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# Tee To Green

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# Tee to Green



Cover: Scarsdale Golf Club.

## In this Issue

### Feature

Improve Your Practice Facility . . . and They Will Come.....2

### Departments

Upcoming Events .....7

Regional News .....8

Chapter News .....10

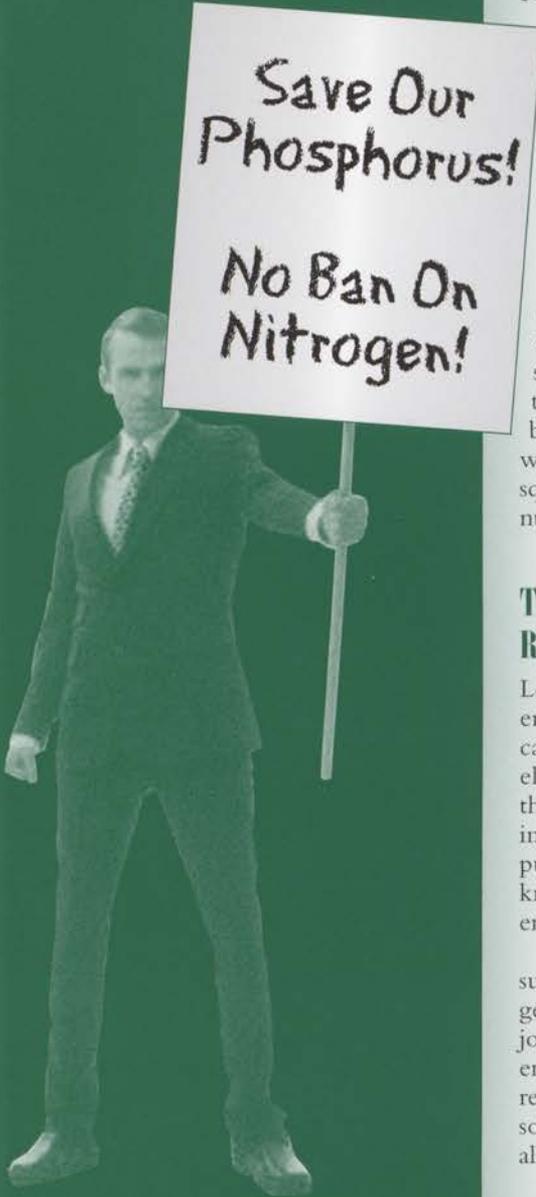
Member News.....11

Spotlight.....12

Note: Last issue's cover shot was compliments of Larry Lambrecht, golf course photographer.

# President's Message

## Environmental Issues . . . and More



Save Our  
Phosphorus!  
No Ban On  
Nitrogen!

# L

ast month, I said I wanted to use my messages to keep you informed of what's been happening in our area. True to my word, here's a rundown on recent industry and association issues and events that concern us all.

### Troublesome Legislation Squashed

We've had a few things brewing on the environmental front these past couple of months that you all should be aware of. First, in Westchester, we were called to battle to oppose legislation that proposed a ban on all fertilizers containing phosphorus. Without going into a lot of detail, rest assured that we rallied troops sufficient enough to shoot the bill down . . . for now. We owe a big thanks to those who took the time to join the protest.

No sooner had we celebrated that victory than another piece of legislation came through—this time in Suffolk County, Long Island—proposing a ban on nitrogen. The dust hasn't settled yet, but it seems this attempt has also been thwarted—at least for the time being. In both battles, area landscape associations were right there beside us, helping to squash these bills. There clearly is power in numbers.

### The Environment: A Force to Be Reckoned With

Let's face it, there's no getting away from environmental issues. It's up to us to educate the public about the environment to eliminate unnecessary concerns that can thwart our ability to do our jobs. But just as important is that we demonstrate to the public that we respect—and have the knowledge and ability to enhance—our environment.

Our association recently sent out two surveys. One, which focused on gathering general information about how we do our jobs, asked us to rank our feelings about the environment. Interestingly, close to half the respondents said the environment was only somewhat important or not important at all. It's my feeling that none of us can afford

to be indifferent about our environment. Perhaps, the Mike Maffei's and Will Heintz's of our association have been doing too good a job fighting our battles.

I urge you not to wait until the battle is being waged on your course. There are programs out there to guide you in becoming environmentally astute. Audubon International, as many of you know, has its golf course certification program, which specifies criteria for certification and becoming a true steward of the environment. My club, Rockland Country Club, has been certified for the past six years. I'm a true advocate of the program. I know, many superintendents complain that adhering to the criteria takes too much time. And I would argue that anything worthwhile takes time and effort. But the Audubon, hearing this concern, devised a program that is virtually trouble-free. Called the Green Golfer Challenge, all it requires is that your golfers pledge their support of the environment while playing golf. That might mean doing such things as replacing divots, fixing ball marks, walking when they can, and endorsing any environmental efforts you already have in place, such as native areas and birdhouses.

I urge you to check out the Audubon website at [www.auduboninternational.com](http://www.auduboninternational.com). According to our survey, the Met has 24 members who subscribe to the Audubon program. Let's bring that number up!

### Kudos to Greg Nicoll

Here's another bit of environmental news—and it's good news for a change. Met member Greg Nicoll, director of grounds at Trump National in Bedminster, NJ, has won the first annual MGA Club Environmental Award (see page 11). Greg, and all the others who submitted applications, are to be

