

June - July 2025
VOLUME 56 NUMBER 3

Tee & 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: Upper
Montclair Country
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Full Swing Into Summer

Recapping memorable moments—and looking forward to what's next



Summer is here, and it hasn't wasted any time making its presence known. From cool spring mornings to real-feel temps of 113°, we've gone from zero to sixty in a flash. The heat even forced us to postpone our June 23 Nine & Dine at Rye Golf Club to a later date.

In the meantime, we've already had some fantastic gatherings. A big thank you to Jeff Wentworth and Pelham Country Club for hosting our Member/Guest event on May 19. As the evening wore on, the stories flowed and the camaraderie among old and new friends reminded us why we do what we do.

Another highlight was the MetGCSA Summer Social at Orienta Beach Club on July 14. Despite the stormy weather, it was an evening well spent—not just for our hardworking members and their teams, but for their supportive significant others as well. These moments of connection and appreciation go a long way in our tight-knit community.

Looking ahead, we're gearing up for several exciting events. Scholarship applications have been in, and we'll be honoring our recipients during the Parent/Child Tournament at Silvermine Golf Club on August 5. Then, on August 18, my team and I at Upper Montclair Country Club will host the MetGCSA Invitational—an event we've long talked about hosting and are proud to finally invite to our course. Concluding our summer roster of events is our always-popular Nine & Dine, which was rescheduled to August 25 at Rye Golf Club in Rye, NY.

New Lines of Communication

Our Education Committee recently got helpful input from members through its survey on future education topics. Thanks to your feedback, we're working to schedule fall and winter educational sessions that will



Michael J. Brunelle, CGCS
MetGCSA President

be of interest to everyone. Thank you to those who took the time to provide us with insight into what is important to you as we look towards the future.

We've also introduced a new way to keep everyone informed: the *Met Monthly*. The response has been overwhelmingly positive. Hats off to our executive director, Mike McCall, for spearheading this effort and enhancing how we stay connected. Great job, Mike!

Wishing everyone continued success through the summer heat. Stay cool, and I look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events.

Mike Brunelle
President

Feature

The Unsung Architects of Enjoyment: How Superintendents Create Exceptional Golf Experiences

by Jim Pavonetti, CGCS





hen golfers step onto the first tee, they're thinking about their swing, the weather, or the friends they're about to play with. What they're *not* thinking about is how perfectly the greens are rolling, how clean the bunkers look, or how easily they found their ball in the rough. And that's exactly the point.

Behind every smooth shot and seamless round is a golf course superintendent, quietly working behind the scenes to make it all feel effortless. But make no mistake: we are *not* just managing turf—we're crafting experiences.

In this article, I'll share some of the ways superintendents can elevate a golfer's day—from the moment they pull into the lot to their final putt on 18. Because when we get the details right, people don't just notice—they come back.

Hospitality: The Makings of a Memorable Experience

Whether you manage the turf at a private club or a public course, the mission is the same: provide a memorable, welcoming experience that gives players a reason to return. It's no different than running a resort or restaurant. In fact, I'd argue that what we do is even more personal.

Golf is sacred to many. It's their escape from work, stress, and real life. It's where they recharge. That's a privilege—and a responsibility. The more enjoyable we can make their time with us, the more value they'll see in their membership, greens fee, or annual pass.

The Pace-of-Play Problem: What We Can Control

In my 25 years as a superintendent, I've sat through countless golf committee meetings—and I can tell you, nothing fires people up quite like slow play.

What's often overlooked is how much we, as superintendents, can influence pace. Are tees set too far back into the wind? Balls lost in overgrown rough? Bunker shots that take three tries to escape? All of it adds minutes and frustration.

Even small adjustments—like forward tee placements on tough days or maintaining fair rough height—can make a major difference. If we can do our part, our golfers will be happier—and so will we!

Presentation Matters: Making the Course Look—and Feel—Inviting

Visual clutter takes away from the natural beauty of a course. Coordinate accessory colors (dark tones blend best), and remove excess items like old ball washers, broken tee receptacles, or divot boxes where appropriate.

Train your team to wipe benches and handrails regularly. Check restrooms mid-day on busy days. These are little things—but they have a big impact.

