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# Tee to Green

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# Tee To Green



Cover: Sleepy  
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# President's Message

## Managing Our New Reality

# W

hat a difference a year can make! After the predictions of a harsh winter that never happened, I would say most golf course superintendents were expecting an early season, especially with the weather of mid-March and early April. Well, to everyone's surprise everything ground to a halt on March 22.

Spring, under normal conditions, is rebirth, rejuvenation, renewal, a time of regrowth...but this year, it is minimum maintenance, social distancing, Zoom meetings, and wondering what will change tomorrow.

With the stresses and strains of operating under challenging circumstances, the feature in this issue of *Tee to Green* offers tips and techniques for weathering our new world, on and off the golf course, and along with it is a piece that tries to find the humor in our new rules of golf. We hope these articles offer some pleasant relief from our new reality!

### Speaking of Our New Reality . . .

Strengthening the relationship between the MetGCSA, MetPGA, CCMA, and the MGA was a goal that I stated in my January/February President's Message. This has proven to be very important as the world and the rules change almost daily. Our executive director, Mike McCall, and I have a weekly conference call with the heads of the allied associations to discuss changes to the Governor's Executive Order, share information regarding how clubs are operating and what the future might look like. The allied associations have worked hard on behalf of our members trying to get the most current information out in a clear, timely, and unified manner.

The Met Board of Directors has also been working hard on reevaluating plans for 2020. Here's the latest:

- All golf and social events are on hold until further notice. We are hoping, however, to have the Summer Social and Invitational and possibly reschedule some of our other events.

**Rob Alonzi**  
MetGCSA President

- Educational events are currently in the planning stages. The Education Committee is exploring changes to the format of seminars in the event that there are capacity limits and social-distancing restrictions at host venues.
- This issue of *Tee to Green* will appear online only. All operation expenses are being monitored to ensure that, as always, our dollars are well managed and well spent.
- We will continue to keep the membership informed about any changes we receive from the governor's office and post all information on the MetGCSA website.

### Our New Operations Playbook

We hope, in the near future, this crisis will subside and we can return to our normal mode of operation. In the meantime, as you plan for what is next and create your playbook for reopening and the new normal at your facilities, here are several helpful links:

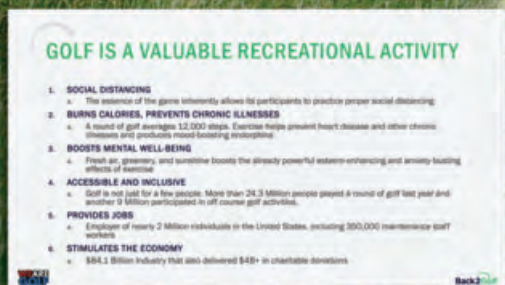
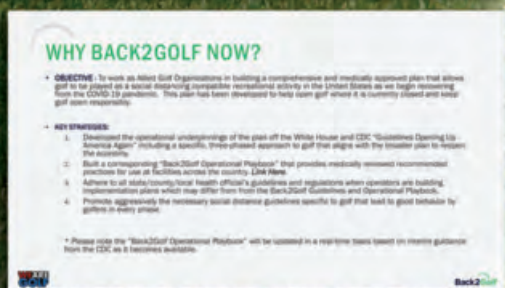
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[https://www.usga.org/content/dam/usga/pdf/2020/Back2Golf\\_AlliedPresentation\\_Final%204.29%20.pdf](https://www.usga.org/content/dam/usga/pdf/2020/Back2Golf_AlliedPresentation_Final%204.29%20.pdf)

<https://www.gcsaa.org/resources/back2golf-resources>

I hope you and your families remain safe and healthy. Best wishes for better days to come!

**Rob Alonzi**  
MetGCSA President





Feature

# Staying Sane in These Challenging and Uncertain Times

*by Pandora Wojick, Tee to Green Managing Editor*



## *We generate fears while we sit. We overcome them by action."*

— Dr. Henry Link, business psychologist



Most golf course superintendents, who have been in the industry for any length of time, have survived a challenge or two: disease infestations, wet periods and droughts, budget cuts, loss of key staff, and countless other uphill battles. But when you stop and think, these issues are far less challenging than the ones we face now with the Covid-19 pandemic.

In addition to career challenges, our routines are being upset, our freedom is restricted with new rules and regulations on social distancing, our financial portfolios are suffering, and worse still, some of our loved ones are falling ill to this deadly virus.

Though GCSAA has gathered a lot of information that can help you manage your golf facilities and answer general questions about the ever-changing rules and regulations during the pandemic (see [www.gcsaa.org/resources/covid-19-pandemic-resources](http://www.gcsaa.org/resources/covid-19-pandemic-resources)), everyone could use some guidelines for forging ahead, not just professionally, but personally as well.

After listening to a webcast by British Executive Coach Colin Hiles, I discovered tips and techniques that will help us all manage and triumph over just about any problem now and in the future, no matter how insurmountable it may at first seem. Here goes. . .

### **Get a Grip on Your Emotions**

As golf course management professionals, you are being tested right now. But you have a choice: As Colin Hiles notes, "While difficult is inevitable, panic is optional." Feeling anxious and fearful is quite a normal response to all you are experiencing, but it won't serve you well. When things are running smoothly in our lives, our brain, he points out, operates on three levels:

1. Thinking brain: logic
2. Emotional brain: relational
3. Instinctive brain: survival

When we are stressed, we lose access to the thinking logical part of the brain and sink into the emotional. This can lead to our

undoing. To get a bit technical, too much stress creates too much cortisol, which, in turn, weakens our immune system (not a good idea in the face of Covid-19), increases blood pressure, and lowers our motivation and focus.

