

March - June 2024
VOLUME 55 NUMBER 2

Tee to Green

Published by the Metropolitan Golf Course Superintendents Association



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TEE TO GREEN is published bimonthly by the Metropolitan Golf Course Superintendents Association
49 Knollwood Road, Elmsford, NY 10523-2819
914-347-4653, FAX: 914-347-3437, METGCSA.ORG
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Tee to Green



Cover: *The Connecticut Golf Club*

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President's Message

And We're Off and Running!

With a mild and wet winter, the spring followed suit:

Water tables were elevated, and the entire Metropolitan area felt like a natural spring with water seeping from areas never seen before. This made the completion of winter projects a challenge and additional drainage work a focal point.

A Great Lineup of Events

Fortunately, things balanced out just as our golf calendar got into full swing. The Dave Mahoney Two-Ball Qualifier was just what the doctor ordered to bring guys together to enjoy another great day at Rye Golf Club courtesy of Chip Lafferty. (See the day's results on page 12).

We also had an incredible showing for the Nine & Dine at Connecticut Golf Club. I'm not sure if it was a record turnout, but it was certainly nice to see over 80 players enjoy the great work being done by Vinny Taylor and his staff in Vinny's very first year at the club. (See pages 14-15 for more on the Nine & Dine host and results.)

We have plenty of great golf to look forward to for the remainder of the year. On July 15, Tom Ashfield will be hosting this year's Member/Guest at Quaker Ridge Golf Club. Thinking outside the box, Tournament Committee Chair Steve Rabideau and the rest of the committee, joined forces to create a new twist on this annual event, setting us up for an excellent day of golf at an iconic venue.

This will be followed next by the always-fun Parent/Child Tournament and Scholarship Awards at a new venue this year: We can look forward to playing Burning Tree Country Club on August 5.

On August 26, Dave McCaffery will host the Poa/Met Championship/Met Team Qualifier at Metropolis Country Club. This year's Met Team Championship will be played in the Philadelphia area at White-marsh Valley Country Club.



**Mike Brunelle, CGCS
MetGCSA President**

With thanks to Joe Gikis and Glen Arbor Golf Club, we will be rounding out our golf season with the always-popular Invitational Tournament on October 7.

Word to the Wise: As summer temperatures rise, just a reminder that we should be mindful of heat stress, which is more likely to occur as our staff spends more time on the course prepping for club or association events. This is not something that needs to be legislated. This is something we, as managers, should do automatically to take care of our staff and ourselves each and every day.

Speaking of taking care of ourselves and our staff, we all should be sure to carve out time to attend our Summer Social, which will return to the Orienta Beach Club on July 22. Bring spouses, assistants, and other turfies to experience a great night of conversation, good eats, and lots of laughter. We all work too hard not to take the time to enjoy ourselves every now and then. I look forward to seeing everyone there.

continued on page 5

A full-page photograph of Mike Brunelle, a man with a beard and a balding head, smiling. He is wearing a green and white horizontally striped polo shirt and dark blue trousers. He is standing on a lush green golf course with large trees in the background under a blue sky with light clouds.

Feature

Mike Brunelle Elected 37th MetGCSA President

by Kevin Collins



After 12 years of service on the MetGCSA board, Upper Montclair Country Club's director of grounds, Mike Brunelle, assumed the reins as the Met's 37th president. Having served on seven board committees and then five years on the Executive Board as secretary, treasurer, vice president, and now president, Mike is clearly well-prepared to lead our association.

Further boosting his know-how, Mike says, was observing and working with his six predecessors—Blake Halderman, Glen Dube, Dave Dudones, Ken Benoit, Rob Alonzi, and Brett Chapin. And like his predecessors, Mike has begun his tenure with a clear vision of where he wants to take the association.

Pointing in the Right Direction

"Moving forward," says Mike, "I would like to work toward rekindling the old-fashioned camaraderie our association once had. When I started my first internship in the late 1990s, working for Scott Tretera at Elmwood, there was more of a brotherhood among the superintendents. I remember lunch with Tony Grasso, cookouts at Sean Cain's house, and rainy days at the local pub hanging out with local supers and assistants. I'd like us to revisit those days, to generate that same "we're all in this together" spirit.

"I'd also like to establish closer bonds with our neighboring associations: Long Island, the Hudson Valley, Connecticut, and New Jersey. If we are able to join forces on issues facing our industry," continues Mike, "we will present a much more formidable defense.

"Speaking of joining forces, another of my goals is to continue to foster open communication among the different allied associations: club managers, head pros, and the clubs' comptroller associations. It is vitally important that all club management staff be on the same page, keeping an open line of communication, while building and maintaining productive working relationships.

Together, we can work to meet the needs of our Met area members. The success of our clubs relies on this."

When It All Began

Mike got his first taste of the turfgrass industry when he was just 13, working summers on the crew at Pine Grove Golf Course, a small operation near his Southamptton, MA, hometown. But it wasn't until Mike saw the superb course conditions at Champions Golf Club in Houston, TX, where his cousin, Jeff, competed in the 1993 U.S. Amateur, that he began to view turfgrass management as a potential career. Jeff worked mornings at The Orchards Golf Club in South Hadley, MA, and helped Mike secure a summer job on the grounds crew there. Though Mike will tell you at that point that he became hooked on the game and the industry, another sport was still calling to him: baseball.

"In high school," says Mike, "I played varsity soccer, basketball, and baseball. But baseball was my number one sport. I played the hot corner, third base. I was a line drive hitter and I had a gun for an arm. When I graduated, I went to St. Michael's College just outside Burlington, VT, to play baseball while pursuing a degree in business management. But at the end of my freshman year, I did some soul searching. Is this what I really want to do for the rest of my life?

Mike decided to leave St. Michael's, his baseball career, and his business degree behind. The next year, Mike continued his education at Holyoke Community College and the following year enrolled in the turfgrass management program at UMass.