Greens: The Key to a Memorable Round

Hole Locations

Great greens are the heart of a memorable round. Pin placement is one of our most sub-

tle tools for player enjoyment—or frustration. Use a level or digital tool to avoid placing holes on severe slopes, especially when greens are fast.

Most cell phones have an electronic level that will show percentage of slope when placed on the putting surface. If yours doesn't, you can get one at the hardware store for less than \$50. If your greens are 13 or more feet, keep the hole locations on spots with a 2-percent or less slope. At 10 to 11 feet, you may be able to get away with 3 percent. Three percent also applies if you have temporary slower and softer conditions from rain. There are programs that will select fair holes for you, such as EZ Locator.

For an enjoyable round, keep it fair, keep it varied. Balance left, right, middle, front, and back locations every day. And be sure to pay attention to the par of the holes when making hole selections. For example, make sure you don't set up every par-five hole location at the back or all on the right side of the green. A balanced setup will add interest, strategy, and variability (fun) to a player's round.



Small details like clean white cups, topped off with the rim freshly painted adds to the player's experience.

Aeration

Aeration is a necessary evil—but it doesn't have to ruin your season. If you can get away with keeping all your greens' aeration practices out of the main part of the season and still have great greens, then I recommend holding off.

At Fairview, rather than aerate in March and November, we do *all* our aeration work in the fall. We still do double drill-and-fill, and we core aerate the greens twice in November, but once all the holes are filled and we have a nice coating of topdressing on the surfaces, we cover the greens for winter. Come spring, we remove the covers and enjoy smooth, healthy greens from day one. Not every course can do this, but it's worth considering.

Tees: The Plus of Moving Them Forward

Tough conditions? Windy days? Wet fairways? Don't be afraid to move tees forward. Helping golfers hit more greens or avoid long second shots keeps rounds moving and tempers from flaring.

We also laser yardages on par three holes from each set of tees and then post them for members to make their club selection in advance and without needing to shoot the yardage themselves. This helps not only speed up play, but also shows that we care about every detail of their round.

Fairways: The Power of Appearance

Fresh-mown fairways are beautiful—but staffing makes it hard to mow them every day. Our solution? We purchased a fairway roller, for little money, and use it on weekends we don't mow. It gives the visual and playing effect of a recent mow, saves labor, and frees up staff for detail work on the course. This gives us a Member/Guest-level setup and appearance.

Bunkers: Reduce Frustration, Not Challenge

Perfect bunkers don't mean easy bunkers—they mean fair ones. At Fairview, we hand-rake slopes so balls roll to the bottom, then mechanically rake the base to keep it soft and playable.

Firm sand allows cleaner contact, faster exits, and—just as important—fewer repeat shots. Helping the average golfer hit a satisfying bunker shot? That's a simple pleasure they'll remember.

Course Markings Make for Smooth Rounds

A clearly marked golf course matters more than most players might at first realize. Regularly marked penalty areas (formally hazards) help players determine how to proceed without unnecessary delays. Similarly, calling out newly seeded or sodded turf with white paint will ensure golfers identify these ground-under-repair areas and know to proceed with a “free lift” if their ball should land within the white lines.

We also like to mark, in red, any lateral hazards—I'm talking about wooded areas that come into play often. This allows players to take a two-club length drop, instead of a lost-ball stroke and distance. Also, in the interest of keeping things moving, we have removed invasive plant material from some areas and replaced it with hard fescue, leaving the trees. Then we mow these areas once a week, a bit higher than the rough, allowing the balls to be easily found and advanced out of these areas.

At Fairview, we mark the course every Friday morning so that the lines are clear for the three busiest days of the week. In addition to pleasing our golfers, this is a great tool for teaching newer assistants or interns the rules of golf. In the end, everyone wins.

Cart Traffic: Controlled Freedom

Cart traffic management is paramount to preserving great conditions, but over the years, I've become more flexible with cart rules—thanks to better traffic control tools. Ropes, signs and small directional pegs help disperse traffic without damage on most days.

We also train our course setup staff to adjust routes daily to put the tires in different spots so the turf has a chance to recover. On special event days, we sometimes remove the markers completely—giving carts the freedom to disperse naturally with



Programs like rolling fairways effectively removes early morning dew, giving the players a dryer playing surface similar to an after-cut appearance.

little chance of causing damage. It makes a difference to most golfers who need to ride and helps the turf in the long run.