Clearly, you can't control every situation, but you can control how you react, and there are three basic tools to help you maintain a good level of stress, and in turn, logical thinking and a higher level of productivity. These include:

1. Self-Care.
2. Controlling Your Focus and Attention.
3. Surrounding Yourself With Positive Input.

### **Job #1: Employing Self-Care Rituals**

This should be your highest priority right now: taking care of yourself. Even if you don't realize it, you are expending more energy. The brain loves to create routines, automate, complete tasks without thinking about them. But right now, your situations and routines on the golf course and in your personal lives are so different that you are thinking all the time. And this takes a lot of energy that you have to make sure to replenish. If your energy runs dry, you're in trouble. "We can't take care of others, if we don't take care of ourselves," Hiles warns. His recommendation is to start by protecting four aspects of your wellbeing:

1. **Sleep.** A good night's sleep is the key to reducing harmful levels of cortisol and replenishing your energy.
2. **Exercise.** Be sure to work out for at least 30 minutes each day. Hiles recommends varying your routines with high-intensity exercises and stretching or yoga. If you're not self-motivated, try using one of the many exercise apps, videos, or televised exercise classes out there, and get moving.

**TIP:** For those days you may feel short on time, there is a free workout app you can download on your phone called



*7 Minutes.* It offers, as you might suspect, seven minutes of 12 high-intensity bodyweight exercises that run 30 seconds each with 10 seconds rest in between. It's a short but sweet workout!

3. **Time outside.** Spend time outside at least once a day. Fresh air, natural light (light coming through a window in your home does not count) sets your circadian rhythm for that all-important good night's sleep.

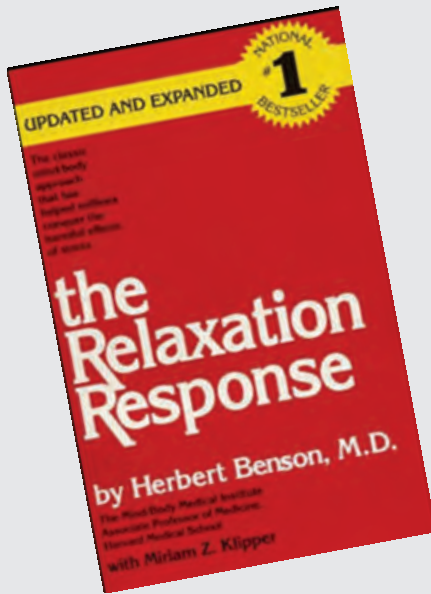
4. **Controlled breathing.** Have you ever told someone who is panicking—one of your children, perhaps—to stop and breathe? There is great benefit in doing this—not just when you're in a state of panic or anxiety, but also on a daily basis. A big part of meditation is focusing on your breathing. And if Navy Seals can do it, so can you!

Hiles explains that they are taught to practice breathing on a regular basis. Why? So they can call on this tactic to help them maintain their cool in the face of the extreme danger they encounter daily. By controlling their breathing, it's been proven that they are able to confront their challenges with greater calm and clarity and perform at a much higher level. The best part of breathing: You can do it anywhere, anytime with hardly a notice by anyone!

**TIP:** The breathing technique Hiles recommends is called the *3-6-5 Breathing Zone*: You do it 3 times per day, take 6 breaths per minute, and do it for 5 minutes to derive three to four hours of benefit with each breathing session. If you

***“You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with.”***

**- Jim Rohn, motivational speaker**



can complete the breathing exercise only once a day, Hiles recommends doing it in the afternoon, because stress builds throughout the day.

The technique involves breathing in through the nose (smell the roses) and with lips pursed, breathing out (blow out the candle). This stimulates the relaxation response, which puts us into a more positive state of mind that allows us to respond to challenges more rationally and logically.

And yes, there is a free app out there that will help guide you in your breathing practice. It's called RespiRelax+. It's a French app, so just make sure to sign up for the English version!

**GOOD READ:** *The Relaxation Response* by Herbert Benson, MD. Among other things, Dr. Benson expands on the benefits of controlled breathing:

- Decreased blood pressure
- Decreased muscle tension
- Improved thought process
- Improved sleep
- Restored circulation
- Strengthened immune system
- Increased overall wellbeing

By ensuring self-care, you are not only doing yourself a great service, but also those who work and live at home with you. It is your job, first and foremost, to do what it takes to allow yourself to think rationally and make the kind of decisions that your employees and your family value and

respect. You will perform at a higher level, and your employees will respond in kind.

### **Job #2: Control Your Focus and Attention**

Our minds are like flashlights; we focus on what we see and hear. It is important, therefore, to be aware of precisely what is consuming the highest percentage of your focus and attention. We have to ask ourselves, “Where are we pointing our mental flashlights?”

Is it on things out of your control, like the news, government policy, restrictions on the golf course and in our personal lives? Or are you focusing on what you are able to control, your own actions, such as planning what you will accomplish on the course on a particular day or what you can do to help your staff weather the trials of the pandemic? As Hiles points out, when we “control the controllables” and think about what we *can do* as opposed to focusing on *what is out of our control*, we feel empowered and capable of taking positive forward action.