"I had some great internships while at UMass," remembers Mike. "The first two were in the Met section. In 1998, I interned with Scott Tretera at Elmwood Country Club. In 1999, I was with Steve Renzetti at Wykagyl. And in 2000, I was with Steve Cook at the iconic Oakland Hills Country Club in Michigan. All three experiences served me well."

Following his graduation from UMass in 2001, Mike spent eight months in Florida at the Old Collier Golf Club in Naples. He returned to New York area to accept a second assistant's position with Steve Renzetti, who was then superintendent at Quaker Ridge.

"I ended up in the shop at Quaker as we were in the process of replacing our mechanic," says Mike, "so after one year, I moved on to Bedford Golf & Tennis, working for Bob Nielsen. It was a great experience. Even though the club is in one of the more affluent areas of Westchester County, the budget didn't reflect it. Bob always had to do more with less but took the challenge in stride.

"We did everything in-house, and the maintenance crew was responsible for not only maintaining the golf course, but also the tennis courts and pool. Bob taught me how to grow *Poa* and how to deliver consistently excellent course conditions to the membership. Working with Bob, I gained an incredible work ethic."

When Mike left Bedford Golf & Tennis in 2007, it was to become the superintendent of the Old Course at Trump National Golf Club ~ Bedminster, working under then Director of Grounds Greg Nicoll.

"At that point, the New Course was still being grown in," Mike recalls. "Greg was involved mostly with the construction and a variety of club matters. He basically threw me the keys."

Within six months, Greg left to work for Harrell's, which gave Mike a chance to advance. "I knew they were lining up other candidates to replace him, but with the support of Greg, the general manager, and the director of golf, I spoke with Mr. Trump. He outlined what was expected of me and of the golf course and offered me the position of director of grounds."

Over the next two years, while expanding the 18-hole facility to 36, Mike learned the ins and outs of the business and how to work within an organization.

In 2009, with sizable experience under his belt, Mike applied and was hired for his current superintendent's position at Upper Montclair Country Club in Clifton, NJ. In his 15-year tenure at this 27-hole Robert Trent Jones / A.W. Tillinghast course, Mike has implemented a master plan that included the installation of a new irrigation system, the construction of a new maintenance facility, a clubhouse renovation, the repositioning of bunkers, and the lengthening of some holes. A new bunker restoration is coming up. "They're a little deep and hard to get in and out of," Mike laughs.

Striking the Perfect Balance

Though juggling his on-the-job challenges and association commitments can be a tall order, Mike is still able to carve out time for his family and not miss a beat. Mike has four children: Gracie (10), Tedy (8), and twin daughters Emmy and Norah (6). And Jenni, Mike's wife of twelve years, is, as Mike puts it, "the glue that holds it all together."

"In addition to Jenni's support," says Mike, "I'm fortunate to work with a solid group of people, both on the board and at Upper Montclair. It's their dedication and support that enables me to keep all the balls in the air."

Mike, we wish you every success in your new role as MetGCSA president.

Kevin Collins, a member of the Tee to Green Editorial Committee, is NE/Mid-Atlantic Territory Manager for Ocean Organics.



The Brunelle family decked out for a special event (left to right): Norah, Tedy, Grace, Emmy and Mike and wife Jenni.

Upcoming Events

More Events to Come!

Met Events

Summer Social/Clambake

Monday, July 22

7 to 10 p.m.

Oriente Beach Club
Mamaroneck, NY

Be sure to join us for our annual Summer Social at the Oriente Beach Club overlooking Long Island Sound. Family, friends, and coworkers are welcome to come enjoy a delicious lobster clambake dinner, open bar, and entertainment.

Parent/Child Tournament & Scholarship Awards

Monday, August 5

Burning Tree Country Club
Greenwich, CT

Host: Stephen Wickstrom

Join fellow members and their children for the Met's annual Parent/Child Tournament

and Scholarship Awards Dinner, where this year's well-deserved scholarship winners are being honored.

The Poa/Met Championship/Met Team Qualifier

Monday, August 26

Metropolis Country Club
White Plains, NY

Host: Dave McCaffrey

MetGCSA Invitational Tournament

Monday, October 7

GlenArbor Golf Club
Bedford, NY

Host: Joe Gikis

President's Message continued from page 1

Industry Support

The Environmental Impact Study, spearheaded by the New York Golf Course Foundation, is in its infancy but will benefit our association, as well as the game of golf, by joining forces with our partners in golf to protect and support this great industry and explain the beneficial impact it has on the community around us. Watch for an update as more progress is made.

Also offering a great deal of support to our industry are our sponsors. This year, they have gone above-and-beyond in their show of support. The relationships members have established with our sponsors are, no doubt, what make this the best association in the country. Our vendors are, essentially, part of our agronomic team. The knowledge they share day-to-day, whether it's related to equipment, fertility, chemicals, or new technology, is invaluable to helping us maintain some of the best-manicured properties golf has to offer. We thank you for your support.

I wish everyone timely rains and cooler-than-normal nighttime temperatures this golf season.

Mike Brunelle

MetGCSA President

Industry Events

UConn Turfgrass Field Day

Thursday, July 25

University of Connecticut
Storrs, CT

For more information, visit s.uconn.edu/TurfFieldDay2024

Rutgers Turfgrass Research Field Day: Golf & Fine Turf

Tuesday, July 30

Rutgers Horticultural Farm II
New Brunswick, NJ

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

Cornell Turfgrass Field Day

Wednesday, September 25

Cornell University
Ithaca, NY

Watch for details as the event grows closer.