If you have GPS-enabled carts with geo-fencing, use them. That will allow you to reduce some of the directional items out there, as well as the clutter.

Rough: Making Tough Play Fair

Most golfers struggle playing out of the rough, so why punish them further? At Fairview, we lowered our rough height to 2¼ inches. It's still penal—but manageable.

What's more, players can spot their ball more easily, swing more confidently, and move on faster. We also mow rough early in the week and just before weekends to keep it playable.

A small extra touch? We mow the first few passes of primary rough in the direction of play. It makes swinging through the grass much easier. Zero extra cost. Real player impact.

Employee Etiquette: Every Interaction Counts

A poorly timed mower, a grumpy staff member, or loud equipment near the green can ruin an otherwise enjoyable round of golf.

We train our team to smile, wave, and yield. We teach them to remember names, shut off engines when close, and avoid disrupting play. It all makes a difference.

Whenever possible, schedule fine-turf (greens, tees, fairways) mowing ahead of tee times in the morning, and plan the tasks so that players don't have to navigate through the fine-turf mowers.

Also important, is that you—and your staff—play your golf course and others too. That's the best way to gain an understanding of the player's perspective and become more mindful of their needs.

Enhancing the Outdoor Experience

Not every improvement needs to enhance pace-of-play. Players love feeling connected to nature, and we can enhance that through pollinator gardens, native grasses, and bird

FAIRVIEW COUNTRY CLUB

Par Three Yardages and Golf Course Statistics

Date: June 7, 2025

Hole Three:

98	116	126	158
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Hole Eight:

109	144	160	173
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Hole Fourteen:

130	167	196	210
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Hole Sixteen:

151	159	179	189
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Green Speed is: 13'4"

Other Course Notes: Play the mounds on the ninth hole as Ground Under Repair. (New Sod)

Jim Pavonetti, CGCS greens@fairviewcountryclub.org (203) 223-5403

Things like posting par three yardages have not only added to our members' rounds, they have also contributed to improving pace of play.

boxes. Not only are these things good for the environment, community, and facility, but they can also bring color and texture to the landscape, elevating the player's experience.

At Fairview, we place native wildflower beds near tees and around the clubhouse. We've also added dozens of bluebird boxes, owl houses, and pollinator-friendly plantings.

Members notice. They comment. And they connect more deeply with the space.

The Role of Regular Communication

Don't let the first time a member hears about a project be during their round. We use weekly emails with project updates, high-quality photos showing progress, and course stats. I found that our members prefer to read emails that come directly from me rather than from blogs or websites. I include department heads and the professional staff on these reports to ensure they have correct, up-to-date information and can respond accurately to players' questions.

Regular communication, in whatever format you find works best for your club—apps, emails, websites, bulletin boards—ensures there are no surprises. When players encounter ground-under-repair, for instance, they're prepared.

Regular updates are not only educational, they also build appreciation for the work we do.

Crafting Memorable Moments

This isn't just a checklist—it's a mindset shift.

Every detail we touch can make the game more fun, more fair, and more satisfying. We're not just growing grass—we're crafting moments. Every raked bunker, every pin location, every smiling employee plays a part.

At the end of the day, we're in the *fun* business. Let's embrace it.

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

National Golf Day 2025: Golf's Voice on Capitol Hill Grows Stronger

by Mike McCall, CGCS

From April 30 to May 2, the GCSAA once again partnered with the American Golf Industry Coalition for the 17th annual National Golf Day in Washington, D.C.

For those in the Met Section who may not be familiar with the event, think of it as the national equivalent of what NYSTA does at the state level with its Advocacy Day in Albany—only on a much larger scale. It's a focused effort to bring golf's voice directly to federal legislators and demonstrate the industry's value to public health, the economy, and the environment.

A Unified Industry Presence

The American Golf Industry Coalition—comprising the GCSAA, PGA of America, USGA, National Golf Course Owners Association, Club Managers Association of

America, and many other allied associations—has developed a strong platform for engaging federal legislators in issues impacting golf. National Golf Day is the centerpiece of that effort, drawing hundreds of stakeholders from across the country to meet with members of Congress and their staff.