*continued on page 5*

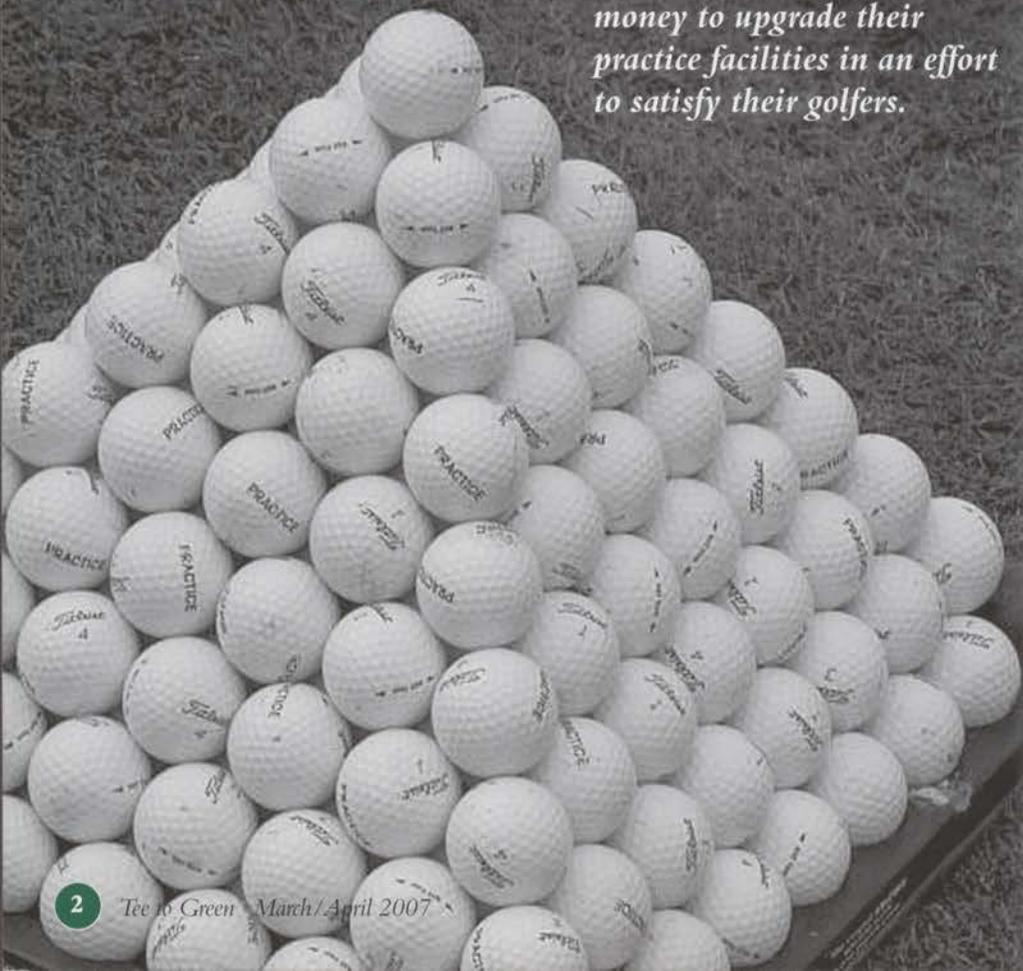


Matt Ceplo, CGCS  
MetGCSA President

## Improve Your Practice Facility . . . and They Will Come

by David A. Oatis

*The popularity of practice is at an all-time high. Consequently, courses are spending large sums of money to upgrade their practice facilities in an effort to satisfy their golfers.*



In the not-too-distant past, practice facilities were little more than an afterthought. They certainly weren't an area that clubs were intent on improving. Driving range tees were small and rarely level. Irrigation systems were rudimentary. Target greens, if present, were little more than roughly shaped mounds with a flag stuck in the top. And practice bunkers? If they existed, they were crude and rarely well maintained. Practice greens, too, were often small and maintained at greater heights of cut, playing very differently from the other greens on the course.

But times have changed. Increasingly, golf courses are focusing their attention—and their resources—on improving their practice facilities. The result is not surprising: As practice facilities improve, more golfers come out to use them.

Thinking about upgrading the practice facility on your course? Here's what you should know before getting started—and what you should do once your project's underway.

### **First and Foremost: Watch the Hidden Costs**

Having the funds to build a better practice facility is one thing; having the money to operate it is another. Two of the most common, yet overlooked, money drains: labor and equipment.

#### **Labor**

Maintaining a practice facility is a cooperative effort that may require additional staffing in both the maintenance department and the pro shop.

Carefully consider your facility's needs. For instance, many golfers want to play early in the morning and would often like to practice before they play. Without adequate staffing, most golf course superintendents would opt to prepare the course for play first and worry about the practice facility later. Clearly, that's a problem that can be solved by adding enough staff to prepare the practice area and the golf course at the same time.

But then there are the golfers who would

like the practice facility open and prepped for play in the evening, when they get home from work. Not unreasonable, but it does require that someone be available after closing to retrieve the balls so the maintenance staff can do their work early the following morning. Again, this is a staffing issue that may, this time, involve the pro shop staff as well. The net-net: To maintain a first-rate practice facility, adequate staffing is critical.

#### **Equipment and Supply Needs**

It's essential that you evaluate your equipment and supply inventory to ensure that they meet the demands of your practice facility. Obviously, you'll want to make sure you have enough mowers, but also consider whether you have adequate equipment for transportation, topdressing, aerating, fertilizing, and divot sweeping.

Be sure, also, to carefully calculate the supplies you'll need—fertilizer, seed, topdressing—to maintain your particular practice facility.

If your practice area is large and busy enough, it might be worth having a small storage building near the practice area to improve efficiency. The same building may also be able to house golf ball retrieval and washing equipment.

**NOTEWORTHY:** *Having additional people won't help much if you don't have the necessary equipment and supplies.*

### **Building a Better Driving Range Tee**

There's much more to building and maintaining a desirable range tee than meets the eye. Here are some of the top considerations.

#### **Size**

The best advice when considering upgrading an existing—or building a new—driving range tee is to THINK BIG, and build the tee as large as humanly possible. More turf means better turf, greater use, and possibly, a less frenetic maintenance schedule.

How big is big enough? Based on my experience consulting with hundreds of courses over the past 19 years, the typical private course needs at least one acre—and preferably two—of usable teeing area. If you have plenty of space, build the tee even larger!

If your range tees are confined to an acre or less, chances are you'll suffer wear problems that will require an aggressive turf management program. To maintain turf cover, think about limiting range use or relying heavily on artificial turf.

**NOTEWORTHY:** *Even large tees require plenty of divot filling. This can be expensive—both in terms of labor and supplies—so be sure to factor this in to your budget.*

#### **Design**

All too often, designers place a higher priority on tee elevation than on tee size. Unquestionably, size should be the most important consideration, and as I've said ... bigger is better!

Since all mounds taper inward as the elevation increases, reducing the elevation can create more usable area, and fill generated by the cut often can be used to expand the tee even further. A significant change in elevation usually is required to affect the view of the target from the tee, and there is a simple way to test this. With your eyes on the target, squat down in the center of tee;

then stand up and climb up a couple of rungs on a step ladder. Usually the view does not change very much, and the area to be gained by dropping the elevation of the tee can be significant.

Another common design mistake: creating multi-level tees when it's not necessary for maintaining visibility. Multi-level tees can waste 20 to 35 percent or more of the potentially usable area, so if square footage is in short supply, build a large single-level tee. It may not be as visually interesting, but the area you gain is well worth the sacrifice.

It should be noted, however, that there are times when it's actually necessary to build a multi-level tee—in situations, for instance, where the tee is significantly higher than the landing zone. In these cases, a golfer's view may be obscured when hitting from the rear portion of the tee.

To avoid this problem, consider limiting the number of levels in order to limit the amount of unusable area. Also think about lowering the height of the tee. Keep in mind that pitching the tee 1 percent from back to front, rather than the traditional grade of 1 percent from front to back, will help with visibility in these situations. These steps may eliminate the need for multiple levels—or at least reduce the number of levels required.

#### **Turf Species**

There often is a strong desire to turf the range tee with the same species used on fairways. In the Northeast, this often means creeping bentgrass. Unfortunately, creeping bentgrass just does not handle wear nor reestablish quickly enough to be a practical choice for anything other than the very largest driving range tees.