Similarly, when we shine our flashlight on all the positives in our life—I still have a job and staff to help me do it; my family is well; the Covid-19 pandemic isn't forever—we are better able to commit 100 percent of our effort to moving forward and inspiring others to move forward along with us in a positive and productive manner.

***“Change what you can, accept what you can't, and be smart enough to know the difference.”***

**- Wally Lamb from his book, *We Are Water***

### **Job #3: Surround Yourself With Positive Input**

Well-known motivational speaker Zig Ziglar once said, “*Your input determines your outlook. Your outlook determines your output, and your output determines your future.*”

Ziglar's words of wisdom prompt the question: What is the source of your input and inspiration? Put another way, what is your mental diet? Our minds, like our bodies, need healthy input to function at peak levels. Right now, however, our environment makes the proper care and feeding of our minds and bodies more challenging than ever. We are surrounded by more sedentary, unhealthy practices and, worse, an abundance of negativity and pessimism.

As Ziglar's quote implies, we must guard against allowing the doom and gloom (input) to consume our thoughts (outlook) because it will do little more than stymie our motivation (*output*) and, in turn, our ability to move things forward (*your future*) in a positive direction.

The antidote: When the going gets tough, do whatever is in your power to guard against negative input. Hiles recommends that you:

**1. Unplug from social media and delete any apps from your phone that alert you to the latest “breaking news.”** More often than not, it's a report on an earthquake or another unhappy event, not the kind of input that will engage your mind in positive thoughts or inspire you to tackle a challenging task at work. It's better, Hiles says, to pull news when you want it, rather than having it pushed on you.

Hiles recommends that you see for yourself the effects the news has on your outlook. Do you feel uplifted by what you hear or more like taking a long walk off a short pier? More often than not, the news produces some level of anxiety.

*continued on page 12*



# A Round of Pandemic Golf

by a Frustrated Golfer

March Madness was cancelled, the NBA shut down, the Masters is postponed, and my Aunt Marge's senior bowling has even thrown in the towel. Restaurants and bars are closed, and our 40-handicap governor has shut down all entertainment facilities including golf courses. I have not tested positive, but the coronavirus is killing me.

There is nowhere to go and nothing to do. My wife suggested we take a walk, but I don't walk anywhere unless I have a golf club in my hand and it's "cart path only." My kids have a restraining order on us and won't let us come within 200 yards of the grandchildren. And we can no longer eat out, but when we tried to cook at home, there were cobwebs in the oven.

The network channels are inundated with coverage of the virus. The golf channel has been showing reruns of old tournaments, which are almost as riveting as watching my brother-in-law's video of his family camping trip to Yellowstone. Paranoia is off the tracks.

Before the shutdown, we were having dinner at a local bar. I let out a loud sneeze and everyone at the surrounding tables started yelling "Check please!" My stock portfolio is plummeting and most of our cash is currently invested in toilet paper. I am washing my hands 137 times a day. I don't touch anyone. I don't even touch myself. I have been using tongs to go to the bathroom. This has to stop.

Our society and economy have been crippled by a microscopic virus. Scientists have not yet determined the exact origin but have narrowed it down to a Chinese fish market or Rosie O'Donnell's bathtub. And no one is sure how to prevent or cure it.

I don't consider myself to be in the high-risk category. I have been building up my immune system by eating one meal per day at McDonald's for the past 25 years. Germs just slide through me. My only pre-existing condition is an inability to launch a golf ball



further than 180 yards. And according to the CDC, symptoms of coronavirus are sweats, dizziness, and trouble breathing, which I experience whenever I am standing over a three-foot putt. I can handle it.

So, I proposed to my regular foursome the idea of escaping from our self-imposed Stalag 17 and venturing outside for a round of golf. Everyone recognized the danger and severity of the situation. But when faced with the decision to remain sequestered with the family or risk contracting a deadly virus, it was a no-brainer. Every man opted to play golf.

Our foursome does not pose a medical risk to mankind. My friend, George, is virus-free. Social distancing has not been a problem for him. Other than us, he doesn't have any friends. Bob, my neighbor is a urologist who has been working from home for several weeks. He has developed a way to do remote prostate exams. I don't even want to know what that entails. And our other partner, Jerry, tested himself for Covid with a kit he bought online. However, he thinks he may have gotten the wrong kit. It showed no traces of the virus but indicated that he was pregnant with twins.

The federal government has established guidelines for social engagement. For example, you must stay at least 6 feet apart and no more than 5 people are allowed at a gathering, which means Patrick Reed's fan club can still meet. In addition, our foursome drafted our own specific set of rules for Pandemic Golf.

## New Rules of Play

- Hazmat suits are permitted. As an alternative, one can wear a college mascot costume or big bunny pajamas.
- Masks are not permitted, because we would look more like stagecoach robbers than a foursome.
- Leave the flag in. And to avoid retrieving balls from the hole, any putt shorter than LeBron James is good.
- Ride in separate golf carts and don't come closer to another player than a fully extended ball retriever.
- No high fives. Fortunately, we seldom have a reason.
- Don't use the port-o-john. More disease in there than in all of Wuhan, China.
- No excuses. Slicing or hooking are not side-effects of the coronavirus.
- Make an online bank transfer to pay off your bets for the day.