This year saw a record 325 participants, with GCSAA members once again leading the charge in terms of representation.

Bob Nielsen of Bedford Golf & Tennis and I were there representing the MetGCSA, joining nearly a dozen others from the New York delegation. Most participants arrived in Washington by late afternoon on April 30 and attended a comprehensive briefing on the legislative agenda for the following day. The session featured remarks from NBC's Steve Sands and concluded with a Congressional Reception to kick off the event's advocacy efforts.

Advocating for Golf: 2025 Legislative Priorities

On May 1, approximately 250 attendees conducted meetings with House and Senate offices to present three key policy priorities.

- **Support for the PHIT Act:** *The Personal Health Investment Today Act* would allow Americans to use pre-tax HSA and FSA funds for fitness-related expenses—including golf lessons, greens fees, and other recreational activities.
- **Passage of the PAR Act:** *The Parity for Athletic Recreation Act* aims to lift outdated restrictions that prevent golf facilities from accessing certain federal disaster relief and economic development programs. These restrictions date back more than 50 years, when golf was wrongly categorized alongside racetracks and gambling facilities.



A great showing for this year's National Golf Day Congressional visits.

• **Reauthorization of the National Turfgrass Research Initiative:** This initiative proposes \$3 million in annual USDA funding to advance turfgrass research, with a focus on turfgrass genetics and on enhancing sustainability, efficiency, and climate resilience.

While these topics may not sound glamorous at first glance, they carry real implications for golf facilities—especially in terms of affordability, public health access, scientific advancement, and disaster recovery. These priorities speak directly to the health, accessibility, and sustainability of golf. More broadly, the meetings foster vital relationships with Congressional staff—connections that become invaluable when local or regional issues arise.

Highlighting New York's Role

One promising highlight from this year's National Golf Day was the strong interest in the upcoming **New York State Golf Economic and Environmental Impact Study**. The New York delegation took the opportunity to present the goals of this important research project, and the response was overwhelmingly positive. Staff members asked detailed questions and expressed a clear desire to receive the final report.

Being able to demonstrate the real-world impact of golf on jobs, the economy, and green space in our home state gave our meetings an added layer of relevance—and it opened the door to deeper conversations with lawmakers.

A Shared Purpose on the Ground

National Golf Day isn't just about policy meetings—it also includes hands-on service.

The event concluded on May 2 with a Community Service Project that put the industry's commitment to civic engagement into action.

This year, more than 200 volunteers lent their time and talents at two historic golf sites:

- **Old Soldier's Home Golf Course**, located at the Armed Forces Retirement Home

- **East Potomac Golf Course**, operated by the National Links Trust

In just four hours, volunteers completed a range of improvement projects, including planting 24 trees, repairing deer guards on nearly 200 existing trees, renovating three landscaping beds, and seeding and topdressing nine greens.

It was a powerful reminder of what can be achieved when professionals across the industry unite behind a shared mission—not only to grow the game, but to give back to the communities we serve.

Looking Ahead

National Golf Day continues to gain momentum as both an advocacy effort and a unifying event for the golf industry. With growing participation, measurable progress on legislative goals, and an expanding community impact component, its importance is only increasing.

To all the Met members who participated this year: Thank you. Your presence matters—and your voice is heard. We hope to see even more involvement in 2026 as we continue to champion the future of golf, one conversation at a time.

Mike McCall is the executive director of the MetGCSA and managing member of the McCall Management Group, LLC.

New Members

Please join us in welcoming the following new MetGCSA members:

- **Ken Anson**, Class A, Paramount Country Club, New City, NY
- **Mike Cornicelli**, Class AFS, Finch Turf, Eldersburg, MD
- **Jake Demasi**, Class AF, Alpine Tree Co., Hopewell Junction, NY
- **Frankie Diaz**, Class AFS, Davey Tree Expert, Norwalk, CT
- **Cody Scott**, Class AF, Finch Turf, Eldersburg, MD

Members on the Move

- **Ryan Hartmann** is the new golf course superintendent at Haworth Country Club in Haworth, NJ. Previous position: assistant superintendent at Haworth Country Club.
- **Shawn Haverdink** is the new golf course superintendent at Bonnie Briar Country Club in Larchmont, NY. Previous position: superintendent at Baltusrol Golf Club in Springfield, NJ.