Unless your range is well over an acre in



*It may be a desire to lower their scores, or it may be that, in a busy world, golfers can find an hour or two to practice more easily than the four to five it takes to play 18 holes. Whatever the reason, more golfers are using practice facilities than ever before.*

size, Kentucky bluegrass may be a better choice for initial establishment. For divot filling, it's hard to beat perennial ryegrass, which not only mixes well with Kentucky blue, but is also wear tolerant and quick to establish. In recent years, an increasing number of courses in the Northeast Region have followed this protocol, sodding their driving range tees with Kentucky bluegrass and filling their divots with perennial ryegrass. They've had good success.

Here are some of the many benefits of establishing Kentucky bluegrass—over other turf species—as the prime turf on your range tees:

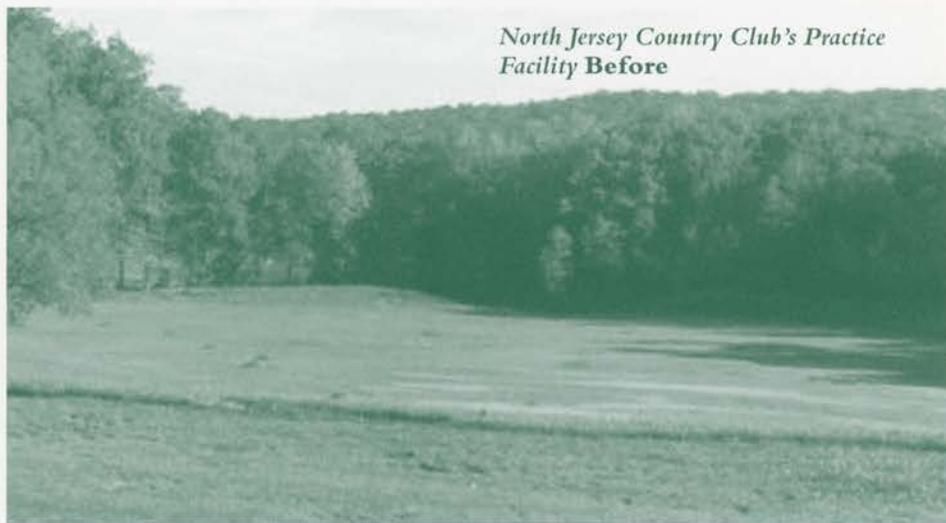
- Kentucky bluegrass can withstand lower cutting heights (1/2" to 9/16") if lightweight mowing equipment is used.
- Kentucky bluegrass is substantially more wear tolerant than creeping bentgrass, and unlike perennial ryegrass, it forms thatch that provides resiliency.
- Unlike perennial ryegrass, Kentucky bluegrass has moderate lateral growth. If divots are spread out, it can fill in all on its own, recovering much more quickly than ryegrass turf would alone.
- Kentucky bluegrass forms a tough turf, resulting in much smaller divots than in creeping bentgrass.

#### NOTEWORTHY:

- *Be aware that it is usually impractical to seed new tees and always impractical to fill divots with Kentucky bluegrass because it is slow to germinate and not competitive as a seedling. If you want to have Kentucky bluegrass tees, the only way to do it quickly is to start with sod.*
- *You can't expect your Kentucky blue tees to last forever. Courses using Kentucky bluegrass on smaller tees often find that the majority of the bluegrass has been divoted out after a season or two, and the remaining stand of annual bluegrass and perennial rye is thin and lacks resiliency. This is the time to reestablish your tees with Kentucky bluegrass sod. Courses with two tees may even resod one tee each year on a rotating basis.*

#### Materials

Though plenty of courses have built driving range tees out of their native soil, the truth is



North Jersey Country Club's Practice Facility Before

few native soils are well suited to the task. It's better to allocate the extra funds needed to select a quality root zone mix, as well as a compatible divot mix, and even a specialized irrigation system.

Here are a few points to keep in mind when selecting your construction materials:

- When it comes to your root zone mix, go for stability. There will be plenty of traffic and shifting and twisting of feet. Turf grown on unstable mixes may wind up sustaining more turf injury from twisting feet than from divots.
- The root zone mix must be capable of supporting healthy turf, and more important, regenerating turf once it's been divoted out. Steer clear of droughty root zone mixes. Some of the poorest-performing tees in the Northeast are created when a clean (sometimes shifty), rapid-draining mix is used in construction.
- When selecting a divot mix, be sure that it's compatible with your root zone mix. You would not want to use a divot mix, for instance, that holds significantly more moisture than the underlying construction mix. The reason: If the construction mix drains substantially better than the mix used for divots, you're likely to have layering and poor drainage.
- Another note on divot mixes: They must hold enough moisture and nutrients to stim-

ulate rapid germination and reestablishment of turf. This is another good reason to avoid droughty root zone mixes in favor of mixes that have some moisture and nutrient retention. Keep in mind, it's never too early in the process to consider the compatibility of construction materials and divot mixes.

- A specialized irrigation system, designed with more and smaller sprinklers, can be a great advantage. The idea is to be able to irrigate as small an area as possible, preferably watering some areas while golfers are using others.

Several courses have recently had good luck with some of the newer, low-angle stream rotor sprinklers, while some of the multi-head systems with the small popup spray heads have proved very labor intensive.

The net-net: Be sure to thoroughly research systems and sprinklers before making your final choice.

#### Divot Management Strategy

Contrary to popular belief—and early training—concentrating divots as close together as possible is not the way to go. Why? Because it results in more damage and a much longer recovery period.

For species with spreading ability, at least 50 percent or more of divot recovery comes from the lateral growth of the remaining turf; the rest comes from seed.

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*North Jersey Country Club's Practice Facility After*



Placing divots close together virtually eliminates the turf's ability to make a comeback through lateral regrowth, leaving no other alternative but to seed. As we all know, turf recovery through seeding is a much lengthier—and less desirable—process.

In short, when larger areas of turf are removed, the end result is thin, weak turf with reduced resiliency and increased recovery time. Worse, the turf will remain weaker and more susceptible to wear injury for months.

Best advice: Spread the divots out and move the markers more frequently; this will enable play to return to the affected areas much sooner.

#### **Traffic Flow**

Traffic flow has a major impact on wear—both on the tee and out on the range. A few words to the wise:

- Be sure to direct traffic flow on and off the range tee by keeping the entry/exit areas as wide open and unobstructed as possible.
- Ball retrieval equipment is a prime, yet often overlooked, offender out on the range. It can cause a tremendous amount of turf damage when used too often, at too high a speed, and when making too many turns.

A simple remedy: Buy more range balls, and pick them up less often. This is particularly important for new ranges where the turf is not fully mature.

- Consider varying traffic flow for the transport of golf balls from the retrieval equipment to the tee.

### **Short Game Practice Area Do's and Don'ts**

Golfers truly interested in shaving strokes know that the short game practice area is the place to do it. It's no surprise, then, that these areas are growing in popularity.

If you're banking on building a short game practice area on your course, here's what you'll want to consider.

#### **Orientation**

Ideally, the green should be built and oriented to accommodate as many golfers at one time as possible. This generally means building a large green that can be played to from multiple locations. A large green, higher in the center, with three or four lobes, can work very well.