The 18th Annual Dr. Joseph Troll Turf Classic

Thursday, October 10

Fenway Golf Club
Scarsdale, NY

Host: Rob Alonzi

This year's UMass Alumni Turf Group fundraiser will be hosted by Pelham Country Club in support of turf education and research at the University of Massachusetts. Please plan to attend this worthy fundraiser. Entry forms and additional information are available online at www.alumniturfgroup.com.

The Met Area Team Championship

Monday, October 21

Whitemarsh Valley Country Club
Lafayette Hill, PA

Host: Darren Farrar

Jeff White Assumes the Reigns as 87th President of GCSAA

Jeff White, CGCS, superintendent at Indian Hills Country Club in Mission Hills, KS, was elected to a one-year term as 87th president of the GCSAA at the association's Conference and Trade Show in Phoenix, AZ.

White served as vice president of the association in 2023 and has been a member of the association's board of directors since 2018. A 33-year member of GCSAA, White is also a past president of the Heart of America GCSA.

White is the director of agronomy at Indian Hills Country Club in Mission Hills, KS, where he has worked since 2013. He previously held superintendent positions at Lake Quivira (Kansas) Country Club and Falcon Ridge Golf Course in Lenexa, KS. He also worked as an assistant superintendent at Lake Quivira Country Club and Alvarado Country Club in Lawrence, KS.

White holds a bachelor's degree in horticulture/turf management from Iowa State University.

GCSAA Board of Directors at a Glance

President

Jeff L. White, CGCS, superintendent at Indian Hills Country Club in Mission Hills, KS

Vice President

T.A. Barker, CGCS, superintendent at Fore Lakes Golf Course in Taylorsville, UT

Secretary/Treasurer

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- Douglas D. Dykstra, CGCS, golf course superintendent at White Mountain Country Club in Pinetop, AZ
- H. Scott Griffith, CGCS, director of agronomy at the University of Georgia Golf Course in Athens, GA



- Steven J. Hammon, superintendent at Traverse City Country Club in Traverse City, MI
- Gregory B. Jones, CGCS, MG, director of agronomy at Champions Run in Omaha, NE
- Marc E. Weston, CGCS, superintendent at Indian Hill Country Club in Newington, CT

Immediate Past President

Kevin P. Breen, CGCS, superintendent at La Rinconada Country Club in Los Gatos, CA

Mark F. Jordan, CGCS, natural resource leader at Westfield Country Club in Westfield Center, Ohio, retires from the board after serving the past year as president.

MetGCSA Makes Its Mark in GCSAA National Championship

by Scott Niven, CGCS

Phoenix, AZ, known for its superb weather and pristine golf courses, played host to this year's GCSAA National Championship event that saw 650 players from all over the country converge for some serious competition. The event was played over three days at six golf courses, including Camelback, Whirlwind Golf Club, and Talking Stick Golf Club, and it featured flighted play in the National Championship, Golf Classic, and Four-Ball.

The courses' lush landscapes and challenging layouts provided the perfect setting for unforgettable moments and memorable shots. The MetGCSA was well represented by roughly 20 participants. Here's how they fared in the three main events:

In the National Championship

Though none of our players took home the National Championship trophy, two members made their mark. The Patterson Club's Jason Meersman finished 54th and Quaker Ridge's Tom Ashfield came in 55th.

This year's champion was none other than Seth Strickland, the GCSAA Class A director of agronomy at Miami Beach Golf Club in Florida. Seth shot six under par besting Tyler Gabriel from Wildhorse Resort in Pendleton, OR, by 3 shots. He was awarded his 6th championship trophy—the most of anyone in the history of this event.

In the Four-Ball

We had a number of noteworthy scores posted by Met members. In Flight I, Allied Nutrients' Andy Drohen and Quaker Ridge's Tom Ashfield finished 7th Place Gross, while Sunningdale's Sean Cain and Century's Kevin Seibel came in 23rd Place Gross.

In Flight II, Patterson's Jason Meersman and Cerbat Cliffs Mike Meersman finished 2nd Place Gross. The other nice finishes in Flight II: 8th Place Net winners Tom Weinert of Plant Food Company and Upper

Montclair's Mike Brunelle. Finishing 21st Place Net were Westchester's David Dudones and Class LA member Jim Swaitlowski, and last but not least, coming in 22nd Place Net, were Meadow Brook Super John Carlone and Maxwell Turf's Doug Heron.

In Flight III, the Met had two winning teams. Redding Country Club's Brett Chapin and Indian Hill's Marc Weston finished 16th Place Gross, while Fenway's Rob Alonzi and Bedford Golf & Tennis's Bob Nielsen came in 29th Place Net.

In the Golf Classic

Met members made some noteworthy finishes in the Golf Classic. Tom Weinert of Plant Food Company placed an impressive 4th in the Class AF Flight, while Tony Hooks of Due Process Golf & Stable finished 34th Place Gross in the Classic I Flight.

In Flight II, four players made their mark. Brae Burn's Blake Halderman finished 19th Place Gross, while Winged Foot's Stephen Rabideau and Meadow Brook's John Carlone came in 22nd and 29th Gross, respectively. Finishing out Flight II was 38th Gross winner Century Country Club's Kevin Seibel.

There were also four winners in Flight III. GlenArbor's Joe Gikis finished 26th Place Net, while another Net win was Upper Montclair's Mike Brunelle, finishing in 40th place. The two Gross wins were Pelham's Jeff Wentworth at 31st Place Gross and Westchester's David Dudones at 38th.

Flight IV Net wins were Bedford Golf & Tennis's Bob Nielsen, who finished with a notable score of 3rd Place Net, and Fenway's Rob Alonzi, ranking 20th Place Net.

Perhaps the most noteworthy finishes were among the Super Seniors. Stanwich's Scott Niven finished 5th Place Gross, while Class LA contestant Jim Swiatlowski came in 5th Place Net.