A Memorable Member/Guest at Pelham Country Club

by JR LaPan

A sincere thank you to Pelham Country Club for hosting this year's MetGCSA Member/Guest. It was a spectacular day with perfect weather, a strong turnout, and a course that was in outstanding condition—thanks to the exceptional work of Superintendent Jeff Wentworth and his team.

The layout provided the right balance of challenge and enjoyment, setting the stage for spirited competition and great camaraderie among members and guests.

Special thanks to General Manager Bill Ceriello for the excellent food and beverage service and to PGA Professional Mike Diffley for pulling off a smooth, well-run

event. The hospitality, attention to detail, and seamless execution made for a truly memorable experience for all.

And now a round of applause for our Net and Gross winners in the Two-Man Best Ball and for our five proximity winners.

Gross Team Winners

- 1st Mitch Gray and Robert Milar, *St. Andrew's Golf Club*
- 2nd Kevin Seibel, *Century Country Club* / Steven Whipple, *West Point Golf Course*
- 3rd Chris Steffen and Alex Bardani, *Candlewood Lake Club*

Net Team Winners

- 1st Joe Gikis, *Glen Arbor Golf Club* / Joe Alonzi, *Biltmore Turf Specialties*
- 2nd Alan Jeffrey and Alexander Noujaim, *Country Club of Darien*

Closest to the Pin

- #2 Nick Middleton at 3'8" *Ocean Organics*
- #7 Tony Hooks at 58" *Due Process Stables Golf Course*
- #10 Joe Alonzi at 8'1" *Biltmore Turf Specialties*
- #15 Doug Heron at 15" *Maxwell Turf*
- #18 Alan Jeffrey at 7'3" *Country Club of Darien*

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



Perfect Day . . . Perfect Conditions.



Getting Ready to Tee Off for a Terrific Day.



Host Jeff Wentworth and Tournament Chair Stephen Rabideau Announce Prize Winners and Offer Thanks.

Silvermine's Dave Peterson Sets the Stage for Family Fun

by Chip Lafferty

The MetGCSA's annual Parent/Child Tournament and Scholarship Awards event returns August 5 at Silvermine Golf Club in Norwalk, CT. Our host, Superintendent Dave Peterson, is hard at work preparing an ideal playing surface for members and their children—young and old—to come together and enjoy the game that is so much a part of their parents' livelihoods.

Now in its 13th year, the tournament remains a favorite tradition. As always, the event is free for members and concludes with dinner and the presentation of our annual scholarship awards.

Silvermine's Unique 27-Hole Legacy

Nestled on 120 rolling acres in Norwalk, Silvermine Golf Club is a distinctive 27-hole facility with deep roots. Founded in 1959 by golf enthusiast and land developer Jack Warner, the course was carved out of the old Loudon Searcrest Dairy Farm—a transformation fueled by passion and vision.

The club has remained in the Warner/Zucco family for three generations. One landmark from its past still stands tall: the Loudon barn, perched on the highest hill in Norwalk. According to local lore, a Volkswagen Bug is buried beneath the second green.

The original nine holes—designed by Warner and his team—were built for speed and accessibility, with a layout of four par 4s and five par 3s ideal for squeezing in a quick round after work. Warner even dreamed of lighting the course for night golf! Today, this layout is known as the Proshop 9 and offers a fast-paced, family-friendly option perfect for beginners, juniors, and anyone looking to improve their game.

The second nine, called the Barn 9, gave the club its first 18-hole configuration. A year later, Warner acquired neighboring Wilson Dairy Farm property, adding a third nine: the Grey Hollow 9. These two nines now make up the “Main 18.” Despite a modest yardage of just 5,200 yards from the men's tees (par 70), the course demands precision and creativity.

“Don't be fooled by the scorecard,” Dave says. “This course plays way tougher than the yardage suggests. Bring your wedges!”

Nonstop Improvements Under Dave's Watch

In his six years at Silvermine, Dave has led a steady march of thoughtful improvements. His efforts have included bunker renovations, expanding the practice green, improving drainage on fairways, releveling and regrassing tees, and enhancing hardscapes around the clubhouse and pro shop.