#### **Playing Characteristics**

The goal is to provide the same playing characteristics as the greens on the course. That means you'll want to:

- See that the turf composition on the practice green matches the turf on the course greens. Assuming yours is an older course, this likely means a mix of annual bluegrass and creeping bentgrass.
- Be sure the practice green is cut at approximately the same height and frequency as the other greens.

#### **Shot Variation**

- Some designs incorporate long shots, but this is rarely practical. A maximum length of 20 to 30 yards is usually more than sufficient, and restricting shot length usually allows more golfers to safely use the facility at the same time.
- Try to incorporate as many different shots in the design as possible. For instance, the design should allow for the bump and run and lob shots, as well as shots from level and unlevel lies in both fairway and rough. Short and long, shallow and deep bunker shots are also desirable, as are up and down hill shots.

#### **Other Considerations**

- As much as possible, arrange bunkers perpendicular to the direction of play so that more than one golfer can use a bunker at a time.
- Consider wind direction and sun angles when laying out the practice area. Few golfers will practice bunker shots if the predominant wind is in their face.

*President's Message continued from page 1*

congratulated for their environmental stewardship. Their efforts have proved that golf courses can be an important asset to our communities. A special thank you to the MGA and Gene Westmoreland for recognizing the important work we do.

### **About Our Surveys**

We sent out two surveys this year. The informational survey, which I've already referred to, and the budget survey. These surveys provide valuable information regarding our responsibilities, profession, and even the state of our industry.

The budget survey included responses from 63 of the 152 Class A and Class SM members we canvassed. The average annual budget is \$1,154,519—to be exact—with \$290,000 for capital expenses. Golf in this area is certainly in fine financial shape.

Another interesting piece of information is that the average superintendent has been employed at the same club for almost 11 years. Guess we're feeling comfortable where we are, and our members and guests appreciate what we do.

Thanks to all of you who participated in the surveys. These results will also be useful to our Club Relations Committee. When positions become available, the committee can inform clubs where they stand financially within the marketplace.

### **A Few Notes**

The next time you're online, be sure to check out our website's new look. Ken Benoit has assumed the role of the Met's webmaster and has added a few new touches to our already-great website.

Blake Halderman, Ken Benoit, and Glen Dube have been hard at work to bring us interesting golf and education events. This year, we'll try some new things and, at the same time, bring back some of the traditions that have made us a premier association. I am very excited to be working with such an enthusiastic board.

### **It's a Wrap**

Well, it's about time to wrap this up. Spring is in full swing. The seasonal staff is preparing the course for play. Projects need to be completed. The high school is wondering when greens will be mowed. Oh, and by the way, the green chairman wants to know why we're over our \$1,154,519 budget. Merry spring!!!!

**Matt Ceplo, CGCS**  
*President*

Designs for short game practice areas are just about infinite, but keeping these points in mind should point you toward developing an effective and practical design that will serve your golfers well . . . and keep them coming.

## Practice Facility Management Tips and Techniques

An aggressive fertility and divot-filling program is essential for the driving range tee and portions of the short game practice area.

### Divot-Filling Practices

Basically, divots should be filled as often as the budget will allow. To speed the process—and improve your chances of success—take the time to pregerminate the seed, particularly when you're using perennial ryegrass. Pregerminating the seed before filling divots actually speeds up recovery by a day or two, but more important is that it eliminates the need to overwater the turf when trying to encourage germination. And as you know, overwatered turf is less healthy, more prone to disease, and it's much more susceptible to wear injury.

Pregerminating the seed doesn't need to be complicated. In the case of perennial ryegrass, simply combine the seed with the soil mix two to three days before it's needed. Keep the mixture moist and aerated, and use it just as the seed begins to germinate.

### Managing Wear and Tear

Regular movement of the tee markers is vital, and developing a systematic, regimented means of shifting play is strongly recommended. Start by measuring the available area; then divide by the length of your season. This will give you an idea of how frequently wear must be shifted and whether artificial turf is needed.

Some superintendents use permanent markers as reference points to aid in shifting wear on a measured schedule. It is possible to improve turf quality on many driving range tees, and careful management of wear and aggressive cultural practices can often help.

## Final Note

For many, golf has become a game of practice. If you want to make points with many of your golfers, look into upgrading your practice facility. Well thought out plans can transform underutilized land into a popular new addition that will enhance your golfers' experience.

*David Oatis has been the director of the Northeast Region of the USGA Green Section since 1990.*

# Seven Area Supers Share Range Tee Maintenance Tactics

by Greg Wójcik, CGCS

**S**even area supers seem to think alike when it comes to their approach to range tee maintenance. What follows are some of their thoughts in common:

- Making it all the more challenging to properly maintain teeing surfaces at practice facilities are Range Plans, which offer members the use of an unlimited number of golf balls for an annual fee.
- Almost daily divot repair is required to come even close to keeping our tees in top shape.
- A durable artificial surface is essential if you don't have an adequate teeing area.
- Range tees sodded with lowcut Kentucky bluegrass and overseeded with perennial ryegrass offers a successful turf cover and overseeding method.
- Sodding range tees every five years or so is necessary to reclaim a dense tee turf cover.
- Mowing heights of about half an inch or slightly less works well on tees. Most of us mow the tees three times per week, with the most typical scenario being Monday, Wednesday, Friday.
- It helps significantly if you can schedule "artificial surface" times of the day, or even entire days, to give the turf sections of your tees time to recover. Reserving artificial surfaces for outings is another good plan.

### Stating the obvious . . .

- Duh!! Having more tee square footage makes it easier to keep turf on range tees.
- Sending more workers, more often, to "fuss" with range areas produces a better product.
- If you have the opportunity to syringe the newly seeded areas of your tees, you're more likely to have germination and seedling success.

### Here are some suggestions that, perhaps, you haven't thought of . . .

- If you haven't installed an artificial surface, consider it. Artificial surfaces are great both early and late in the season. They're useful during periods of extreme weather. And they're usually fairly well accepted by the membership, as long as they're not used for extended periods of time.
- Syringing during the day is something that

can be worked out on a regular basis with help from the pro shop. Pick a time of day when everyone is expected to vacate the tee for a 10-minute syringe. When temperatures soar, two times a day would be a better call.

- Educate your membership that it's actually counterproductive to tightly cluster divots at a tee station. Years ago, it was considered proper to leave the most intensely used range areas devoid of grass. Research tells us that leaving distance between divots allows for faster recovery of the area.

- When resodding, order the dwarf-type bluegrass. This turf is durable when sodded, and it can withstand the half-inch-or-less height of cut. Overseed with perennial ryegrass because of its fast germination and tenacity in the seedling stage.

- Optimize the tee area you have with this kind of rotation in play:

*Day one:* Place your markers, showing golfers where to position themselves across the tee.

*Day two:* Move your markers back, guiding golfers to hit from the turf that they actually stood on the day before.