In the Team Competition

The following three Met teams fared well in the Team Competition:

10th Place Gross / Met #1

Jason Meersman, *The Patterson Club*; Tom Ashfield, *Quaker Ridge GC*; Stephen Rabideau, *Winged Foot GC*; Kevin Seibel, *Century CC*

13th Place Net / Met #3

Tony Hooks, *Due Process Golf & Stable*; Steven Whipple, *West Point GC*; Rob Alonzi, *Fenway GC*; Bob Nielsen, *Bedford Golf & Tennis*

24th Place Net / Met #2

Joe Gikis, *GlenArbor GC*; Jeff Wentworth, *Pelham CC*; David Dudones, *Westchester CC*; Mike Brunelle, *Upper Montclair CC*

Special Thanks

We would like to offer a special thank you to the GCSAA staff for their efforts in putting this special event together and to all of the sponsors who make this event possible, especially the Toro Company for their generous support as the title sponsor for the past 30 years.

As the tournament concluded, and winners claimed their prizes, there was a sense of fulfillment and achievement that permeated the air. But beyond the trophies and accolades, what truly stood out was the sense of community and passion for the game that brought everyone together. Congratulations to all who anticipated in this year's golf championships!

Next year, the GCSAA Golf Championships will be held in San Diego, CA. Hope you all will take advantage of this opportunity to network with superintendents from across the U.S. and around the world.

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

MGA Green Chair Education Series Brings Golf Course Environmental Efforts to Light

The MGA's annual Green Chair Education Series took place on March 29 at Alpine Country Club in Demarest, NJ. Designed to educate club leaders and the golfing public about issues affecting the golf course industry, the program offered highly informative talks from industry experts.

As always, the highlight of the day was the presentation of the Arthur P. Weber Environmental Leaders in Golf Award. Now in its 18th year, this high honor was awarded to the Noyac Golf Club in Sag Harbor, NY, joining the lineup of MetGCSA member supers and clubs who were recognized for their environmental efforts the past several years.

Environmental Stewardship at Work

Among Noyac's award-worthy environmental efforts are converting two acres of unused land to a native area beneficial to the Peconic Land Trust and the formation of wildlife habitat. Deer and eagles are often seen around the club grounds, while such habitats also help pollinators like bees to thrive. The club has also improved its water efficiency and done its part in helping improve the quality of the waters in the nearby Peconic Bay. The club also emphasizes environmental education for its interns and assistants, ensuring they continue important stewardship practices in the future.

Insights From Industry Experts

Presentations began with **Brian Gietka**, a Mid-Atlantic agronomist with the USGA Green Section. Gietka discussed the importance of making time for and prioritizing cultural practices that are integral to producing good turf. While these types of programs may inhibit play at times, they are crucial for the long-term health of golf courses and the goal to provide players with top-notch conditions. Gietka shared insight on operations, such as aeration, topdressing, and more, while also discussing the importance of communication with golfers through the processes.



Noyac superintendent Brian Goleski and assistant Ryan Bain (center, L-R) accept the Arthur P. Weber Environmental Leaders in Golf Award, pictured with MetGCSA executive director Mike McCall (L) and MGA director, member services Kevin Kline (R).

MetGCSA member **Bob Nielsen**, a long-time superintendent at Bedford Golf & Tennis Club and last year's Weber Award recipient, followed by sharing newly implemented regulations and what they could mean for local golf courses. He also discussed bills that are currently working their way through the regulatory process and their potential impacts.

Garrett Bastardi, president of T3 (Turf Threat Tracker) and co-founder of UmbrellaWx, closed the opening session of presentations, discussing how weather impacts course conditions, as well as superintendents' jobs. He shared how different weather conditions and patterns impact conditions in both short- and long-term periods and how it impacts daily and long-term decision-making for superintendents.

After breaking for the presentation of the Weber Award, golf course architect **Jim Nagle** spoke to the crowd about renovations and restorations. Nagle, a member of the American Society of Golf Course Architects who recently launched Nagle Design Works

after 25 years with Forse Design, shared a timeline of trends in golf architecture, including the rise in restorations in recent decades. He also shared valuable information for those embarking on such a project, from how to select an architect and setting a priority list for the project to how to educate members on the importance of the plan and its implementation.

The day's programming concluded with a lightning round by **Elliott Dowling**, regional director of the East region for the USGA's Green Section. Dowling covered a variety of his most-frequently discussed topics from course consulting visits and interactions with superintendents over the past year. Dowling shared insight on many topics, including aeration timing and methods, native grass selection and placement, tree management, and construction and renovation trends.

Watch for next year's education series, and be sure to encourage "the powers that be" at your club to attend this highly informative event!

Advocacy Day Returns to In-Person Sessions in Albany

by Michael Maffei, CGCS

With the pandemic and then an ill-timed snow storm at play, this year's Advocacy Day was the first in three years to be held in person.

Twenty-two attendees convened in Albany on March 4, making 36 legislator visits. Many also met with the New York State Deputy Secretary for Food and Agriculture, Kevin King, and Senior Policy Advisor for Food and Agriculture Lindsey McMahon. I joined Bob Nielsen, Kevin Doyle, and Mike McCall, in representing the MetGCSA.

Tom Kaplun, NYSTA Government Relations Co-Chair, welcomed everyone to Advocacy Day 2024 and went on to communicate our top two issues and concerns to legislators:

- Funding for the Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Fund (TESF)
- The challenges facing the green industry in navigating the change to battery-powered equipment

Speakers Todd Vandervort of the Vandervort Group and Renee St. Jacques of the New York Farm Bureau gave a brief overview of the legislative climate in Albany and the overall agricultural budget requests for the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

Guest speaker Senator Bill Weber welcomed everyone to Albany and, in a nutshell, said that as a person involved in the golf business, he could relate to the challenges faced by the green industry daily.