These rules and restrictions adequately protected us from contamination. Unfortunately, there is no vaccine for bad golf. I had trouble gripping the club with oven mittens, but it was an enjoyable afternoon which ended way too soon. There were no handshakes on the 18th green, no beers at the bar, and we drove home separately.

As the pandemic plays through, it is giving us a glimpse into our inevitable future where all meals are delivered, all entertainment comes through the TV screen, and all human interaction is through our cell phone. Where schooling is online at home, exercise is on a stationary bike in our basement, and medical testing is done at drive-through windows.

The world is changing. It is becoming less interpersonal as technology consumes us. So now that we have time on our hands, everyone should take a moment to cherish this fading era, when friends still get together to hit a little ball around an open field for no good reason other than to enjoy the companionship of their fellow man.

# The New York State Turfgrass Advocacy Day Brings Legislative Issues to Light

by Michael Maffei, CGCS

The 21st annual New York State Turfgrass Advocacy Day was held February 26 at the Empire State Plaza in Albany, NY. This year, 42 superintendents and other industry professionals ventured to Albany eager to discuss our 2020 priority issues: Support for the Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Fund, the Adoption of a State Definition of IPM, Nitrogen Fertilizer Restrictions, and Legislative Bans of Pesticide Products.

Advocacy Day-goers made a record 77 visits to legislators' offices to drive home the importance of these legislative issues. Joining me in representing the MetGCSA were Bob Nielsen, CGCS; John Carlone, CGCS; Blake Halderman, CGCS; Matt Topazio; Steve Whipple; Rob Alonzi Jr.; Brent Peveich; Luke Knutson; Chris Strehl; and Mike McCall, CGCS.

Also in attendance was Kevin Kline of the Metropolitan Golf Association, as well as two national associations: the National Association of Landscape Professionals, which was represented by Bob Mann, and the Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment (RISE), which was represented by Barbara Ahern.

## Event Kickoff

The event kicked off with an association breakfast and welcoming remarks by NYSTA President John Carlone and NYSTA Government Relations Committee Co-chair Steve Griffen.

Todd Vandervort of The Vandervort Group spoke on the legislative climate in Albany. The 2018 fall elections brought a huge change to the State Senate with Democrats now in control. This coupled with the announced retirement of seasoned veterans in the Senate makes devoting time and effort to educating legislators new to our industry and our issues just as important this year as last.

Jeff Williams of the New York Farm Bureau discussed the various line items in the agriculture budget and stressed, once again, how important it will be this year to advocate with one voice for this budget.



*Rick Zimmerman presents important lobbying information to NYSTA Advocacy Day attendees.*

Finally, Senator Jen Metzger, chair of the New York State Senate Agriculture Committee, spoke about her priorities for this year and communicated the importance of the turfgrass industry in her district. She also expressed her support of the Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Fund.

## The Issues of the Day

After the introductory speeches, industry leaders spoke to attendees about the following issues:

### Garnering Support for the Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Fund

*Steve Griffen, New York State Turfgrass Association*

Steve explained just how important the Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Fund (TESF) is to the turfgrass industry, noting that funding for the TESF comes out of the Department of Agriculture and Markets budget. With changes in the Senate and Assembly Agriculture committees' chairpersons last year, it is essential that we advocate all the more vigorously for continued funding for this program.

The 2019-2020 New York State Budget included a \$150,000 appropriation to support research that provides improved turf management solutions, as well as educational outreach programs.

Continuing research is essential in providing turf management solutions that are key in preserving and protecting the quality of our environment. With this in mind, **NYSTA recommended that legislators fund a \$200,000 line item in the 2020-2021 budget.**

In 2019, \$35,000 of this funding was earmarked for continuing support of the BMPs for New York State Golf Courses, and Blake Halderman, president of the New York Golf Course Foundation, emphasized the importance of continuing to fund BMP initiatives. It was with this funding that the newly released second edition of the BMP document, offering important guidance in the implementation of facility BMPs, was made possible.

### Adopting a State Definition of IPM

*Steve Whipple, New York State Turfgrass Association*

Steve reviewed the Adoption of a State Definition of IPM, stating that NYSTA be-





*NYSTA President John Carlone and lobbyist Todd Vandervort present NYSTA issues during a legislative meeting with Assembly Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes' staff members.*

believes New York State would be best served by adopting the IPM terminology recognized by the Food Quality Protection Act, the National Integrated Pest Management Network, and the Empire State Council of Agricultural Organizations. Several legislative proposals define IPM as using pesticides as a last resort. As we all know, pesticides are used as a tool in an IPM program.

**NYSTA supports A3632 (introduced by Assemblywoman Gunther),** which defines integrated pest management as a “systematic approach to managing pests that utilizes a diversity of management options to minimize health, environmental, and economic risks and impacts. These options may include biological, cultural, physical, and chemical tools to prevent pest infestations or reduce them to acceptable levels.”

Our lobbyists are currently searching for a senator to introduce a companion bill to Assemblywoman Gunther's. Before it can be passed, the law must go through both the assembly and Senate and then get the governor's signature.

### **Nitrogen Fertilizer Restrictions**

*Tom Kaplun, New York State Turfgrass Association*

Tom reported that Senator Kaminsky (S2130) and Assemblyman Englebright (A4568) have introduced legislation to limit the sale and use of nitrogen fertilizer on Long Island to no greater than 12 percent nitrogen by weight. Fertilizer stakeholders throughout Long Island have been working with the NYSDEC, the Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan (LINAP) Commission, and environmental advocacy groups for the past three years. They are developing science-based fertilizer recommendations that would have a far greater impact on protecting Long Island's water than the proposed bag analysis legislation.

