the week. And of course, having to rake 150,000 square feet of bunkers in 20 minutes, as we had to do after a downpour during the 2010 Barclays, is a lot easier with 105 people on staff than with our normal 35!"

Andrew Wilson, director of agronomy at Bethpage State Park, who is already planning for the PGA Championship at the Black Course next May, is no stranger to hosting events. Having had two U.S. Opens and a Barclays under his belt when he was an assistant and then superintendent at Bethpage, he knows the advantage of recruiting volunteers with tournament experience. But also high on his list of priorities is gathering a diverse group of volunteers—everyone from superintendents, assistants, and interns to vendors and university faculty.

"The diversity," he explains, "gives us a full complement of skill sets while, at the same time, creating a great opportunity for camaraderie and networking among the volunteers during the week."

Andrew readily admits that hosting events at a course like Bethpage makes recruiting experienced volunteers that much easier. "Many of our volunteers have worked at Bethpage in the past and return to lend a hand when a large event comes to the property. That means they know where the holes, roads, and access points are, and that type of familiarity also allows them to lead crews to get tasks completed much more efficiently." A bonus for sure.

At Shinnecock Hills Golf Club, the site of the U.S. Open this past June, host superintendent Jon Jennings had 400 applicants

knocking down the door for the opportunity to volunteer in their first Open since 2004. Two hundred volunteers made the cut.

"We had turf students, assistants, and superintendents," says Jon, noting that he gave preference to those living in the region and then expanded his recruiting efforts out from there. "I didn't want people living in close proximity excluded," says Jon, adding, "and besides, recruiting locally encouraged a sense of ownership and pride."

Like Andrew Wilson and Todd Raisch, Jon was able to recruit volunteers with a range of experience. "We had our volunteers list their skills and then matched them with the appropriate tasks," explains Jon. "We wouldn't have a superintendent walk mowing greens," he added. "But we would assign supers to go out with people on greensmowers and oversee and assist in the work being done."

With the abundance of volunteers, there was no shortage of networking opportunities. "We had more people than we ever needed, and without any inclement weather that required more hands on deck, we would often have several people working together," says Jon. "That, naturally, gave them the opportunity to chat and swap stories and experiences."

Also helping volunteers' networking efforts was a binder that listed each volunteer's name and place of employment. "It's handy to have everyone's contact information readily available," says Jon, noting that the binder was designed to make it easier for people to stay in touch after the tournament."

Heading into the championship, Jon acknowledged the volunteers' efforts in readying the golf course for the weeklong event—and for the hard work they were headed for during the course of the tournament. "We appreciate the time away from your home and from your employer," Jon told them.

The Tangible Benefits to Volunteers

While it's a gift to have people volunteer their time and hard labor to making the event happen, it's a sizable job to manage

them. Everything from coordinating their varying duties and assignments to arranging for their lodging, food, and tournament attire, is part of the host superintendent's already lengthy to-do list.

At Ridgewood, volunteers who work the full seven days get the royal treatment. The club provides them with local hotel accommodations, which allow them to avoid a long trip home after an early morning start or late-night end.

All shifts begin with a start-of-shift meeting. It's then that volunteers are filled in on the plan of action for their shift, and jobs are assigned. Most morning shifts begin at 4 a.m. and finish up around 9 or 10 a.m. Evening shifts typically run from 4 p.m. to around 9 p.m. Schedules vary depending on the particular tournament schedule. Volunteers were encouraged to stay around and socialize and watch some good golf or head back between shifts so they can recharge and get some shuteye.

In addition to the gratis lodging, volunteers are well fed. "Everyone is provided with plenty to eat and drink," says Todd. "And if you stay late enough, there might even be adult beverages provided!"

Todd also provides diversions for volunteers during the day between shifts that include ping-pong, synthetic putting greens, and even video games. And the volunteer common area is outfitted with leather sofas, air mattresses, and individual lockers. "Those in the know," says Todd, "bring a swimsuit with them and spend many an afternoon in the pool at our golf professional's house, which is along the first hole."

Todd tries to make his volunteer experience as rewarding as possible: "We go out of our way to improve our incentives each time we host an event," says Todd. "For instance, we have a tiered system of 'thank you' giveaways. The more volunteers work, the more they receive," says Todd, noting that the giveaways can range from volunteer tournament golf shirts to nice golf pullover jackets, and the gift selection gets more extensive with each tournament Ridgewood hosts.

But one of Todd's favorite perks involves a rather new tradition that has begun at Ridgewood: A group of regular volunteers pick a different spot each night to rehash the day over drinks.

"I love this part of the day," says Todd. "We end up in hospitality tents, scenic points on the course, in grandstands, somewhere new every night. Word spreads each night about where we're going. Then, little by little, people begin to show up as they finish their jobs. It's a lot of laughs and great camaraderie."

Bethpage offers a number of perks similar to Ridgewood's, for one, putting their volunteers up at the local university or hotel. "From there, we outfit them pretty well with gear and provide plenty of food and drink," says Andy, who hopes when Bethpage hosts the PGA next year to add another bonus for those who volunteer: guest speakers.