Here are NYSTA's positions on the two core issues:

Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Fund

Founded in 2006, the Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Fund has successfully funded over \$2 million in turf research, education, best management practices, and professional outreach in New York State. Last year, NYSTA received \$175,000 in funding and, in 2024-2025, is requesting that a line item of \$200,000 be appropriated for the Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Fund.

This funding will continue to help support:

- New York Greengrass Association Outreach
- Green Industry Educational Webinars
- Professional Promotion Through Research and Education
- Environmental Stewardship Education
- Best Management Practices (BMPs) for New York State Golf Courses, which includes continued updating and enhancement of BMPs and support in implementing Facility BMPs
- Workforce Development through the New York State Apprenticeship Program

Update: As of 4/23/24, the \$200,000 allocation was approved in the State Budget

New York State Renewable-Energy-Powered Equipment for Landscape Use

We support efforts being made in the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act.

There is increasing pressure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through the adoption of equipment that can be powered by renewable energy:

- **We support** these efforts, and there are numerous examples throughout the green industry in New York State where this equipment is slowly being incorporated.



There are still many obstacles to overcome, however, before a large-scale transition takes place:

- The technology and infrastructure to support large-scale, commercial use of battery-powered lawn and landscape equipment are currently inadequate.
- Facilities need significant resources to upgrade their electrical infrastructure to support safe battery storage and charging.
- The cost difference between gas and battery-powered equipment is a major obstacle for commercial users as it is two to four times more expensive for battery power.
- **We support** federal and state funding for the research and development of battery and electric equipment.
- **We support** working with legislators on building a roadmap for transitioning to more cost-effective battery-powered equipment.
- **We oppose** S02132/A02133 (Liu/Dinowitz) prohibiting the use of gas-powered lawn and leaf blowers from May 1 to September 30.
- **We oppose** A705 (Carroll) proposing to ban the sale of gas-powered leaf blowers and lawn mowers by 2025.

Thank you to all who attended, and a special thank you to NYSTA's Government Relations Co-chairs Tom Kaplun and Bob Nielsen for the time and effort they put into organizing this important event.

Michael Maffei, a Life A member, is a past president of NYSTA and a member of the NYSTA Government Relations Committee.

Special Thanks to Our Sponsors

BASF, Capital Region Golf Course Owners Association, Golf Course Superintendents Association of New York, Hudson Valley Golf Course Superintendents Association, Landscape Contractors Association of Long Island, Long Island Golf Course Superintendents Association, Metropolitan Golf Association, Metropolitan Golf Course Superintendents Association, Michael Bellantoni LLC, National Association of Landscape Professionals, New York Green Industry Council, Northeast Chapter Golf Course Superintendents Association, Ocean Organics, RISE, Syngenta, Target Specialty Products.

Winter Seminar Takes Data Analysis to a New Level

by Steven McGlone and Chip Lafferty

Though taking place months ago, the principles and tactics learned at the Winter Seminar and Trade Show held at Westchester Country Club have helped those superintendents who attended (me for one!) to reevaluate, and perhaps reset, some of their management practices from the prior season.

In addition to the presenters, a lobby full of vendors offered a wealth of knowledge and information about new and proven products. We would like to express our gratitude for our vendors' continued support at this event, as well as throughout the growing season. You'll find their names and numbers listed on page 11.

The Speakers

Met president Mike Brunelle kicked off the day with a reminder that we need to continue our fight in Albany to protect our pesticide arsenal from being restricted. Neonicotinoids will be off the market very soon followed by Chlorothalonil, much to the dismay of many who manage their properties by regularly spraying this product. I think many understand that we will have to begin finding ways to reduce or eliminate our use of this chemical now before we are required to and are caught without another control method.

The first speaker was **Dr. Bill Kreuser of the Greenskeepers App**. Bill's topic was *Targeted Apps: Take Control of your GPS Sprayer*. He highlighted the many types of GPS sprayer technologies and noted that each manufacturer carries different methods of receiving and directing the applications. The talk focused on the accumulation and implementation of data, which was the common theme among many of the talks of the day.

The next speaker was **Dr. Richard Buckley of Rutgers University**. Buckley's focus was on his pathology lab and the reduction of annual samples he is receiving. Buckley noted that the advancements in

chemistries of the products we use have reduced the amount of damaged turf that is in need of diagnosis, an interesting step forward.

A very technical presentation on drainage was given by **Dennis Hurley, President of Turf Drainage Company of America**. Hurley has become the drainage guru, and his work includes some of the most prestigious clubs in the country. Hurley's company examines a course's current drainage system and works with superintendents to build a comprehensive plan to effectively drain a property while remaining sensitive to budget. His drainage plans address the four pillars of a drainage: surface, seepage, collection, and transportation.

He noted that taking as much drainage water back to the irrigation pond as possible is his primary goal. His company has patented collection systems utilizing the energy from pressurized irrigation laterals to draw or pump drainage water uphill and off the property or back to the irrigation pond. Some of his systems perform as deep as 12 feet!

Awards Luncheon

The Awards Luncheon portion of the seminar was a real treat, with great food, great conversation, and the customary awards presentations. Each year, the MetGCSA Board honors the notable achievements and support of two individuals: A MetGCSA member with its Distinguished Member Award and a public figure deemed worthy of its prestigious John Reid Lifetime Achievement Award.

Receiving this year's Distinguished Member Award was LAF member Anthony Grasso Sr., who joined the Met 59 years ago and exemplified the award's criteria by displaying exceptional participation in association events and activities.

Unanimously selected to receive the John Reid Lifetime Achievement Award was longtime NBC sportscaster and Winged Foot member Dan Hicks, who has shown great support of not only the golf industry, but

moreover, the crucial role of the golf course superintendent. Unable to accept the award in person, seminar goers were able to watch a prerecorded video interview skillfully conducted by our executive director, Mike McCall.