“We're always looking at what can be better,” he says. “It's all about making the course more enjoyable and more sustainable.”

Dave's Winding Path to Silvermine

Dave didn't take the traditional route into turfgrass management. “I started at Penn State planning to be an engineer,” he says. “But after a year, I realized it wasn't for me. I actually considered heading west to ski and snowboard for a few years until a heart-to-heart over some whiskey with my dad and Uncle Mark changed everything.”

That uncle, Mark Nuzum—partner of EarthWorks' Joel Simmons—urged Dave to explore turf as a career. Dave returned to Penn State and earned his degree in Turfgrass Management in 2008.

While in school, he interned at Winged Foot Golf Club during 2005 and the 2006 U.S. Open under Eric Greytock. He followed that with another internship at The Kittansett Club in Marion, MA, working under John Kelly.

After graduation, Dave and some classmates drove cross-country to Pebble Beach, where he worked under Chris Dalmer for two years, overlapping with the 2010 U.S. Open. After the tournament, Dave and his siblings packed into a 1985 Ford Econoline van and road-tripped back East—where another chapter began.

Finding a Home at Silvermine

Shortly after returning to the East Coast, Dave began working at Brae Burn Country Club for Blake Halderman.



Dave Peterson

“I've tried to pull lessons and experience from every superintendent I've worked for, but none more than Blake,” says Dave. “He really helped an introverted 24-year-old find his voice and always pushed me to get out of my comfort zone.”

In 2019, Dave accepted the superintendent role at Silvermine—thanks in part to a timely connection. “Blake had strong ties to both Stuart Waack, the club's head pro, and Larry Pakkala, the outgoing superintendent,” says Dave. “He helped get me in the door—as he did with most of my interviews!”

From the beginning, Dave felt a strong fit. “Silvermine is probably the last mom-and-pop, blue-collar private club in Fairfield County,” he says. “It has the warmth and feel of a country course in Vermont.”

Dave credits his experienced and loyal team for much of the club's success. “My assistant, Chris Vitali, has been here more than 30 years. Our crew foreman, Justiniano ‘Justy’ Mendez, over 20. Most of our crew has been around for a decade or more. They are all willing to do whatever it takes to make Silvermine better, and I am so lucky to work with them.”

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Mike Brunelle and Upper Montclair Welcome the 2025 Invitational

by Bob Nielsen, CGCS

On August 18, MetGCSA members will convene at the historic Upper Montclair Country Club in Clifton, NJ, for the annual Invitational Tournament. Hosting this year's event is Mike Brunelle, the club's longtime director of grounds and current MetGCSA president, who has led Upper Montclair's grounds team for the past 16 years.

During Mike's tenure, the club has undertaken many significant projects. Most recently, they completed a second bunker restoration, with the help of our Ace Sponsor, LaBar Golf Renovations, and the expertise of golf course architect A. John Harvey. This collaboration introduced softer bunker features, making them more accessible and easier to maintain in the long term. By softening the bunker surrounds, the greens' topography has been accentuated, resulting in the addition of more fine turf roll-off areas. These enhancements provide golfers with a greater variety of shot options around the greens. Completing this ambitious 27-hole bunker project in a single off-season was no small feat.

A Rich Legacy of Championship Golf

Upper Montclair's evolution is deeply rooted in golf history. Originally founded in 1901 as a modest five-hole and then nine-hole layout in the Montclair Meadow, the club moved to its current location across from the Hepburn family farm in 1912.

A.W. Tillinghast designed the original property in the 1920s before the construction of the Garden State Parkway in the mid-1950s. Following this, a transformative redesign of the now-consolidated property was completed by Robert Trent Jones Sr., who shaped the club's modern 27-hole identity. His work elevated the course to the championship-caliber layout we know today.

Since hosting the Thunderbird Classic in 1962, Upper Montclair has welcomed events from all three professional golf tours—a rare distinction.

Although the club completed a clubhouse renovation in 2018 and 2019 at the same time as their short game and practice facility renovation, the west end of the clubhouse is

slated to be redone in the coming years. There's even the possibility that there might be an LPGA event in the not-so-distant future. We will have to wait for the 2027 schedule to be released to find out.