"When I visited at Bellerive and Shinnecock in 2018 to observe their tournament operations," says Andy, "there were several times during the week that special guest

speakers came to give the volunteers a quick talk, on everything from architecture and maintenance to a pep talk on team building. I really enjoyed that part of the week and would like to do the same for our volunteers."


"We did have a speaker each evening of the tournament," says Jon. "The talks ranged from inspirational to educational and were just another perk of the volunteer experience. Everyone seemed to enjoy them," he adds.

The Intangible Benefits of Volunteering

When you volunteer for one of these major tournaments, whether it's for a few shifts or the entire week, you sign on for a crash course in tournament prep and maintenance, which often involves learning the art of skillfully pushing the turf to the brink of disaster—but never over!

This type of high-pressure environment puts everyone's skills to the test—both interpersonal and agronomic. But in addition to offering an incomparable learning experience for any volunteer in the industry, it provides assistant supers who work these events with a long list of additional benefits, including the opportunity to network, experience another club's operation, and quickly build their resumes.

Steve Brazer, an assistant super at Winged Foot Golf Club who has volunteered at eight events, enjoys the variety of each tournament experience: "Every tournament involves something different—tasks, weather



A parade of Toro 5010 fairway mowers stagger to the left, finishing up their last pass on the third hole at Ridgewood during the Northern Trust Championship.

"Volunteering at a variety of clubs can help you determine your personal career goals, particularly the type of operation you might like to manage one day."

—Jim Pavonetti

U.S. Open volunteers at Shinnecock finish their morning meal as they await their marching orders for the day.

conditions, unexpected challenges. You realize how important it is to be flexible and ready to tackle anything and everything.”

Working closely with a team of volunteers, Steve experienced a special camaraderie and shared commitment to helping a fellow turf professional succeed before and during the tournament. “It’s a tightly knit industry, and we are all in it together,” he says, “especially during crunch time as the tournament is being played.”

Anthony Minniti, assistant superintendent at The Creek Club and veteran tournament volunteer, has offered his services at eight tournament events. He, like Steve, feels one of the large motivating factors for volunteering during a major tournament is the desire to help a fellow industry professional. Another is the opportunity to network.

“These events are great for connecting, face-to-face, with local vendors and a variety of industry professionals,” says Anthony. “You just never know when one of these contacts might provide an ‘in’ to a job you’re after.”

And while no tournament volunteer can ignore the many tangible benefits derived from assisting with an event—perks like high-quality gear and clothing, nice accommodations, food and drink, and the chance to be front and center of the tournament action—clearly more important is the long-term payoff. Your good deed provides something that money can’t buy: the incomparable opportunity to quickly elevate your skill set and add marquee courses to your resume.

“When hiring, clubs are looking not only for the proper educational background, but also a history of diverse experiences,” says Shinnecock’s Jon Jennings, who has volunteered for at least 25 tournament events—from PGA Tours to U.S. Opens and Amateurs. “Volunteering also shows employers the stuff you’re made of,” adds Jon. “Performing a variety of duties in a high-pressure environment speaks volumes about your work ethic and initiative.”

Fairview Country Club Superintendent Jim Pavonetti, who’s volunteered at numerous events during his time as an assistant in years past, notes another, less obvious, benefit assistants can derive from volunteering at a variety of courses: getting an up-close-and-personal view of what it’s like to work at various operations.

“Volunteering at a variety of clubs can help you determine your personal career goals, particularly the type of operation you



might like to manage one day,” he says. “Some guys have their sights set on big operations like Winged Foot and Westchester. Others see quickly that managing a multiple-course facility will never be in their wheelhouse.”

Winged Foot Assistant Steve Brazer had the fortunate opportunity to discover his career path when he was working as a crew member at a local public course in Massachusetts and decided to volunteer for what was his first volunteer experience: the Duetsche Bank Championship at TPC Boston.

“Coincidentally, I ended up raking bunkers alongside my old boss from a landscaping company,” he recalls, “and he mentioned to me that golf course work could actually be a viable career option. That thought stuck with me,” continues Steve. “Later that year, I enrolled in the Rutgers two-year program with my sights set on working at a high-end course one day.”

Regardless of their ultimate career goals, all assistants would agree that volunteering is a prime opportunity to work alongside and observe the strategies of the top professionals in the field. This not only helps them refine their existing skills, but also gives them added confidence in their abilities as assistants.

Anthony Minniti particularly enjoys having the chance to pick the brains of fellow assistants and superintendents from other facilities. “I listen to the issues they struggle with on their courses and how they’ve remedied them,” says Anthony.

“I also like to see, firsthand, other ways to complete specific tasks,” he continues. “It’s great to be able to take some of the best ideas I encounter and implement them on my home course.”

“Volunteering at a major tournament is not unlike an internship,” adds Jim Pavonetti. “It offers assistants the opportunity to not only gain further insight into the indus-

try, but also learn about the latest industry trends, advances in equipment and/or technology, and what, exactly, helps a course stay ahead of the game.”