Another of the Met's prestigious awards, the Sherwood A. Moore Award, is presented only on occasions when members identify a recipient who has demonstrated exceptional dedication to advancing the image, status, and reputation of golf course superintendents. This year, Brae Burn Superintendent Blake Halderman was the obvious choice for his ongoing service to the association and industry.

With the awards presented, attendees turned their attention to presentations from the final two speakers.

Turfgrass Consultant Adam Moeller presented *Aeration & Topdressing: Using Data to Determine if We're Doing too Much*. There is that word data again. Moeller introduced us to OM246, a standardized method of sampling and identifying organic matter percentage in our rootzones. Basically, it involves measuring first down to 2 cm, then from 2 cm to 4 cm, and finally from 4 cm to 6 cm.

He notes that organic matter percentage in the past is a number that varies drastically from course to course and even within the same course. Moeller posted a chart showing various scholars and their analyses of acceptable target organic matter percentages in the top 3 inches of a rootzone. They varied from .5 percent to nearly 8 percent, but the mean was about 3 percent. Stay tuned for more information about OM246.

Moeller also discussed aeration philosophies and technologies and relayed that whatever aeration plan you, as a course manager, are selling to your membership, remind them that it's always in flux. Communication is key with any aeration and topdressing program. He presented his thoughts on infiltration and porosity, emphasizing that trying to get the Ksat to 15-20"/hour is too high.

Dr. Frank Rossi from Cornell closed out the day with an electric talk titled *More for Less: Maximizing Course Playability, Minimizing Environmental Impact*. Frank, like the other presenters, is all about data and applying data to the advantage of both playability and the environment. From golf cleat issues and using the stimp meter, to nutrient management programs focusing on targeted application for all our different growing needs, Frank hits the nail on the head when he says we need to “wake up and be more aware of our environment as course managers.”

Be There Next Year!

Once again, our preseason seminar delivered topnotch presentations from some of the golf industry’s best specialists. Thanks to Education Chair Dave Peterson and his committee for arranging another successful day.

We would also like to extend a sincere thank you to host Superintendent David Dudones and the entire Westchester Country Club staff for doing such a superb job—once again—in making this a thoroughly enjoyable experience for all who attended. Last but not least, we would like to thank our vendors for their continued participation and support.

All this is what makes our Winter Seminar one of the most valuable educational opportunities we have available to us all year. Be sure not to miss this career-building event in 2025.

Steven McGlone, a member of the Tee to Green Editorial Committee, is superintendent at Siwanoy Country Club in Bronxville, NY.

Chip Lafferty, co-chair of the Tee to Green Editorial Committee, is superintendent at Rye Golf Club in Rye, NY.

Special Thanks to Our 2024 Winter Seminar Exhibitors

We’d like to thank all the vendors who participated in this year’s Winter Seminar. As a show of appreciation, we’re listing the exhibitors here, along with their areas of specialty and contact information.

When the opportunity arises, we hope you’ll show these contractors and suppliers the same support they’ve shown us during our Winter Seminar—and throughout the year.

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Competition Fierce in Two-Ball Qualifier

by Blake Halderman, CGCS

Thanks to Chip Lafferty and his team at Rye Golf Club, we had a wonderful day on April 29 for the 2024 Dave Mahoney Two-Ball Qualifier. The golf course was in fabulous shape, and it made for a great day of competition followed by an upbeat vibe for dinner on the Whitby Castle clubhouse patio. I also want to thank the rest of the team at Rye who went above and beyond to take care of us: Golf Pro Kyle Baehler, General Manager Chris Correale, and Chef JB.

We had approximately 40 two-man teams vying for 30 spots, so the competition was fierce. Clearly, Chip had some home course advantage as he and his partner, Century's Kevin Seibel, shot a 2 under par 69 to take home the Low Gross prize. They came in three shots better than the next team of Westchester Turf's Dave Lippman and West Point Superintendent Steve Whipple, who shot 72 gross.

On the Net side, Bedford's Bob Nielsen (Mr. "I get two shots per hole") and Biltmore Rep Joe Alonzi shot an amazing 8 under par followed by Tony "Captain" Hooks from Due Process Golf & Stables with partner Jeff

Wentworth from Pelham Country Club, who were 6 under par.

With that great play, Chip and Kevin secured the Second Seed on the gross side only behind last year's champions Jason Meersman from The Patterson Club and Mike Dachowski from Shelter Harbor Golf Club who automatically gets the First Seed. Nielsen and Alonzi will hold down the Second Seed in the Net Division as Metro's Todd Apgar and Patriot Hills Superintendent Evan Weymouth have the automatic bid as last year's Net Champion.

Event of the Day Results

Gross Team Winners

- 69 Chip Lafferty, *Rye Golf Club*
Kevin Seibel, *Century Country Club*
- 72 Dave Lippman, *Westchester Turf*
Steve Whipple, *West Point Golf Course*

Net Team Winners

- 63 Bob Nielsen, *Bedford Golf & Tennis*
Joe Alonzi, *Biltmore Turf*
- 65 Tony Hooks, *Due Process Golf & Stables*
Jeff Wentworth, *Pelham Country Club*

Beyond Team Prizes

Longest Drive

Jason Meersman, *The Patterson Club*

Closest to the Pin

- #3 Steve Whipple 2'
West Point Golf Course
- #10 Tony Hooks 9'4"
Due Process Golf & Stables
- #14 Grover Alexander 2'2"
Hudson Hills Golf Club
(No he didn't make a birdie!)
- #17 Jeff Wentworth 7'
Pelham Country Club

Congratulations to all who qualified for this season-long event. For those who missed the cut this year, we hope you'll try again next April.