**NYSTA's recommendation is to continue its opposition to the Kaminsky (S2130) and Englebright (A4568) bills and for stakeholders to carry on with their discussion with the LINAP and the DEC to develop reasonable, science-based fertilizer recommendations for Long Island.**

### **Legislative Bans of Pesticide Products**

*Rick Zimmerman, New York Alliance for Environmental Concerns*

Bills have been introduced to prohibit the use of certain pesticide products, such as imidacloprid, used for grub control on turf and for ornamental insect control, and glyphosate, a nonselective vegetation control product.

New York is only one of two states that conducts its own pesticide review process after a pesticide goes through an extensive evaluation and registration process by the Federal EPA. Legislative bans of pesticide products, reviewed and approved by the EPA and the New York State DEC, usurp science-based policy and set a bad precedent for New York State. Governor Cuomo, in his veto of S5343 (chlorpyrifos ban) recog-

nized the NYSDEC's regulatory authority stating that this ban bill “bypasses the rigorous process available to challenge an approved product and substitute the legislature's judgement for the expertise of chemists, health experts, and other subject matter experts in the field.”

**NYSTA recommends opposition to the pesticide ban bills.** The decision-making on pesticide bans and regulations should continue to be performed by the Department of Environmental Conservation, not the Legislature.

### **The Legislative Visits and Closing Activities**

Rick Zimmerman, from NYAFEC, offered attendees tips on how to make the most of their visits. With the presentations complete, attendees had the opportunity to meet with legislators and share their views and recommendations on the issues.

After the legislative visits were finished, attendees returned for a luncheon and wrap-up of the morning's activities. They also had the opportunity to share any feedback they received during their legislator visits with NYSTA Government Relations Committee Co-chair Steve Griffen for follow-up.

Zimmerman had nothing but praise for the outcome of NYSTA's Lobby Day, noting the critical role our industry's advocacy



*NYSTA Vice President Steve Whipple reviewing information on adopting a state definition of IPM.*

## **Special Thanks to Our Sponsors**

We would like to acknowledge the following sponsors who helped make this successful event possible: the Metropolitan Golf Course Superintendents Association, the Hudson Valley Golf Course Superintendents Association, the Northeastern Golf Course Superintendents Association, the Long Island Golf Course Superintendents Association, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of New York, Metropolitan Golf Association, Capital Region Golf Course Owners Association, the Nassau Suffolk Landscape Grounds Association, the National Association of Landscape Professionals, New York Lawn & Arbor Care Applicators Council, RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment), the Steve Smith Memorial NYSTA Challenge, Helena, Corteva Agriscience, Syngenta, Bayer Crop Science, SavATree, Harrell's, Woodfield Associates, Nutrien Solutions, TruGreen, All Pro Horticulture, Ocean Organics, Plant Food Company, and Target Specialty Products.

# You Asked. We listened.

**No one expected COVID-19, or what it would bring with it, but hindsight is 2020.**



**May 25th—July 31st**

**Metro Turf Specialists and Quali-Pro have teamed up to help you get through this season. **ALL** Quali-Pro product purchased from Metro Turf Specialists, receives pay terms with a due date of 9/10/20!**

End User Program	Start Date	End Date	Details
Spring Savings on Proflex	April 1st	June 30th <i>*Extended for our end users!*</i>	•Purchase a case (6 qts) and receive a \$50 Visa Gift Card. •Backed by Quali-Pro's 90 Day Mosquito Protection Guarantee. Check out our website for details.
Keep it short. Keep it green. T-NEX	April 1st	June 30th	•Receive up to \$25 per bottle when you purchase T-NEX PGR. •Purchase one-gallon units of T-NEX and receive \$10 per unit. Purchase 2.5-gallon units of T-NEX and receive \$25 per unit. •Minimum of 8 gallons purchased to qualify.
Enclave/Flexguard Summer Rebate	April 15th	July 15th	•Buy 2 cases of Enclave = \$75 Rebate •Buy 1 case of Flexguard = \$75 Rebate •Buy 2 cases of Enclave + 1 case of Flexguard = \$200 Rebate
Slow It Down With Pac-Low	April 15th	June 30th	•Receive a \$15 per gallon rebate when you purchase Pac-Low PGR.

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10 days	2 %
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For Orders Invoiced By 7/10/20	

**Extended Pay Terms + Discounts + End User Programs = No brainer!**

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# Nor'easter Ski Race Plowed Under by Blizzard Conditions

by Andy Drohen

efforts play in advancing programs, policies, and funding that enhance our industry. "Once again," says Zimmerman, "our volunteer advocates, who devoted a day to travel to Albany to nurture state lawmaker relationships, spoke out about proposed legislation that would negatively impact our industry. It is essential that industry leaders actively engage with state and federal lawmakers because no one has more credibility addressing the issues," he noted.