But as you speak with tournament volunteers, you begin realize that there are almost as many reasons people choose to volunteer as there are tournaments! While Steve Brazer, for instance, finds tournament experience helpful in advancing his skills and career, one of his prime motives now for volunteering is to pick up tips and techniques he could apply at his own course when Winged Foot hosts the U.S. Open in June 2020.

“Working a variety of major events has given me different perspectives on what goes into hosting a tournament,” says Steve. “Whether it was while working on the crew at TPC Sawgrass leading up to a major tournament or volunteering at numerous other venues, the knowledge I gained has been invaluable in planning for the U.S. Open.”

Superintendents Tout the Volunteer Trail

There are many successful superintendents in the New York Metropolitan area who readily credit where they are today to working past tournaments. Here, several of those supers emphasize the undeniable benefits that assistants—and any turf professional—can derive from lending a helping hand before, during, and after a major tournament.

Jim Pavonetti of Fairview Country Club looks back fondly on his volunteer experience at the 1997 PGA Tournament at Winged Foot with then superintendent Bob Alonzi.

“I remember helping one of Bob Alonzi’s mechanics set at least 25 walk-mowers. Back then, Winged Foot walk-mowed fairways for the PGA Championship. I had just finished working on the course for the evening,



Bethpage displays the trophies for two of its upcoming tournaments: The Wannamaker Trophy, left, will go to the 2019 PGA Championship winner. The trophy, right, will go to the 2024 Ryder Cup winner. Be sure to inquire about volunteer opportunities!

and as I was walking to my car to go home, I saw a lineup of mowers waiting to be set outside the shop and couldn't resist stopping. Well, I was there until about 10:30 at night, helping to get those mowers ready for the next morning. It's an experience I'll never forget."

Jim also was one of those who picked up a handy trick-of-the-trade that he brought back to his home course, Willow Ridge Country Club, where he was working at that time as an assistant.

"In one tournament," he recalls, "we raked bunkers with extra-long, homemade handles so that we could have one continuous rake stroke to make the bunkers look uniform and perfect. We started doing that at my home course, and the members loved it."

Shinnecock's Jon Jennings feels tournament experience is so valuable that he recommends young professionals in our industry volunteer for at least one tournament a year.

"It can seem a bit daunting to find a week to volunteer in the midst of a busy summer schedule," Jon admits, "but it can also be a good change of pace."

Ridgewood's Todd Raisch also touts the

benefits of a volunteer getaway: "It can be a fun diversion from the summer grind and a much-needed change of scenery, especially at the time of year when most of our events seem to be scheduled mid- to late August.

Of all the benefits surrounding tournament experience, the supers we spoke to touted networking as number one.

"A lot of new friendships and connections are developed during tournament week," says Todd.

"Your network is so important for future job opportunities and for advice and tips," adds Jim. "You can't go wrong with meeting dozens of new turf managers, and there's no better way to do that than volunteering at an event."

Bethpage's Andrew Wilson couldn't agree more. "The networking opportunity for young professionals volunteering at an event is exceptional," he says. "To spend a week getting to know supers, assistants, vendors, and university faculty is a great opportunity to learn from the best and create contacts from across the country."

Many of these contacts develop into lasting friendships—or at least a familiar face at industry events. "I run into people at GIS

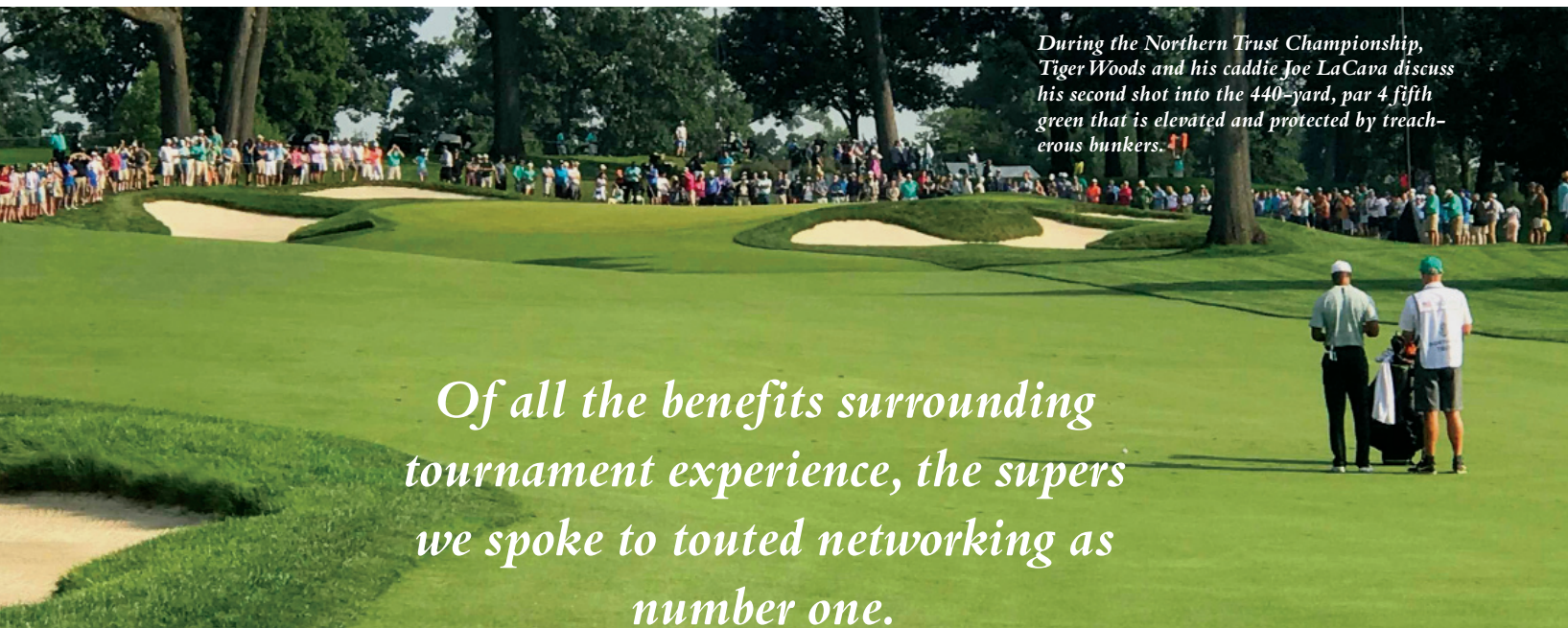
who I met years ago as a tournament volunteer, and it's always great to catch up," says Andrew.