Match Deadlines and Updates

Please be sure to complete your matches by the deadlines below so that the event flows smoothly all summer:

First Round Completed ~ June 30
Quarter Finals ~ August 11
Semi-Finals ~ September 15
Finals ~ October 20

The matches in both the First and Second Flights are underway, so please be sure to contact Tournament Co-Chair Stephen Rabideau with the results of your match along with any interesting shots, matches, or scores so we can highlight them in the next *Tee to Green*.

Blake Halderman, a member of the Tournament Committee, is superintendent at Brae Burn Country Club in Purchase, NY.





Nine & Dine Hotly Contested at Connecticut Golf Club

by Jim Pavonetti, CGCS

On Monday, June 3, Director of Grounds Vincent Taylor hosted the MetGCSA's popular Nine & Dine event at the newly renovated Connecticut Golf Club in Easton, CT. A half-day event, the Nine & Dine allowed even the busiest of supers time to kick back and enjoy playing this superb venue.

Not-to-Be-Missed Golf Course

The brainchild of Lawrence A. Wein, a lawyer and real estate investor, the course was designed by renowned golf course architect Geoffrey Cornish and built in 1966 with the sole mission of providing "a golf retreat in the middle of a stunning New England landscape, far removed from the busyness of daily life."

As Nine & Dine contestants could see, the course boasts multiple doglegs, elevation changes, and water hazards in a serene country setting. Three of the club's four par threes can be set up to exceed 200 yards, and all four require golfers to play their tee shots over water. Another unique feature is the course's first hole: It's their longest, at a 575-yard par five. How was that for a greeting!

In addition to the rugged New England terrain accented with rock outcroppings, the real "teeth" of the course lies within The Connecticut Golf Club's greens. Throughout your round, you were treated to greens with a variety of contours, shapes, sizes, and multiple tiers. A notable example of this was on the sixteenth hole, a par four that boasts a green with a depth of 68 yards and four tiers, offering a heck of a journey if you were putting from the front portion of the green to a back-hole location!

Vinny entered the club at the tail end of their major renovation project working with Golf Course Architect Joel Weiman to finish up the several-year-long construction project. "The outcome is great," says Vinny, explaining, "All the bunkers have been done using the Better Billy construction method and the installation of new bunker sand."

"Lots of new tees have been constructed along with approach and fairway expansions

on many holes." Vinny continues, "Many trees have been taken out to give greater views of the course and to make the rock outcroppings, which are a staple of the landscape at the club, more visible."

Born to Be a Turfgrass Manager

Vinny is in his rookie year at The Connecticut Golf Club, but is hardly a newcomer to the business. He grew up in Bloomington, IN, working at his parents' nine-hole, par three golf course. "This was truly a family affair," says Vinny. "My parents and I would get the golf course ready in the morning, and then they would retreat to the back of the clubhouse where they ran their law practice."

"It was here that I fell in love with playing golf and became fascinated with turf management." Growing up on the golf course, Vinny not only helped manage the agronomics of growing grass, he was also the mechanic and chemical applicator. "On weekends," he says, "I would run the clubhouse in the afternoons by checking in customers."

After 15 years at his parents' facility, Vinny knew he wanted to continue his turf career. He earned a science degree from his local community college and then enrolled in the Rutgers Two-Year Turf Management Program. Vinny interned at Eagle Point for one season in Wilmington, NC, and after graduating from the Rutgers program in 2015, he secured a second assistant's position with Stephen Rabideau at Winged Foot Golf Club.

"I worked at Winged Foot for eight seasons, working with Gil Hanse on the restoration of the West course," explains Vinny. "We hosted the 2020 U.S. Open during the pandemic. It was a challenge." But his hard work apparently paid off: Vincent was promoted to superintendent of golf courses for the past three seasons before landing his current position at The Connecticut Golf Club. In the midst of his transition to Connecticut, Vinny married his wife of three years, Kim, and they now live happily-ever-after in Stamford, CT, with their one-year-old son, Jackson.



Vincent Taylor

Now and Into the Future

When asked how his first season is going, Vinny had high praise for the club and his working relationships: "My experience so far at The Connecticut Golf Club has been amazing," says Vinny. "The membership is filled with very down-to-earth, good people. The pro, John DiPilato Jr., and I have a great working relationship, and he is one of my biggest supporters. Also, the grounds crew has stepped up and really transitioned well to the new maintenance program we are establishing."

Vinny's maintenance plans now and down the road will include, first, producing firmer and faster conditions by managing thatch through intensive core aeration and cultural practices. "We will also be implementing a more complete fescue management program to control weeds in the natives," says Vinny.

During the renovation, strategic groups of trees were removed, and some areas were converted to native fescue. This, according to Vinny, has become one focal point for the membership. "Now that the renovation process is complete," adds Vinny, "the club and I would like to host more minor tournaments in the next few years with the MetPGA, MGA, and our own association, the MetGCSA."

See page 15 for the outcome of this event.

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

Scorecard

Nine & Dine's Big Wins

by JR LaPan

Nine & Diners played an enjoyable and challenging round, thanks to Connecticut Golf Club's Director of Grounds Vincent Taylor and his team led by Shawn Andreason, Alex Burr, and Mike Morataya. With 87 MetGCSA members registered, both the front and back nines were occupied.

We would like to offer our gratitude to PGA Professionals John Dipilato and Pete Ballo for their organization, along with Director of Operations Debbie Wallenta, whose support was invaluable.

Congratulations to those who won the Nine & Dine scramble along with the proxy winners.