## The Benefits of Being Involved

If you are not a member of NYSTA, please consider joining. Your membership provides NYSTA with the resources needed to plan and implement many informative industry-related events, not the least of which is our annual Turfgrass Advocacy Day. Particularly important to preserving our livelihood, the Advocacy Day is designed to:

- Protect you and your golf course from losing the tools needed to perform your job
- Prevent any onerous new regulations from adversely affecting our industry
- Advocate for changes to—or the repeal of—laws and regulations that affect our clubs

Though you may not have been able to attend this year's event, consider visiting your assembly member or senator in their district offices or writing them to discuss these issues. The NYSTA office will gladly supply you with all the materials that the attendees and legislators received at Advocacy Day to help you with your visits or letters. These materials can also be easily downloaded from the NYSTA website at [www.nysta.org](http://www.nysta.org).

Please consider attending the Turfgrass Advocacy Day in 2021. Laws and regulations affect everyone, and your input is important!

*Michael Maffei, golf course superintendent at Back O' Beyond in Brewster, NY, is a past president of NYSTA and co-chair of the NYSTA Government Relations Committee.*

Who would have thought the Nor'easter Ski Race would be the first in a long line of sporting events to be cancelled in 2020! Ironically, the event, scheduled for February 27, was called due to too much snow—tremendous blizzard conditions, in fact. Wind speeds gusted over 50 mph and snow came down sideways and heavy, forcing the Killington Mountain Race team to cancel all racing activities that day.

That, however, did not prevent the more than 175 members from across the Northeast from making the trek north to Killington. Though the main ski event was a bust, we were still able to socialize, après-ski-style, at the Wobbly Barn. Kudos to all who made the effort to attend and enjoy the camaraderie! Prizes had already been secured for the race, so everything was raffled off, and a great time was had by all despite the weather.

Speaking of prizes, by default, the Northeastern GCSA will retain the Nor'easter Cup and VT Cups until we race again!

## All Was Not Lost

Ski Race or not, as in years past, the generous support of our sponsors and folks in attendance has allowed the Nor'easter Ski Day to raise money for those in need. This year, as per members' requests, we will be making donations to Jordan Keshler, golf course superintendent at Barker Brook Golf Club, as well as David Cameron, brother-in-law of Stephen Hicks, superintendent and director of operations at Bull's Bridge Golf Club.

We are all fortunate to be associated with such great folks, and we encourage all of you to join us next year as we continue to use the event as a means to help our own.

## Thank You to Our Sponsors

Last, but not least, special thanks goes out to our Title Sponsors, the Houseknecht Family and the team at MTE (Jacobsen, Vermont Precision Reel Grinding, Giant, Ventrac), for their overwhelming support of the Nor'easter Ski Day. Our Ski Day is made

great because of the continued support of our sponsors! We would like to thank the following companies for their help in making this event a success:

- **Platinum Sponsors:** Sipcam Agro USA.
- **Gold Sponsors:** BASF, Grassland, Toro, Turf Products.
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Save the date for next year's Nor'easter to be held at Killington Mountain on February 25. More information will come later in the year. In the meantime, let's all work together to support and help one another through these trying times, and hopefully, we'll see each other soon on the golf course!

*Andy Drohen, a member of the Tee to Green Editorial Committee is the Northeast Sr. Territory Manager with Koch Agronomic*

## A Note Regarding the Met Area Team Championship

With the Covid-19 situation affecting pretty much all the associations that participate in the championship, it's difficult to predict if we will be able to hold this year's event. Most clubs' spring events have been cancelled and moved to the fall wherever possible, so to take up a date on a club's calendar that could generate much-needed income may be a challenge this year. Let's all see how the pandemic plays out, and Blake Halderman and I will keep you updated on the status of the 2020 Met Area Team Championship.

# Professional Development Seminar Takes Interviewing Skills to New Level

by Worth Andrews

**T**his year 34 assistants from the Tri-State area and Rhode Island congregated at Sleepy Hollow Country Club on February 19 for the fifth annual Class C Professional Development Seminar. Many thanks are in order for host superintendent Tom Leahy, his team of assistants—Royal Healy, Nate Jones, and Tyler Warren—as well as the clubhouse staff for hosting this event.

Thanks also goes out to the Class C Committee for organizing a day full of career-boosting advice, and a special thank you, as well, to the speakers and panel members who took time out of their day to share their knowledge and experience with the assistants.

### Improving Your Odds

The first speaker of the day, Armen Suny of Kopplin, Kuebler, & Wallace, offered assistants helpful tips and techniques for improving their odds of landing a superintendent's job. Suny works as a search and consulting executive and has extensive experience working with hiring boards for superintendents, general managers, and head golf professionals.

Suny pointed out numerous things that may seem trivial but, when overlooked, can affect your chances of getting a job. He noted the importance of having a professional voicemail message, a voicemail box that isn't full, and showing up to the interview not only dressed appropriately, but also well groomed, right down to ensuring your fingernails are clean. Even the simplest things can have a lasting impression.

Suny then canvassed the room, asking how many assistants rehearse before going on a job interview. No one raised their hand. He stressed that with so much time spent on trying to excel in your career, why not spend 15 minutes weekly on practicing for a job interview. He advised beginning by having someone ask you potential interview questions while videotaping yourself. Being able to watch yourself answer questions allows you to pinpoint your weaknesses and work on correcting them. Common missteps include using filler words like "um," "uh," or



*Class C Representative Worth Andrews addresses Professional Development Seminar attendees.*

"ah," as well as any behaviors or facial expressions that may put off the hiring board. Suny emphasized that a brief pause is far more professional than using filler words.