"But more important," he adds, "you never know when one of those contacts may prove useful in a job search one day. It is, after all, often who you know, not what you know that matters when you're looking to climb the career ladder."

When all is said and done, there is no doubt, volunteering is a win-win. The host superintendents benefit from the much-needed help, and the volunteers prosper from the incomparable opportunities to expand their skills, their network, and their confidence as competent turf professionals.

If you have any interest in volunteering at a tournament next year, reach out to the host superintendents and inquire if they need any volunteers for their upcoming tournament. You can find a list of PGA or USGA tournaments on their websites. There's little doubt they'd love the help.

Andrew Baxter is an assistant superintendent at Fairview Country Club in Greenwich, CT.



During the Northern Trust Championship, Tiger Woods and his caddy Joe LaCava discuss his second shot into the 440-yard, par 4 fifth green that is elevated and protected by treacherous bunkers.

Of all the benefits surrounding tournament experience, the supers we spoke to touted networking as number one.

A Day in the Life of a Tournament Volunteer

by Andrew Baxter



A volunteer team at the Ridgewood tournament event after mowing the 18th green for the last time under the lights. From left to right: Jeff Reggio from Baltisrol, Leo Barber from Paraparaumu Beach Club in Australia, and Andrew Baxter from Fairview Country Club,

The day began at 4 a.m.; I was one of more than 70 volunteers from all over the world who gathered at the site of the 2018 Northern Trust Championship at Ridgewood Country Club. We started by checking in for the morning shift. I was directed to a locker, which became mine for the duration of the tournament. There, I found a uniform and tournament gear that I was expected to put on and wear throughout the week. Once suited up and ready for action, the other volunteers and I awaited for our morning assignments. Joining us were the 35-plus regular grounds staff members. We all were eager to help prepare for this world-class event, which was the first stage of the FedEx Cup Playoffs.

I was fortunate to be selected to work on the golf course for not only the week leading up to the championship, but also throughout the tournament as well. Like many other volunteers, I was assigned to work both the morning and evening shifts.

Between shifts, volunteers had the option of going back to the hotel to get some rest or hanging around the employee lounge, where they could play ping-pong and other games or just catch up with old friends. Aside from offering many of the comforts of home, this assignment afforded me free entry into the

tournament, which I attended during my break between shifts. After a short rest at the hotel, I would head back to the course in time to watch some of the later groups come through. Many days I would catch Dustin Johnson or Tiger Woods for a few holes before starting my evening shift.

It was pretty exciting to have this opportunity to get an up-close-and-personal view of some of the best golfers in the world—there were 125 of them—as they set out to advance to the next stage of the FedEx Cup Playoffs and, ultimately, win the Northern Trust Championship. It was also exciting to be near the 18th green watching Bryson DeChambeau outplay everyone in this leg of the tournament, his first of back-to-back victories during the FedEx Cup Playoffs.

The Assignment

While some volunteers were dispersed around the course and charged with raking bunkers and mowing tees and fairways, my morning assignment was to mow greens. My evening job consisted of mowing fairways with six other volunteers. Both assignments required a steady hand and laser focus, but then any of the prep work being done for the week required an eye for perfection.

The PGA, I quickly learned, is very particular about how a course is maintained, as well as how it's set up for the week of the tournament. Even the way the bunkers are raked is scrutinized. Fairway bunkers must be raked parallel to the fairway, while greenside bunkers are raked facing the green.