Front Nine Winners

1st Rich Apgar, *Metro Turf Specialists*,
Josh Haugh, *Whippoorwill Club*, Dan
Schena, *Siwanoy Country Club*
(Won by match of cards)

Back Nine Winners

1st Michael Drowne, *Wee Burn Country
Club*, Ken Dicillo, *Wee Burn Country
Club*, Riley Tewksbury, *Wee Burn
Country Club*, Tom Smith III, *Wee
Burn Country Club*

Closest to the Pin

#5 Bill Perlee at 22'5"
Class LA
#8 Brian Bontemps at 10'8"
Noble Turf
#10 Chris Steffen at 13'
Candlewood Lake Club
#13 Riley Tewksbury at 8'3"
Wee Burn Country Club

Longest Drive

#1 Seamus O'Neill, *Metropolis Country
Club*
#14 Michael Drowne, *Wee Burn Country
Club*

JR LaPan, a member of the Tournament Committee, is superintendent at Country Club of Darien in Darien, CT.

Front Nine Winners (left to right): Dan Schena of Siwanoy, Josh Haugh of Whippoorwill, and Rich Apgar of Metro Turf Specialists.



Back Nine Winners from Wee Burn Country Club (left to right): Mike Drowne, Ken DiCillo, Riley Tewksbury, and Tom Smith.

A Member/Guest of a Different Kind

Tom Ashfield and Quaker Ridge Welcome Their Third MetGCSA Event

by Chip Lafferty

Once again, Tom Ashfield and Quaker Ridge Golf Club have agreed to host a MetGCSA event, this time, our annual Member/Guest. Unlike past events, however, you won't be greeted and catered to by clubhouse staff. And there will be no golf pros or caddies on hand. You see, that day, the club's doors will be closed to business.

The MetGCSA, however, will have the run of this top-rated Tillinghast course, as well as the use of the golf carts. Then, post-golf, contestants will be able to belly up to one of several local food trucks and dine on the lovely clubhouse patio. It's sure to be a memorable event!

Quaker's Beginning

A classic Tillinghast design, Quaker Ridge opened in 1916 as a par 70, with a current playing yardage of 7,005 yards. Quaker Ridge is renowned for its world-class golf conditions. It has received numerous accolades over the years, not the least of which was its #71 ranking in *Golf Digest's* 2019 list of "Top 100 courses in the United States."

Quaker has hosted many prestigious events over the years, including the 1936 Met Open, where Byron Nelson won his first professional event. In 1997, there was the Walker Cup, then three Met Opens, three Met Amateurs, and, yes, three Met PGA Championships.

In 2018, the club hosted the Curtis Cup becoming one of a select few clubs to host both a Walker Cup and Curtis Cup. On an annual basis, Quaker Ridge hosts the Hochster Tournament, which is an amateur event attracting some of the best golfers in the Metropolitan Area, as well as from around the country.

Now, on July 15, MetGCSA members will have the opportunity to experience this Tillinghast gem.

Quaker's Enhancements

In its nearly 100 years of existence, Quaker has undergone relatively few changes but has made some notable refinements to the course. The first big step was bringing Tillinghast back in 1925 to utilize a newly

purchased tract of land. In 1965, Robert Trent Jones added some tees and removed some outdated bunkers, and from 1991 to 1993, Rees Jones completed some bunker work and added a few new tees.

Over the past 20 years, Architect Gil Hanse has been the catalyst for bringing Quaker Ridge back to its original glory. Tom's assistant, Connor Meth, a computer whiz, was able to create overlays of the aeri- als from 1925 and 1940, which allowed Gil and his team to recreate the original shape and size of the greens and surrounding features before rebuilding to USGA specs.

Tom and his staff have been accomplish- ing this arduous task by rebuilding three greens each year. Once this is complete, the club is shooting to install new irrigation over the course of 2026 and 2027.

Tom's Trek to Quaker

Tom's love for the game dates back to his first regular job as a caddie at Orchard Lake Country Club in Michigan. He was 15 and would spend all of his summer days "loop- ing" where he quickly became one of the top caddie-jocks at the club.

After finishing high school in 1983, Tom didn't immediately opt for a career in turf. Instead, he entered the army on the G.I. Bill to earn money for college. He originally thought about pursuing a career as an FBI agent, but Tom still had a hankering for a good game of golf and would play on what- ever golf course he could find.

While stationed in Germany, Tom was selected for special duty in Belgium guard- ing the residence of a high-ranking officer. He worked the nightshift which left him time to team up with guys from other branches and golf. One favorite spot was a course in Belgium where all they had was a drop box for the greens fees and a staff of two or three to take care of the links.

After three years in the service, Tom took a job working on the grounds crew at Oakland Hills Country Club in Birming- ham, MI. But having had a longtime passion for law enforcement, Tom decided to take a brief hiatus from turf and joined the Bloomfield Hills Police Department as a dispatcher. It didn't take him long, however, to realize that turfgrass management was his true calling.



Tom Ashfield

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

While finishing his four-year degree, Tom returned to Oakland Hills Country Club as an assistant where he had the opportunity to experience all that went into prepping the course for the 1996 U.S. Open. The follow- ing year, Tom was offered the superinten- dent's position at Edgewood Country Club in Commerce Township, MI. He worked at the 60-acre, 36,000-round course two years before heading East to the Metropolitan area's Canoe Brook Country Club. He remained there as superintendent for eight years before landing his current position in 2007 at Quaker Ridge.

Family and Fun

Tom and his wife, Karla, will be celebrating 28 years of marriage on October 12. Their love story began in Michigan when he, by chance, met Karla at a birthday party he reluctantly agreed to attend. Tom and Karla have two children: Kylie, 18, and Andrew, 23. Andrew just completed his MBA in account- ing at Tom's alma mater, Michigan State University, and is currently preparing to take his CPA exam with a job lined up at KPMG in Detroit.

Kylie graduated from Somers High in mid-June and is planning to attend Grand Valley State University of Michigan to study Graphic Design.

Nearly empty nesters, Tom and Karla are looking forward to traveling the world together and are hoping to visit England.

Be sure to line up a guest and join fellow members for a great round at this Tillinghast gem!

Chip Lafferty, co-chair of the Tee to Green Editorial Committee, is superintendent at Rye Golf Club in Rye, NY.

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