He also pointed out that although you want to showcase your ability to maintain quality turf, make sure to understand your audience. Remember that many hiring boards include general managers, golf professionals, and members who don't have a background in turf management. Suny recommended using analogies to convey a message so that they get a better understanding of what you are trying to explain. He used belly fat as an example, explaining that if people don't exercise and they eat too much, they get belly fat. Similarly, if we overfeed turf by applying excess nitrogen and then don't give it a workout with aeration, topdressing, grooming, etc., our turf gets its own version of belly fat: thatch. He also recommended that instead of thinking about the interview as a question-and-answer session, we try to steer it more toward a discussion or conversation so that

there is more of a connection with the interviewers.

*Anyone seeking job interview advice or coaching can contact Armen Suny at 303-570-2741 or [Armen@kkandw.com](mailto:Armen@kkandw.com).*

### Building Blocks

David Oatis of David A. Oatis Consulting was the second speaker of the day. He offered valuable advice to assistants looking to build their network, as well as their career. After 30 years with the USGA, David Oatis, who recently retired from his position as the organization's regional director of the Greens Section Northeast region, is well known to area superintendents. He began his talk by conveying the importance of having a vast network of contacts to increase your chances of getting a superintendent's position. He pointed out that while building a network within the golf industry is important, it is also essential to form a network of contacts outside the industry. Speaking with others at meetings or social events will not only help you fine-tune your communications skills, but also lead to opportunities that you might





*Dave Oatis of David A. Oatis Consulting offers assistants valuable career-building advice.*

not have had otherwise. The more contacts you have in your network, the greater the chance those contacts may prove beneficial to you, in not only your career, but also your life.

Dave went on to note that although most interviewees are concerned with the questions that will be asked during the interview, it is important to bear in mind the interview begins once you set foot on the property, and it doesn't end until you leave. Dave reminded the assistants that treating everyone they encounter with respect, regardless of the person's position or title, is a valuable practice that will not only reflect well on them during the interview process, but also benefit them throughout their life.

Dave suggested that assistants take a few action steps even before applying for a position, including cleaning up social media accounts, updating their LinkedIn accounts, and thoroughly researching the golf course, including its history, project work, and areas that might profit from improvement. Dave informed the attendees that many courses across the country have had USGA representatives come and complete a course evaluation, which can be available if the course grants you permission to view the report on file. Being able to read this report might give you the edge you need to impress the hiring board by demonstrating your sincere interest and your ability to perform due diligence prior to the interview.

Echoing Suny's advice that no detail is too trivial, Dave advised brushing up on your social graces by grabbing a copy of *Emily Post's Etiquette*. Published originally in 1812 and now in its 19th edition, the book offers

tried-and-true insights into life's every situation from digital networking and job seeking to dining etiquette. Dave warns that if a hiring board expresses interest in you, they often will invite you to a dinner. How you conduct yourself over dinner, your etiquette and manners, can make—and sometimes break—the opinion they have of you. Your goal is to impress the hiring board in every way you can and increase the likelihood that you will be their number-one choice for the job.

*Anyone seeking consulting advice, please feel free to contact David Oatis at 908-347-9436 or at david.a.oatis@gmail.com.*

## Panel Discusses Tournament Experience and Career Advice

Following a delicious lunch, assistants gathered for a panel discussion with four area superintendents who shared the ins and outs of working a major tournament, as well as thoughts on how to best position yourself for career success. The panel included Andrew Wilson of Bethpage State Park; Aaron Crouse of The Golf Club of Purchase; Dave Peterson of Silvermine Golf Club; and Weston Neff of Winged Foot Golf Club. Collectively, the superintendent panelists have been, at some point, a part of three of the four majors with The (British) Open Championship being the only exception.

As the Class C Representative, I moderated the discussion, which began with the panel members' lessons learned while being involved with a major tournament and continued with their professional advice on how to best position yourself when interviewing for a superintendent's job.

When asked, "What are some traits or work ethics you look for in an assistant superintendent?" here is what some panel members had to say:



*Search and Consulting Executive Armen Suny shares tips and techniques for a winning job interview.*

**Aaron Crouse:** “I look for an assistant who can recognize and adapt to what my priorities are, be self-starters, and have a good sense of priorities.”

**Weston Neff:** “I’m always looking for someone who has a passion for this industry. It’s very hard to succeed doing what we do if you aren’t passionate about it.”

**Dave Peterson:** “Always be willing to learn something new, and don’t be afraid to make mistakes. Even the best superintendents make mistakes. Just be able to learn from those mistakes and be confident you can learn any new skill if you put your mind to it.”

**Andrew Wilson:** “When hiring an assistant, I look for a person who is capable of planning for both the short- and long-term, who is able to communicate clearly and honestly with me, the crew, and the clubhouse staff, and who is always on the lookout for opportunities for self-improvement and ways to refine their skills.”

## The Takeaway

If there is one thing that became clear during the Class C Professional Development Day seminar, it’s that whether you became an assistant superintendent last month or five years ago, it is never too early to begin preparing to interview for a superintendent’s position. The last thing you want is to be applying for a position you have always wanted only to find out your interview skills are subpar.

We are fortunate to be associated with the MetGCSA, an organization that values and supports our development, personally and professionally. It is up to us to pursue these opportunities to improve our ability to do our jobs and to advance in our careers.

Again, many thanks to all who made this day of professional development possible. We will look forward to seeing everyone next year!