Just like all other aspects of maintenance, everything I did had to be checked and rechecked in order to ensure playing conditions were beyond perfect. This was the type of perfection that very few could detect; nonetheless, it was a top requirement of the job. There were actually people assigned to “quality control,” and their job was to follow behind the volunteers to make sure every task—from divot repair and bunker raking to green, tee, and fairway mowing—was completed to perfection.

The Payoff

In the end, the tournament prep went off without a hitch. Thanks to the help and guidance of the regular Ridgewood employees, all 70 of us were able to grasp the lay of land and our assigned roles. Sure it took hard work and long hours, but with the tremendous team effort put forth, Ridgewood was more than ready, by the week's end, for the 2018 Northern Trust Championship.

For me, volunteering at this event was well worth the time and effort. It gave me the opportunity to experience, firsthand, the enormous amount of planning and effort that goes into hosting a major golf tournament. And in the process, I picked up a few new maintenance techniques and cultural practices that I was able to bring back to our operation at Fairview. But just as valuable was having the opportunity to work alongside a variety of people, who bring with them a variety of experiences and perspectives on golf course management.

I met assistants, superintendents, and sales reps from across the U.S. and from Australia and the U.K. Working together so intensively toward a common goal created a bond that I feel enabled me to form more than a few lasting connections.

Though challenging, I can't emphasize enough how fulfilling an experience volunteering at a tournament can be. And there is no doubt in my mind that this experience will aid me in my journey toward securing a head superintendent's position one day.

There always seem to be opportunities in our area to volunteer. I urge anyone and everyone to pursue the opportunity to volunteer for at least one major event. I guarantee, you won't regret it.

Andrew Baxter is an assistant superintendent at Fairview Country Club in Greenwich, CT.

Winning Results of the 'Six' & Dine at Rock Ridge Country Club

by Jim Pavonetti, CGCS

The fall Nine & Dine was moved forward one week, from September 25 to October 2, with the hope of dodging the forecasted rains and flooding. Given the year we've all had, it was no surprise, then, that our rescheduled event had to be cut short—from a Nine & Dine to a Six & Dine—due to, you guessed it, flooding rains that hit during play. Adding to the excitement, Weather Channel alerts forecasted a potential tornado touchdown. Fortunately, Rock Ridge was spared!

Even with the rain-shortened event, everyone had a blast. Met board member and Tournament Co-Chair Steve Loughran had Rock Ridge in wonderful shape. The greens were firm and rolled like glass,

despite the uncooperative weather leading up to the event.

Doubling the pleasure of the day was the clubhouse staff, who couldn't have been more hospitable. The food was great and the camaraderie fostered by the event was much needed as Met supers and assistants shared their war stories from this unforgettable season.

The Top Scorers

Winged Foot Assistant Superintendents Kelly Barrell, Kevin Crill, Ethan Spatol, and Matt Sherlock claimed top prize for their admirable 3 under par score.

Placing second in a match of cards, with a score of 2 under par, was the team of Greg Gutter of The Care of Trees, retired Class A member Bill Perlee, Ken Benoit of Glen Arbor, and Bob Nielsen of Bedford Golf & Tennis.

Closest to the Pin prizes were awarded to Greg Rotter, assistant superintendent at Redding Country Club, and Greg Moran of Valley Green, Inc.

And Longest Drive went to Tuxedo Club Superintendent Casey Klossner.

Congratulations to one and all! And many thanks to the entire staff at Rock Ridge with an extra-special thank you to Head Golf Professional Brian Hussey, who did a nice job with the scoring and prizes.

Jim Pavonetti, chairman of the Tee to Green Editorial Committee, is superintendent at Fairview Country Club in Greenwich, CT.



Old Oaks Shines for a Day of Golf and Giving

by Jesse Shannon, CGCS

Despite a long wet season and the sky threatening another rainy day, Old Oaks shined for the October 9 Poa Annual fundraiser, Met Championship, and Met Team Qualifier.

Host Superintendent Jason Anderson and his staff clearly went all-out to have the course in great condition. Playing this terrific venue, while experiencing the fine renovation work completed over the past two years, made it an extra-special day on the links.

This year's event was played as a Two-Man Best Ball that doubled as both a qualifier for the Met Team Championship and a round to determine the individual 2018 MetGCSA Champions.

Here are the highlights of the day's three events....

The Poa Annual

More than 64 golfers played in the Poa Annual fundraising tournament, and 38 tee signs were sold. As a result, \$1,280 was raised to help support the New York State Turfgrass Foundation. We thank you all for your generosity. Here's a look at the winning results:



Low Gross

Tom Ashfield, *Quaker Ridge GC*
Tom Weinert, *Plant Food Co.*

Low Net

1st Steve Wickstrom, *Burning Tree CC*
Steve McGlone, *Siwanoy CC*
2nd Josh Haugh, *Willow Ridge CC*
Matt Neus, *Knollwood CC*

Closest to the Pin

#3 Tom Ashfield, *Quaker Ridge GC*
#7 Greg Moran, *Valley Green*

Longest Drive

#18 Steve Loughran, *Rock Ridge CC*

Met Area Team Qualifier Results

Contestants competed for a position on the team representing the Met in the Met Area Team Championship. The qualifiers are:

Gross

Steve Loughran, *Rock Ridge CC*, Tom Ashfield, *Quaker Ridge GC*, Sean Cain, *Sunningdale CC*, Stephen Rabideau, *Winged Foot GC*

Net

Dave Conrad, *Plant Food Co.*, Steve McGlone, *Siwanoy CC*, Blake Halderman, *Brae Burn CC*, Josh Haugh, *Willow Ridge CC*

Met Championship Outcome

It's at this event every year that the MetGCSA crowns the winner of our Met Championship. This year's battle for the title ended with Siwanoy's Steven McGlone claiming the MetGCSA Net Championship, while Rock Ridge's Steve Loughran took the Gross Division for his third time in the past four years.

Congratulations to the contestants who claimed the top wins. And special thanks to the entire Old Oaks staff for their part in making our day of golf and giving memorable.

Jesse Shannon, co-chair of the Tournament Committee, is superintendent at Manhattan Woods Golf Club in West Nyack, NY.



2018 Scholarship Recipients Recognized

by Ken Benoit, CGCS

The 2018 Scholarship Awards Ceremony was held on August 7 as part of the sixth Annual Scholarship & Parent/Child Tournament at Mosholu Golf Course, one of America's premier First Tee golf courses located in Bronx, NY.

Dave Moffett, who is in his seventh season as Mosholu's superintendent, had the course in great shape. The nine-hole, 2,300-yard par-32 course proved, once again, to be the perfect setting for kids and adults of all golfing abilities.

Thirty-five participants (parent/child teams) played in a nine-hole shotgun, two-man scramble, which was free to members and, by all accounts, a great success. The winners in this year's tournament were Peter and Michael Grace of H. Smith Richardson Golf Course. The two generously donated their winnings back to the Met Scholarship Fund! After golf, the golfers and guests enjoyed an outdoor dinner while scholarship winners were presented with their awards in an informal ceremony.

The Scholarship Award Winners

In addition to maintaining stellar GPAs, these students are all very involved in their communities and in numerous extracurricular activities. I am truly awed and inspired by the depth of talent possessed by the children who applied for a MetGCSA scholarship this year. The Scholarship Committee and board are very pleased to recognize these deserving applicants with scholarship awards.

Please join me in congratulating this year's scholarship recipients—and their proud parents:

Chris Bresnahan, son of Tami and John Bresnahan of Syngenta, is attending the University of Vermont and pursuing a degree in Environmental Science.

Julia Cook, daughter of Lisa and Mike Cook of The Care of Trees, is attending University of Scranton and pursuing a bachelor of arts.

Lexus Marie Disbrow, daughter of Paula and Tom Weinert of Plant Food Company, is attending Lehigh Carbon Community College where she is majoring in Social Work.



At the Mosholu Parent/Child Tournament, 8 of the 16 MetGCSA scholarship winners received their well-deserved awards. From left to right: Bill Jones and his daughters, Amanda and Trish; Matt Severino with his son, Matt Jr.; Frank and Diane Muggeo with their daughter, Isabella; Peter Grace and his son, Michael; Jim Weiland and Shannon Mulligan with their son, Nicholas; Jon Jennings and his son, Ted.

Payton Dorsch, daughter of Misty and Rob Dorsch of Richter Park Golf Course, is attending University of Delaware and pursuing a degree in Social Work.

Skylar Dorsch, daughter of Misty and Rob Dorsch of Richter Park, is attending Arizona State University and pursuing a degree in Communications.

Margaret Drohen, daughter of Donalee and Andy Drohen of Koch Agronomic Services, is attending University of Massachusetts and studying Biology.

Nicholas Girardi, son of Christine and Tony Girardi of Rockrimmon Country Club, is attending University of Wisconsin and studying Biochemistry.

Michael Grace, son of Peter Grace of H. Smith Richardson Golf Course, is attending Merrimack College and pursuing a double major in Business Management and Sports Management.

Ted Jennings, son of Susan and Jon Jennings of Shinnecock Hills Golf Club, is attending University of Minnesota Twin Cities and pursuing a Biomedical Engineering degree.

Amanda Jones, daughter of Patricia and Bill Jones of Friar's Head, is attending Long Island University and studying Theatre.

Isabella Muggeo, daughter of Diane and Frank Muggeo of Palisades Fuel, is attending Fordham University and pursuing a degree in Business.

Mike Muggeo, son of Diane and Frank Muggeo of Palisades Fuel, is attending Saint Joseph's University and pursuing a degree in Sports Marketing.

Matthew Severino, son of Kristin and Matt Severino of Scarsdale Golf Club, is attending the University of Connecticut and majoring in Civil Engineering for Manufacturing.

Mary Sylvester, daughter of Julie and Dave Sylvester of Bayer U.S., is attending University of West Florida and pursuing a Doctor of Education in Curriculum and Instruction/Curriculum and Assessment.

Nicholas Weiland, son of Shannon Mulligan and Jim Weiland of Connecticut Golf Club, is attending Worcester Polytechnic Institute and pursuing a degree in Biomedical Engineering.