The frequency of rotations? Your call, depending on the traffic you get on your tees.

### Stats on the seven clubs surveyed . . .

- The average total area for the practice tee is 22,860 square feet, with the largest at 50,000 square feet and the smallest at 13,000.
- The average range tee accommodates 17 golfers. The majority and the high was 20 practice stations; the low was 12.
- Weekly labor involved in maintaining the practice tee averaged 14 manhours, with a high of 24 manhours.

In addition to me, the six area supers who took the time to share their range tee maintenance programs were Mike Reeb of Country Club of New Canaan, Larry Pakkala of Woodway Country Club, Doug Drugo of Wee Burn Country Club, Tim O'Neill of Country Club of Darien, Scott Niven of The Stanwich Club, and Peter Rappoccio of Silver Spring Country Club. Many thanks to one and all.

*Greg Wójcik, a member of the Tee to Green Editorial Committee, is superintendent at Greenwich Country Club in Greenwich, CT.*

# 2007 Met Events Update

Here's what's new—and still open—in our 2007 Meeting and Social Calendar. Please be sure to change your calendars to reflect the new date for our annual Invitational Tournament!

If anyone is interested in hosting a meeting or social event that does not have a site, please contact the appropriate committee chairmen. For professional events, contact either of our Tournament Committee co-chairs: Blake Halderman at 914-946-1074 or Ken Benoit at 914-241-0700. Our Social & Welfare Committee co-chairs are Tom Leahy (914-941-8281) and Bob Nielsen (914-234-3779). Both are available to discuss any upcoming social events.

### Superintendent/Manager or Guest Tournament

Thursday, May 31  
Scarsdale Golf Club, Hartsdale, NY  
Host: Matt Severino

### Family Picnic

Date & Site OPEN

### Poa Annual Tournament

Monday, July 9  
Powelton Club, Newburgh, NY  
Host: Bob DeMarco

### MetGCSA Invitational Tournament

Monday, July 23  
Whippoorwill Club, Armonk, NY  
Hosts: Paul Gonzalez, CGCS, and Chuck Martineau

### Education Meeting

Date & Site OPEN

### Summer Social

August  
Date & Site OPEN

### Met Championship and Met Area Team Championship Qualifier

Tuesday, September 11  
Colonial Springs Golf Club  
Farmingdale, NY  
Host: Mark Chant

### Superintendent/Green Chairman Tournament

Tuesday, October 9  
Tuxedo Club, Tuxedo Park, NY  
Host: Tim Garceau

### Annual Assistants Championship

Thursday, October 11  
Dellwood Country Club  
New City, NY  
Assistant Hosts: Brian Chapin and Jake Parchen

### Met Area Championship

Monday, October 22  
Bethpage State Park, Black Course  
Farmingdale, NY  
Host: Craig Currier

### Annual Meeting

November  
Date & Site OPEN

### MetGCSA Christmas Party

Saturday, December 15  
The Stanwich Club  
Host: Scott Niven, CGCS

### Educational Events

#### UMass Turf Research Field Day

Wednesday, June 20  
UMass Joseph Troll Turf Research Center  
South Deerfield, MA  
For further information, contact the UMass Turf Program office at 508-892-0382 or visit [fieldday@umassturf.org](mailto:fieldday@umassturf.org).

#### Rutgers Turfgrass Research Field Day (Golf & Fine Turf)

Tuesday, July 31  
Horticultural Farm II  
New Brunswick, NJ

The field day will focus on research currently taking place at the Turf Research facility. Among the studies are:

- Anthracnose management on *Poa annua* greens
- Current efforts to convert *Poa* fairways and greens to bentgrass
- New bentgrass cultivars for greens/fairways

- Irrigation management studies on bentgrass
- Advances in disease, insect, and weed control

Registration for field day activities runs from 7:30 to 9 a.m. Tours are conducted from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. followed by lunch from 1 to 2 p.m. For further information, call 215-757-6582 or visit [www.njturfgrass.org](http://www.njturfgrass.org).

#### University of Rhode Island 76th Annual Turfgrass Field Day

Wednesday, August 22  
C.R. Skogley Turfgrass Research Facility  
Kingston, RI

The field day offers the opportunity to tour turf plots showing research trials being conducted at the university. In addition, attendees will have access to the largest gathering of regional product distributors outside the New England Regional Turfgrass Conference and Show.

Registration for field day activities runs from 7:30 to 9 a.m. Turf plot tours run from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. And exhibitor booths are open from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

For further information, call 401-874-2791 or visit [www.uriturf.org](http://www.uriturf.org).

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**MetGCSA.org**

**And look for details in the next issue of Tee to Green.**

# Superintendents Make Their Mark at 2007 Turfgrass Advocacy Day

by Michael Maffei, CGCS



Speaker Ron Gardner (center) sits with Jeff Lane (left) and Turfgrass Advocacy Day attendee Joseph Van DeLoo.

The New York State Turfgrass Association's 2007 Turfgrass Advocacy Day took place on Wednesday, February 7, at the Empire State Plaza in Albany. Now in its seventh year, this event was initiated to provide a forum for discussing legislative and regulatory pesticide issues. This year, discussions centered on opposition to restricting pesticide use and to the local regulation of pesticides; building support for the Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Fund and for the New York Farm Viability Institute; and maintaining the education component of the pesticide applicator program.

As always, those who attended were able to meet, and discuss regulatory issues and concerns, with state legislators who represent their districts. There were 54 green industry professionals present, with the golf industry well represented by the MetGCSA, the Northeastern GCSA, Hudson Valley GCSA, and the Finger Lakes Association.

As NYSTA Past President Steve Griffen noted, "There is nothing better than someone in the field telling their legislator exactly how legislation affects them in their specific operation. The knowledge that a golf course superintendent possesses about the environment, ecosystems, and biology of plants far exceeds that of the average lawmaker. Our participants were skilled at communicating their role as stewards of the environment and their interest in sustainable environmental systems while balancing their desire to provide unpar-

alleled playing surfaces and enjoyment to their customers."

Advocating for the green industry is a long and ongoing battle, which is not going to go away. We must continue to promote the important role our entire industry plays in providing environmentally friendly services for the enjoyment and better quality of life for all New Yorkers.

I feel that every golf course superintendent in the State of New York should be aware of the battles being fought behind-the-scenes for our industry. What follows is a quick recap of the discussions of the day, which will give you insight into NYSTA's tremendous role in supporting our industry, as well as what you, personally, can do to support our work. If you didn't attend our Turfgrass Advocacy Day, consider joining us next year. Your voice counts.

## Advocacy Strategy Highlights

### *Opposing Local Regulation of Pesticides/Restricting Use of Pesticides.*

After the opening remarks, I presented our work to oppose pesticides bills—there are currently seven—which would allow pesticide regulations to be imposed locally, that is, outside of state law and the Department of Environmental Conservation. These local regulations are likely to be more stringent than state requirements. The restricting use of pesticides bills prohibit the use of certain pesticides for commercial lawn, golf course, and residential applications. Due to the lack of proven and reliable alternatives for pest management, these bills could do more harm than good. Our recommendation is to let sound science be the basis for environmental legislation and regulation.