*Worth Andrews is the MetGCSA Class C representative and assistant superintendent at Brae Burn Country Club in Purchase, NY.*



*Panel discussion participants offer insight into the makings of a desirable superintendent and job candidate. From left to right: Silvermine Super Dave Peterson, Winged Foot Super Weston Neff, Brae Burn Assistant and Class C Rep Worth Andrews, Golf Club of Purchase Super Aaron Crouse, Bethpage State Park Super Andrew Wilson.*

## MetGCSA Scholarship Award Applications: Come and Get 'Em!

Application forms for the 2020 MetGCSA Scholarship Awards are available on the Met website, [www.metgcsa.org](http://www.metgcsa.org), or through MetGCSA Executive Secretary Susan O'Dowd at [sodowd@mgagolf.org](mailto:sodowd@mgagolf.org) or 914-909-4843.

Any Class A, Life A, Life A/AF, B, C, Life C, AF, or Life AF member of the MetGCSA or a dependent of a member is eligible to win. Applicants must be enrolled in a short course or in an associate's, bachelor's, master's, or Ph.D. program.

If you have any questions about the application process, please feel free to contact Scholarship Chairman Brett Chapin. You can reach him by sending an email to [green@reddingcc.org](mailto:green@reddingcc.org) or by calling 203-885-3109.

The Scholarship Committee will select recipients based on leadership, maturity, scholastic capabilities, activities, and commitment to a chosen career. **All applications MUST be RECEIVED by end of business day on Monday, June 22. Emailed applications will not be accepted!**

Scholarships will be awarded at a future date. Watch our association website for details as our plans become clearer.



## Member News

### New Members

Please join us in welcoming the following new members:

- **Michael Ford**, superintendent at The Blind Brook Club in Purchase, NY.
- **Joseph Haverilla**, assistant superintendent at Brae Burn Country Club in Purchase, NY.
- **Oliver Therrien**, assistant superintendent at Pleasantville Country Club in Pleasantville, NY.
- **Tyler Warren**, assistant superintendent at Sleepy Hollow Country Club in Scarborough, NY.
- **Kevin Whalen**, assistant superintendent at Maidstone Club in East Hampton, NY.

### Members on the Move

- **Corbin Blier** is the new superintendent at Longue Vue Club in Verona, PA. Previous position: Assistant superintendent at Fresh Meadow Country Club in Lake Success, NY.
- **Kathy Conard** is in technical sales and support with Turf Trade in Mullica Hill, NJ. Previous position: Business development manager with Spectrum Technologies in Burlington, NJ.
- **Jonathan Knol** is the new superintendent at Dyker Beach Golf Course in Brooklyn, NY. Previous position: Superintendent at Beaver Brook Country Club in Annandale, NJ.
- **Branko Zdravkoski** is the new superintendent at Pound Ridge Golf Club in Pound

Ridge, NY. Previous position: Assistant superintendent at Pound Ridge Golf Club.

### Recertified

Congratulations to the following MetGCSA members on their CGCS recertification:

- **Ken Benoit** of the New York Golf Foundation
- **Sean Cain** of Sunningdale Country Club
- **Eric Morrison** of Shennecossett Golf Course
- **Scott Niven** of The Stanwich Club
- **Christopher Smith** of Hollow Brook Country Club
- **Jared Viarengo** of Apple Brook Golf Club

### Condolences

- We would like to extend our deepest sympathy to Waccabuc Superintendent **Doug George** who suffered two losses due to Covid-19: his brother and his father-in-law. Please know that our thoughts are with you and your family, Doug.
- We would also like to offer our condolences to Rockrimmon Country Club Superintendent **Tony Girardi** and his family on the passing of his father, Anthony James Girardi, on April 4 in Narragansett, RI. He was 80. Memorial contributions may be made to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, P.O. Box 1000-Dept. 142, Memphis, TN 38101 or Shriners Charities, 1 Rhodes Place, Cranston, RI 02905.

Feature continued from page 4

You'll be reminded of things you weren't thinking about, and of course, the latest tragic events. Do we need that?

**2. Guard against misinformation** being circulated right now, particularly about the coronavirus. More often than not, it's anecdotal, but people take it as gospel and share the information with others. It's important, therefore, that you pull your information not from hearsay, but from verified news outlets that you trust. If you want reliable information on the coronavirus, for instance, the Center for Disease Control is a solid source.

**3. Surround yourself with belief-givers.** According to research by social psychologist Dr. David McClelland of Harvard, "The people you habitually associate with determine as much as 95 percent of your success or failure." Let's face it, behavior is contagious. So in this period of trials and tribulations, are you surrounding yourself with mood hoovers and energy suckers, or are your closest associates and friends belief-givers?

As ex-Navy Seal William McRaven writes in his book, *Make Your Bed: Small Things That Can Change Your Life . . . and Maybe the World*, "Life is like a small rubber boat: You cannot paddle it alone. It takes a team of good people to get you where you want to go." The key words are "team of good people," those who will inspire and support you in becoming a positive role model for those you live and work with.

Hiles quotes Life Coach Marshall Goldsmith, who says, "If you don't create and control your environment, your environment will create and control you."

In other words, don't ignore the impact your environment can have on your psyche and overall wellbeing. It is in your power to create a positive environment and surround yourself with information and people who will inspire and motivate you. In turn, you will be capable of inspiring others while developing ways to move from our current reality to a brighter future.

*Wishing you  
safety and sanity...  
happiness and harmony...  
today and for the years  
to come.*

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