Zachary Weiland, son of Shannon Mulligan and Jim Weiland of Connecticut Golf Club, is attending Worcester Polytechnic Institute and pursuing a degree in Chemical Engineering with an environmental concentration.

In addition to congratulating our 16 scholarship recipients, I'd like to recognize those past boards who had the foresight to initiate our Scholarship Fund, which has enabled us to assist in the ever-increasing college costs thanks to our annual Bill Caputi Scholarship Raffle, the 50/50s at our monthly meetings, and last but not least, a portion of our dues. Finally, a special thank you needs to go out to the entire Scholarship Committee for their hard work in reviewing and awarding each scholarship.

Please remember to support our scholarship raffle. It is the major income-generator for our Scholarship Fund!

Ken Benoit, chairman of the Scholarship Committee, is superintendent at Glen Arbor Golf Club in Bedford Hills, NY.

Turning a Difficult Season Into a Catalyst for Change

by John Garcia

Editor's Note:

Below is a well-rounded account of the season's weather extremes and their effects on both golf courses and the superintendents who manage them. Though the article is intended to reach golfers, green committees, and club officials, it does offer talking points that you, the superintendent, might use to great effect in presenting your view of the challenges you faced, as well as the deficiencies and course needs that became all the more apparent this past season.

We hope you will use this information as a starting point for discussions with your board and in your budget meetings. There is no time like the present to lobby for the funding you need to build growing conditions that can withstand any future extremes in weather. If you should need further assistance with your club communications, our Club Relations chair David Dudones, along with MetGCSA Executive Director Mike McCall, will be happy to assist you.

The summer of 2018 has gone down as an unwelcomed “perfect storm” for our area’s turfgrass managers. After a cool start to the spring, we have seen records set for heat, dew points, and rainfall . . . a lethal combination for cool-season grasses that are subject to both intensive management and high traffic. Under these prolonged conditions, cool-season grasses simply can’t thrive despite superintendents’ all-out efforts to implement best management practices to maintain turfgrass performance. The photosynthesis and respiration required for plant survival are thwarted, and the weakened turf falls prey to fungal diseases, algae, weeds, and insect damage. Simply put, these weather patterns magnify every little problem that may exist on your property.

Throughout the summer, as I spoke with golfers, club officials, and other industry professionals, I had a pretty simple message: If your golf course is struggling during weather patterns like this, it’s likely that the club’s infrastructure is to blame, *NOT* the golf course superintendent! No one cares more about the golf course than the superintendent, who routinely puts in 60-plus hours a week, sacrificing family time, sleep, and their own wellbeing to ensure pristine conditions for golfers’ recreational enjoyment. You can imagine, then, how frustrating it is when weather conditions foil their best efforts and intentions.

In times like these, clubs should focus less on finger pointing and looking for a “fall guy,” and more on working with the superintendent to develop solutions to any deficiencies in growing conditions and maintenance programs that invariably become apparent during difficult weather periods. With the support and understanding of golfers and club officials, superintendents will be better able to develop strategies that encourage the quick recovery and long-term success of the golf course.

The Keys to Survival

This past season, there was no “silver bullet” to cure the turf ills that the extreme weather created. I visited at least 20 to 25 courses and spoke with an additional 20 to 25 turfgrass

professionals on the phone each week. The courses that performed reasonably well this season were lucky enough to have a solid infrastructure in place. What follows are some of the keys to surviving even the most difficult weather patterns—and coming out at least partially, if not wholly, unscathed.

1. Good Drainage. If you have poor surface and/or subsurface drainage, your grass will perish when there is persistent heat and moisture. Water replaces air in both the soil and any thatch and then suffocates the turf plant. Wet wilt, disease, algae, and the pressure to mow/roll when wet all contribute to turf’s slow and painful death. To prevent future turf loss, it might be time to consider installing drainage and implementing sound core aeration and topdressing programs.

2. Minimal Thatch. Thatch holds water near the surface and becomes a breeding ground for fungal diseases. It causes puffy surfaces that are prone to wear and scalping, and it contributes to slower green speeds. The fall is a great time for physical soil analysis like ISTRC. This process will help you make decisions that can improve your cultivation and topdressing programs, while minimizing disruption to the golf schedule.

3. Modern Irrigation System. Being able to put the water *where* it is needed, *when* it is needed is critical, particularly during hot, dry weather cycles. This gives the turf manager the control to cool surfaces and supply water to the root zone when needed. In addition, it allows managers to water in plant protectant applications, which can be critical depending on the target pest and product being used. Smaller heads with more control are always better than large “cannons.”

4. Fewer Trees. Trees rob nutrients, block sunlight, and reduce airflow to the turf. Tree removal is rarely popular among members, but even small, incremental removals will show significant improvement in areas compromised by tree cover. What’s more, small successes can provide the momentum needed to implement larger scale tree removal efforts that will, ultimately, benefit the turf.