### *Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Fund.*

Dr. James Baird spoke next about the status of our Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Fund. In addition to his work as an agronomist with the Northeast Region of the USGA Green Section, Dr. Baird serves on NYSTA's Board of Directors and is chair of NYSTA's Grant Review Committee.

For the uninitiated, the Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Fund supports environ-



Speaker Dr. Jim Baird (left) discusses Turfgrass Advocacy Day issues with Superintendent Gerry Kunkel of Pine Hollow Country Club in East Norwich, NY.

mental research that looks beyond the traditional agronomic aspects of turfgrass science and seeks to determine the influence of practices on the environment.

You may recall that, last year, the Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Fund received a \$175,000 legislative appropriation in the 2006-2007 New York State budget. Instrumental in securing this appropriation was our 2006 guest of honor, Senator Catherine Young, chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee.

Thanks to Senator Young's efforts, we have been able to fund the following research:

- "Prospecting for Resistance to the Annual Bluegrass Weevil in Improved Cultivars of *Poa annua*," conducted by Dr. Daniel Peck of Cornell University.
- "Development of Molecular Techniques for Identification of Invasive Pest Crane Flies in Turfgrass," conducted by Dr. Peck and Dr. Ping Wang, also of Cornell.
- "Benefits of Turf: Reasons Why Pesticides and Fertilizers Applied to Turf Are Not Just for Cosmetics," conducted by Cornell University's Dr. A. Martin Petrovic.
- "Integrated Cultural Practices to Reduce Dollar Spot on Golf Course Fairways," conducted by Dr. Alex Ellram of SUNY Cobleskill.

We are pleased to report that Senator Young has pledged, again this year, to support an appropriation of \$175,000 for the Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Fund.

**New York Farm Viability Institute.** Our next speaker was Steve Griffen, who in addition to being past president of NYSTA, is co-owner of Saratoga Sod Farm, Inc. Steve also chairs the Empire State Council of Agricultural Organizations and serves on the board of the New York Farm Viability Institute (NYFVI).

Steve presented our recommendations for the NYFVI. High on the list was securing continued funding in the 2007-2008 New York State budget for the institute's projects and programs that deal directly with barriers affecting New York agriculture and horticulture. This year, \$5 million has been budgeted. "I think the fact that many legislators and their staffs remember NYSTA and the participants from past lobby days bodes well for the increased influence we may be having," says Griffen in response to the institute's continued funding. "Usually, political progress does not happen very quickly, so I'm surprised by the success we've had in such a short period of time. I believe the New York Turfgrass Survey has played a huge role in helping lawmakers understand how important our industry is to the people and economy of the state."

**Educating Pesticide Applicators.** Ronald Gardner, a senior extension associate in the Pesticide Management Education Program (PMEP) at Cornell University, discussed the need for "Supporting the Education Component of the Pesticide Applicator Program."

At present, Cornell University's Pesticide Management Education Program remains the sole source for the development and distribution of pesticide training and certification manuals for New York State. There is talk, however, of putting this job out to bid to other suppliers.

Since 1975, the New York State Department Environmental Conservation Law, Part 325, has charged the Department of Environmental Conservation with ensuring the qualification and knowledge of persons applying pesticides through an applicator's certification program. They have entrusted Cornell University's Pesticide Management Education Program with providing effective, scientifically based, and professionally conducted education services for more than 26,700 certified pesticide applicators in New York State. In addition, DEC requirements have been completely integrated with the training manuals and education programs currently provided by PMEP.

Greg Chorvas, NYSTA's secretary/treasurer, felt that this was one of the most important issues addressed at this year's Turfgrass Advocacy Day. Echoing the sentiment of NYSTA, Greg notes, "The PMEP should maintain its sole-provider status because it is currently the only provider in the nation that sells and distributes training manuals for every New York State pesticide certification category and subcategory." Beyond this, NYSTA

fears that the change will result in inferior pesticide applicator education.

**Legislator Meeting Prep.** Next, Jeff Williams, the legislative director with the New York Farm Bureau, offered helpful advice on becoming an effective citizen advocate, reviewing strategies for communicating productively with your legislator.

Explains Jeff, "All of NYSTA's issues are critically important, so my priority was to establish a process at each meeting where every participant could quickly and effectively get their message across to the legislator or staffer. The process worked, and the participants were able to discuss all issues at each meeting."

**Over Lunch.** After meeting with their legislators, attendees reconvened for lunch where they heard from Senator Elizabeth O'Connor Little, Republican chair of the Local Government Committee. Senator Little, a native of Glen Falls, NY, is responsible for overseeing the committee's work on legislation affecting counties, towns, villages, school districts, fire districts, and special districts.

NYSTA's executive director, Beth Seme, introduced Senator Little, praising her contributions to the region: "Senator Little is in the forefront of environmental issues and effectively represents communities in an area that is challenged by growth, development, and the need for preservation of not only our environments, but also small business and families. Senator Little is a true representative of the people of New York State."

## When All Was Said and Done

All in all, NYSTA's 2007 Turfgrass Advocacy Day was a very successful event. According to NYSTA's newly appointed lobbyist Jeff Lane (see box), "Turfgrass Advocacy Day was one of the most well-organized and efficiently executed lobby days I've seen in Albany since I first started lobbying five years ago. The association members were well prepared to discuss the issues with legislators and did so with great enthusiasm. When the day was over, legislators were still asking for more information to be helpful. I am pleased with the progress we made."

All who attended the Turfgrass Advocacy Day felt privileged to have the opportunity to work with legislators toward the goal of educating lawmakers and achieving sound environmental policies.

## In Closing

I would like to recognize the sponsors of Turfgrass Advocacy Day who make this event possible: the Northeastern Golf Course



## Jeffrey Lane Assumes Post as Green Industry Lobbyist

We are pleased to announce that Jeffrey Lane, who joined The Vandervort Group in December, will be representing green industry concerns as our lobbyist in Albany. He will be replacing Chris Revere, who, as our lobbyist since 2002, has made great strides for our industry in Albany. We wish Chris well as he continues to pursue his career in Washington, DC.

Jeff brings great experience to the position. He's served for five years as the legislative representative for the New York City Mayor's Office in Albany. Prior to this position, Jeff was employed as a legislative liaison for the Assembly Minority Leader's Office in Albany. Based in New York City, Jeff was responsible for creating and directing public affairs projects in the Metropolitan New York City area dealing with criminal justice, budget, economic development and educational issues. We look forward to working with Jeff as our industry advocate.

Superintendents Association, Sullivan County Challenge Golf Tournament, New York State Lawn Care Association, Helena, RISE – Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment, Grassland Equipment & Irrigation Corp., NYAFEC, LESCO, and Dow Agro-Sciences.