Behind the Scenes: A Talented Team

Managing a 27-hole facility with constant renovation demands takes a village—and Mike is quick to credit his trusted team.

"Chad Botos, our course superintendent, just completed his first year—and it's been a whirlwind from day one," Mike says. "He arrived on property just before our three-day Invitational, stepped right into aeration, and then launched into a major bunker project—all during one of the driest autumns and coldest winters New Jersey has seen in years." Mike adds, "Michael Ballew and Ryan Gallagher, now in their second season, have been invaluable. They serve as an extension of my eyes and ears on the property, consistently ensuring that our course standards and expectations are being met."

Then there's Mayor, the crew's four-legged rookie, the most popular member of the team. The 8-month-old border collie keeps geese at bay and morale high.

Mike also speaks with genuine appreciation for the club's leadership and members. "The board hired me to be a professional and they've let me do my job," he says. "I'm treated like family here. And our GM/COO, Charlie Dimpfl, runs a tight ship with an incredible handle on the financials. It's a collaborative, respectful environment—and that makes all the difference."

From Baseball to Bedminster—and Beyond

Mike's path to Upper Montclair began in a different arena entirely: the baseball diamond. A business major at St. Michael's College, he played ball before ultimately transferring to UMass to pursue turfgrass management.

After internships at Elmwood, Wykagyl, and Oakland Hills, Mike took an early-career detour to Old Collier in Naples, FL. He returned north to serve as second assistant at Quaker Ridge before spending over four years at Bedford Golf & Tennis as the first assistant.



Mike Brunelle, CGCS

His first superintendent role came at Trump National – Bedminster, where he found himself overseeing the "Old Course" while the "New Course" was under construction. As the construction phase shifted to grow-in, the director of grounds unexpectedly left and Mike was promoted to the role. That high-stakes opportunity prepared him well for the demands at Upper Montclair, which hired him in 2009. Sixteen years later, the fit remains a good one.

Family First—and Still Learning

Off the course, Mike's life is just as full. He and his wife of 13 years, Jenni, are raising four children: Grace (11), Tedy (9), and 7-year-old twins Emmy and Norah.

"Take Your Child to Work Day' is a big hit with all the kids," Mike says. But he's quick to point out that Jenni is the one who keeps the wheels turning. "Between dance, gymnastics, piano, and sports—there's always something going on. She holds it all together."

Incredibly, Mike also carved out time to complete a master's degree in Professional Studies in Turfgrass Management from Penn State. He preaches to his staff to continue to challenge themselves: "There is always an opportunity for growth personally and professionally," he says. "You never want to become stale."

Looking Ahead to August

With August 18 just around the corner, the stage is set for another exceptional Invitational. And with Mike Brunelle at the helm, you can be sure the course—and the experience—will be nothing short of first-class.

Bob Nielsen, a member of the Tee to Green Editorial Committee, is golf course superintendent at Bedford Golf & Tennis in Bedford, NY.

Rye Golf Club Adds a ‘Splash’ of Something New to This Year’s Nine & Dine Event

by Jim Pavonetti, CGCS

Starting at 3 p.m. on August 25, Rye Golf Club and Chip Lafferty will host this year’s MetGCSA Nine & Dine. Adding a new element of fun to the event, Rye Golf Club is opening its pool area for spouses and families to enjoy while the golfing members compete on the course.

Always eager to support Met events, this Nine & Dine marks the ninth time Chip has graciously hosted a Met gathering during his 23-year tenure at Rye.

A Bit About Rye Golf Club

Rye Golf Club is a member-only, 126-acre course owned and operated by the City of Rye. Designed by the renowned classic golf course architect Devereux Emmet, the course boasts a rich history and scenic beauty.

Overlooking the property is the historic Whitby Castle, a stoic 1854 structure designed by American architect Alexander Jackson Davis. Modeled after England’s Whitby Abbey, the castle was originally a private residence before the property was converted into a golf club in 1921, offering stunning views of Long Island Sound.

Also of interest: Rye Golf Club had six different names before settling on its cur-

rent title in 1965. It began as Rye Country Club (1921), then successively became Rye Sound Public Country Club (1943), Bayview Country Club (1944), Rye Soundview Country Club (1945), Glen Castle Country Club (1946), and Ryewood Country Club (1949). Quite the identity journey!