5. Experienced Staff. Catching disease, insect, and moisture issues sooner rather than later is particularly important in extreme

weather. The best-conditioned clubs have multiple staff members with college degrees in Turfgrass Management.

Unfortunately, there is an ever-shrinking pool of qualified professionals, and with the often-inadequate compensation and benefits packages, as well as work environments, it becomes doubly difficult to attract and retain the best staff. Clubs must consider allocating the funds needed to attract topnotch staff, if they expect top-notch conditions.

6. Strong Support Network. A solid and supportive relationship between superintendents and the club's leadership is crucial—all the more crucial when extreme weather challenges course conditions. With the encouragement and support of the club's key people, superintendents are able to focus their efforts on developing strategies for managing troubled turf conditions, rather than wasting time and energy on defending their action plans. Become an advocate of your superintendent and an influencer in making positive change for your property.

7. Flexible Budget. Being willing and able to reallocate funds and quickly approve additional expenses is vital when we are hit with weather extremes and failing turf conditions that require added resources. Losing revenue due to weather and then having to allocate more funds to what seems a losing proposition is painful, but attacking an issue when it's small is far better than waiting until it becomes a larger, more costly problem to remedy.

Lessons Learned

- Use this difficult season to identify any shortcomings in the infrastructure of your golf course. Then establish priorities, create a viable plan, and allocate the funds needed to remedy short-term issues, as well as establish long-term goals that will ensure the course's future success.
- Look to your superintendent for counsel. An experienced golf course superintendent, who knows your property well, is the person most qualified to evaluate the causes of any problems and then develop the strategies needed to return your conditions to the expected level.
- Carve out time to thank your club's golf course management staff for their exhaustive efforts throughout this past season.

In the end, the clubs and superintendents who emerge from this difficult season with the greatest success will have taken this opportunity to identify deficiencies in their infrastructure and then map out a plan for smooth sailing in the years ahead.

John Garcia is a turfgrass consultant and an owner of Atlantic Golf and Turf.

Upcoming Events

Not-to-Be-Missed Educational Events Around the Region

2018 GREEN EXPO Conference and Trade Show

Tuesday – Thursday, December 4 – 6
The Borgata Hotel, Atlantic City, NJ

The New Jersey Green Expo offers a comprehensive educational program providing cutting-edge applications and tactics to guarantee green industry professionals' success on the job.

For further information, call 973-812-6467 or visit www.njturfgrass.org.

2019 NYSTA Regional Conferences

Plan to attend one or more of NYSTA's special educational conferences in various New York locations. Each conference offers a variety of educational sessions with leading turfgrass educators and industry professionals. In addition, you'll have the opportunity to visit exhibitor booths offering the latest and greatest products and services in the industry. For further information, visit www.nysta.org or contact the NYSTA office at 518-783-1229.

Long Island Regional Conference

Thursday, December 6
Radisson Hotel Hauppauge-Long Island
Hauppauge, NY

Central Regional Conference

Tuesday – Wednesday, January 15 – 16, 2018
Turning Stone Resort Casino, Verona, NY

Southeast Regional Conference

Tuesday – Wednesday, January 29 – 30, 2018
Resorts World Catskills, Monticello, NY

MetGCSA Winter Seminar

Wednesday, January 16, 2019
Westchester Country Club, Rye, NY
Host: David Dudones

GCSAA Golf Industry Show & Education Conference

Saturday – Thursday, February 2 – 7, 2019
San Diego Conference Center
San Diego, CA

Don't miss this year's GCSAA Golf Industry Show and Education Conference with an incomparable lineup of seminars and educational sessions, as well as one of the industry's most comprehensive trade shows.

For details on the conference's educational offerings and trade show, visit www.golfindustryshow.com.

2019 Turfgrass Advocacy Day – NYSTA'S Lobby Day

Wednesday, February 13
Empire State Plaza
Albany, NY

NYSTA welcomes all green industry professionals to attend this event. The Turfgrass Advocacy Day offers the opportunity to attend a priority issue briefing session on current legislation that could affect the turfgrass and green industry, as well as a chance to meet with your local elected officials and later discuss issues over lunch with a government official.

For further information, contact the NYSTA office at 518-783-1229 or visit www.nysta.org.

MetGCSA's Annual Holiday Gathering

WHEN? Friday, December 14, 3-6 p.m.

WHERE? Bull and Barrel Brew Pub, Brewster, NY

Come one, come all to our annual Holiday celebration. Employees, friends, and family are welcome to join the festivities and cocktail party atmosphere that will include great food, an open bar, and, this year, a Ride-the-Mechanical-Bull Contest for assistant superintendents. A \$250 cash prize will be awarded to the assistant who can hang on to that bucking mechanical beast the longest!

Be sure to put December 14 on your calendars, and ring in the holiday season with fellow Met members, old and new.

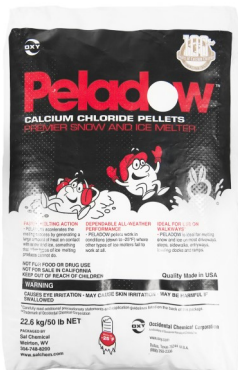




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