I would also like to thank the members of the MetGCSA who took the time out of their busy schedules to attend Advocacy Day. The issues we discussed are important to all of us. Without the support of everyone, our issues and concerns will never be addressed in Albany. Again, I encourage your participation at the 2008 Turfgrass Advocacy Day!

For more information on Turfgrass Advocacy Day—or to link to the Lobby Day Issue Papers—you can log on to the NYSTA website, [www.nysta.org](http://www.nysta.org), and call up the News/Government & Regulatory Issues section.

*Michael Maffei, president of NYSTA, is superintendent at Back O' Beyond, Inc., in Brewster, NY.*

# The Lineup of 2007 MetGCSA Board Members



The MetGCSA Annual Meeting concluded with the following members elected to the board. Front Row, left to right: Treasurer Bob Nielsen, CGCS, of Bedford Golf & Tennis Club; President Matt Ceplo, CGCS, of Rockland CC; Secretary Glenn Perry, CGCS, of Rolling Hills CC. Back Row, left to right: Rob Alonzi of St. Andrew's GC; Ineke Pierpoint, MetGCSA executive secretary; Ken Benoit, CGCS, of Glen Arbor GC; Glen Dube, CGCS, of Centennial GC; Blake Halderman, CGCS, of Brae Burn CC; Kevin Collins of Aquatrols, Inc.; Past President Will Heintz of Pound Ridge GC; Vice President Tony Girardi, CGCS, of Rockrimmon CC; Tom Leahy, CGCS, of Sleepy Hollow CC; Dave Dudones of North Jersey CC; Dave Moffett of the Round Hill Club.

## Your 2007 Committee Chairmen at Your Service

We've provided a list—with phone numbers—of each of the MetGCSA's committee chairs. Please feel free to contact any of them with questions, comments, or helpful suggestions.

### **Awards Committee**

**Will Heintz**, Pound Ridge GC  
914-552-2085

### **Bylaws Committee**

**Tony Girardi**, CGCS, Rockrimmon CC  
914-764-5010

### **Class C Representative**

**Dave Moffett**, Round Hill Club  
203-869-6477

### **Club Relations Committee**

**Joe Alonzi**, CGCS, Westchester CC  
914-798-5361

**Glenn Perry**, CGCS, Rolling Hills CC  
203-762-9484

**Peter Rappoccio**, CGCS, Silver Spring CC  
203-438-6720

### **Communications & Advertising Committee**

**David Dudones**, North Jersey CC  
973-942-0566

**Rob Alonzi**, St. Andrew's GC  
914-478-5713

### **Education Committee**

**Glen Dube**, CGCS, Centennial GC  
845-279-8960

### **Government Relations Committee**

**Tom Leahy**, CGCS, Sleepy Hollow CC  
914-941-8281

**Glenn Perry**, CGCS, Rolling Hills CC  
203-762-9484

### **Long-range Planning & Steering Committee**

**Will Heintz**, Pound Ridge GC  
914-552-2085

### **Membership Committee**

**Glenn Perry**, CGCS, Rolling Hills CC  
203-762-9484

### **Scholarship & Research Committee**

**Tony Girardi**, CGCS, Rockrimmon CC  
914-764-5010

### **Tri-State Turf Research Subcommittee**

**Matt Ceplo**, CGCS, Rockland CC  
845-359-5346

**Tony Girardi**, CGCS, Rockrimmon CC  
914-764-5010

**Bob Nielsen**, CGCS, Bedford Golf & Tennis Club  
914-234-3779

### **Social & Welfare Committee**

**Tom Leahy**, CGCS, Sleepy Hollow CC  
914-941-8281

### **Special Events Committee**

**Glen Dube**, CGCS, Centennial GC  
845-279-8960

**Kevin Collins**, Aquatrols, Inc.  
609-841-2077

### **Tournament Committee**

**Blake Halderman**, CGCS, Brae Burn CC  
914-946-1074

**Ken Benoit**, CGCS, Glen Arbor GC  
914-241-0700 x270

### **Website Committee**

**Ken Benoit**, CGCS, Glen Arbor GC  
914-241-0700 x270

# MetGCSA Represents Our Profession at the 2007 Lower Hudson Golf Show

by Dave Moffett

The Lower Hudson Golf Show held March 17 and 18 at the Westchester County Center in White Plains, NY, marks, for many area golfers, the kickoff to a new golf season. For the third year, the MetGCSA staffed a booth stocked with handouts and pamphlets designed to educate the golfing public about our association, our profession, and the role turfgrass professionals play in enhancing the environment.

We had a steady stream of golfers interested in our booth and in what we had to say. When one guy who stopped by found out we were golf course superintendents, he said, "Oh, you're the good guys." He obviously already knew about the important job we do. The event provided an opportunity for at least 80 other organizations and companies

to market their goods and services to the public. Set up right beside us, in a highly visible spot in the center of the show floor, was the MGA booth.

This year, not only were several MetGCSA members gracious enough to volunteer their weekend to staff the booth, but most had to endure difficult road conditions just to arrive. A very powerful cold front dropped nearly 10 inches of snow on the area the night before the show was scheduled to open. Although show attendance was down on Saturday morning, things began to pick up once the icy streets had been cleaned. Many new booths graced the center this year, testimony to the rising popularity of this event.

As this show continues to grow, so will the important presence of the MetGCSA. This year, we accomplished our goal: to promote



MetGCSA President Matt Ceplo and his daughter Megan meet and greet the public at The Lower Hudson Golf Show.

our unique profession and grow public awareness of the turf industry. In the future, we must continue to bring innovative and exciting topics to educate the golfing community. I encourage everyone in the industry to attend this event!

*Dave Moffett, a member of the Tee to Green Editorial Committee, is an assistant superintendent at the Round Hill Club in Greenwich, CT.*

## Member News

### MetGCSA Member Earns First Annual MGA Club Environmental Award

Congratulations to Greg Nicoll, director of grounds at Trump National Golf Club in Bedminster, NJ. Through his environmental stewardship on the job, the club has earned the first annual MGA Club Environmental Award. The award was presented March 21 at the 2007 MGA/USGA Green Chairmen Education Series and Club Environmental Award Luncheon.

To earn this high honor, Greg Nicoll has implemented a highly effective environmental strategy. This strategy has resulted in the preservation of a dedicated 45-acre grassland bird habitat on the property, as well as intensive erosion control and a stream stabilization management plan.

In addition, Greg has successfully integrated environmental awareness into the club's golf course maintenance, course construction projects, and future construction plans by maintaining more stringent standards than those required by state and local regulations.

What's more, Trump National has made itself readily available to Bedminster Township officials by way of monthly meetings to keep them up to date on the club's environmental monitoring activities.

"All of the applicants were very qualified," said Met President Matt Ceplo at the award

ceremony. "The superintendents are grateful for the MGA's recognition of what area golf courses do for the environment."

For more information on the MGA Club Environmental Award, contact Gene Westmoreland of the MGA by email at [gwestmore@mgagolf.org](mailto:gwestmore@mgagolf.org) or by phone at 914-347-4653.