While the scorecard measures 6,344 yards, don’t be fooled—the course’s small greens and tight landing areas create a challenging, picturesque layout.

Chip has continuously enhanced the course through mostly in-house renovations and restorations. Recently, he completed restoring several bunkers to Devereux Emmet’s original design, collaborating with Todd Quitno of Quitno Golf Designs.

Off-Duty Activities

Chip brings the same dedication to his work on the course as he does to his service on the MetGCSA board, where he has served for seven years and currently holds the role of *Tee to Green* editor. “I find service incredibly rewarding and encourage anyone interested to get involved,” Chip says with a smile. “There’s always room for committee service and hopefully a board appointment.”

Beyond his professional and volunteer commitments, Chip is a true people person



Chip Lafferty

who enjoys testing his low-single-digit handicap in challenging rounds with his MetGCSA friends.

Family is very important to Chip. He cherishes time with his wife of 22 years, Clare, and their four children: Jessica (15), Mackenzie (14), Travis (13), and Matthew (11). The family—and their two dogs, Larkin (a border collie) and Wiki (an Australian shepherd)—often accompany him on the course.

One of Chip’s favorite family traditions is their annual road trip to Alabama. “Once a year, we all load up in the Suburban and head south to visit my sister and parents in Gulf Shores, Alabama,” he says. “These trips have brought the family—and dogs—closer together. We’ve actually discovered we enjoy each other’s company.”

So, for a short but fun break from your routine, mark your calendar and be sure to attend the 2025 Met Nine & Dine. The course is dialed in and ready—are you?

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



Rye Golf Club’s heated Olympic-sized pool awaits the families of Nine & Dine golfers.

Upcoming Events

Check Out What's Ahead!

Spotlight continued from page 9

He's also grateful to his predecessor. "Larry laid a great foundation," he says. "The crew already knew how to do things the right way. That made my transition so much easier."

Dave also appreciates the broader Silvermine staff. "Stuart Waack is a special person. He's shaped Silvermine into what it is over the past 26 years. I consider him a mentor. And since Chris McDougal joined as GM in 2021, he's been great to work with—as has Karen Pearsall, our controller, who keeps everything humming behind the scenes."

All in the Family

Away from the course, Dave stays plenty busy. He and his wife of nine years, Kaitlin, are raising four children: Leigh (7½), Cecelia (6), Henry (3½), and Caroline (10 months).

"Raising four kids with Kaitlin is the joy of my life," he says. When he's not working or spending time with family, you might find Dave fishing, golfing, or tackling home projects.

Join Us at Silvermine!

Dave hopes MetGCSA members will take advantage of this special day to unwind with their families, enjoy some friendly competition, and celebrate this year's remarkable scholarship recipients.

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

Met Events

Parent-Child Tournament/Scholarship Awards

Tuesday, August 5
Silvermine Golf Club
Norwalk, CT
Host: Dave Peterson

MetGCSA Invitational Tournament

Monday, August 18
Upper Montclair Country Club
Clifton, NJ
Host: Mike Brunelle, CGCS

Nine & Dine

Monday, August 25
Rye Golf Club
Rye, NY
Host: Chip Lafferty

The Poa/Met Championship/Met Team Qualifier

Tuesday, October 14
Meadow Brook Club
Jericho, NY
Host: John Carlone, CGCS

Fall Education Seminar/Annual Meeting

Thursday, November 13
Fenway Golf Club
Scarsdale, NY
Host: Rob Alonzi

MetGCSA Holiday Party

Wednesday, December 10
Beechmont Tavern
New Rochelle, NY

MetGCSA Winter Seminar

Wednesday, January 14, 2026
Westchester Country Club
Rye, NY
Host: David Dudones

Industry Events

The 19th Annual Dr. Joseph Troll Turf Classic

Monday, September 22
Worcester Country Club
Worcester, MA
Honoring: Dr. Scott Ebdon, professor emeritus, Agronomy-Turfgrass Science

The Met Area Team Championship

Monday, October 20
Tamarack Country Club
Greenwich, CT
Host: Jeff Scott, CGCS

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