### Members on the Move

- **Michael Brunelle** is the new superintendent at Trump National Golf Club in Bedminster, NJ. Previous position: Assistant superintendent, Bedford Golf & Tennis Club, Bedford, NY.

- **Greg Gutter** is the new superintendent at Mount Kisco Country Club in Mount Kisco, NY. Previous position: Assistant superintendent, Golf Club of Purchase, Purchase, NY.

- **Scott Ingram** is the new superintendent at Maple Moore Golf Club in White Plains, NY. Previous position: Assistant superintendent, Bonnie Briar Country Club, Larchmont, NY.

- **Dave Moffett** is a new assistant superintendent at the Round Hill Club in Greenwich, CT. Previous position: Assistant superintendent, Trump National Golf Club, Briarcliff Manor, NY.

### Births

Congratulations to Tee to Green Editor and North Jersey Country Club Superintendent **Dave Dudones** and his wife, Dana, on the birth of their daughter, Taylor Juliet on April 16.

### In Sympathy

It is with deepest sympathy and regret that we announce the death of longtime MetGCSA member **John Wistrand**. John is probably best remembered as the co-founder of Metro Milorganite, with fellow Life AF member Anthony Grasso. In their many years in business together, they became good friends and trusted advisors to many superintendents, who looked forward to Metro's visits to their courses.

"The kindest man ... a character ... life of the party ... one of the real educators in the business at that time ... truly knowledgeable ..." These are just several of the words used by friends and associates to describe John Wistrand. When John and Anthony sold Metro in 1991, John retired to Pinehurst, NC, where he lived for many years, enjoying the gracious Southern living and the many friends he made in his time there. John passed away March 16 at the age of 84. He will be missed by all who knew him.

A Memorial Service will be held in August. More information will follow at a later date.

# Scarsdale's Matt Severino Welcomes Upcoming Superintendent/Manager Tournament

by Eric O'Neill

**O**n May 31, we'll be joining fellow members for the Superintendent/Manager or Guest Tournament at Scarsdale Golf Club in Hartsdale, NY.

Our host, Matt Severino, calls Scarsdale his home away from home. Working there since 1992, he began as an assistant under then Super Herb Waterous, and assumed the reins from his mentor when he retired in 1998. Matt can't say enough about how much he's enjoyed his 15-year tenure at the club.

"Working at Scarsdale is as enjoyable to me today as it was when I first started," says Matt. But it's more than just the work that keeps Matt motivated. "It's the membership that truly makes the job," he says, praising the club's supportive atmosphere. "They treat me like family," Matt adds. It's no surprise, then, that he enjoys the social and public relations aspects of his job. "I make sure I'm accessible for comments, questions, or concerns from the members, whether it's during a round of golf or at a club social event," says Matt.

In the past two years, Matt has expanded his responsibilities at Scarsdale to include managing the clubhouse maintenance department, which involves facilities maintenance, house-keeping, and capital improvements.

## You've Come a Long Way, Baby

Matt's relationship with golf began when he was in seventh grade and his family moved close to Pilgrims Harbor Golf Club in Wallingford, CT. He traded work at the club—handpicking range balls and cleaning carts—for a free junior membership. With access to the facilities, Matt learned to play golf, picking up pointers from the professional staff.

While he continued to earn his keep, Matt was also exposed to nearly every aspect of course operations, including pro-shop and range management, club repair, and ultimately, golf course maintenance.

At the time, Matt enjoyed the game of golf so much that he played for the Xavier High School golf team. After graduating, he set off in pursuit of a B.S. in Business Administration from the University of Connecticut, not totally discounting a career in golf.

By the time Matt had completed his degree, however, he realized that a career in business wasn't going to make him happy—and a career as a golf pro just wasn't going to happen. On the heels of earning his B.S., Matt completed a certificate in Turfgrass Management from UMass. Staying close to the field he knew best, he accepted an assistant's position at Ridgewood Country Club in New Jersey, under than Superintendent Ed Walsh. "Working at Ridgewood was challenging," remembers Matt, "but I was sure by then that I wanted to be involved in the industry."

A year later, Matt found himself at Scarsdale, where he's had plenty of opportunity to put both his business and turf expertise to the test.

## The Course, Today and Yesterday

In Matt's tenure at Scarsdale, the club's embarked on more than just a few capital improvement projects, not the least of which have been reclaiming an algae-choked lake; installing an all-new irrigation system and pumphouse; upgrading the booster pumps for the system on the seven elevated holes; building a new practice facility, short game area, and putting green; and constructing a new Har-true tennis court.

What's more, working with The Roger Rulewich Group, the club is close to finalizing a master plan that will reevaluate every aspect of the club's original A.W. Tillinghast-designed golf course, including bunkers, tees, and drainage.

Scarsdale wasn't always an 18-hole course—or even a golf course at all. It started in the late 1800s as the Scarsdale Gun Club. Then one Saturday morning in 1896, members decided they wanted to start playing golf instead of shooting clay pigeons. They formed a golf membership and, within two years, built a nine-hole Willie Dunn course adjacent to the railroad station.

Another 20 years passed before the club purchased enough land to expand the course. A.W. Tillinghast was hired to redesign the entire golf course, taking the new parcel of heavily wooded, rocky land and transforming it into 10 new holes—now referred to as "The Hill."



Matt Severino

Like many Tilly designs, this one is not long but, more importantly, emphasizes placement and accuracy. Scarsdale has some classic risk-reward holes. The dogleg left sixth hole offers longer, accurate hitters the opportunity to land a tee shot left center and then go for the green in two. However, a miss-hit there into the spoils can easily lead to a snowman. The 10th and 18th holes are each reachable in two if both shots are dead-on. Any shots left or right will lead to bogeys and out of bounds.

## Tourney Contestants, Take Note

Many say Matt physically resembles Jose Maria Olazabal, but his name and game is more like Seve Ballesteros's, especially when he walks after a vicious duck-hook tee shot that lands two fairways over and then somehow makes par.

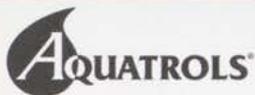
As we all know, Matt has played many rounds of golf at Scarsdale, so he is well versed in the do's and don'ts of the course. For those unfamiliar with lay of the land, Matt offers these words to the wise: "Keep the ball below the hole on the greens, and don't over-club approach shots. Stay in the short grass, especially around Wilson Cup time in the spring."

For the uninitiated, the Wilson Cup is an Amateur team event held annually on Memorial Day weekend at Scarsdale. It features some of the best golfers in the Met area and is held as a memorial for longtime Scarsdale member Charles E. Wilson, a former president of General Electric.

Like most superintendents, Matt works hard to maintain that balance between the demands of the job and his young, active family. There's nothing Matt enjoys more than spending time with his wife, Kristin, and his three children: Matthew, 8; Kathryn, 5; and Melissa, 2. They live in nearby Yorktown, NY.

*Eric O'Neill, a member of the Tee to Green Editorial Committee, is superintendent at Towers Country Club in Floral Park, NY.*

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