

Spring 2024 Edition

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# Reading the Green



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# GCSA of New York Reading the Green

Spring 2024

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*It must have been a guest!*



*It must have been the new guy!*

# President's Message

GCSA of NY Members and Partners



As I sit at my computer on frosty April morning, I'm having an issue of controlling my excitement for the 2024 season. Aeration and Dry-Ject are done. My mechanic is tired of hearing we need a better cut, his response "stop throwing all of this sand!" Just another typical loving conversation between a superintendent and a mechanic. We are all back at the daily grind of our jobs, but my excitement is not about growing grass, it's about the GCSA of NY.

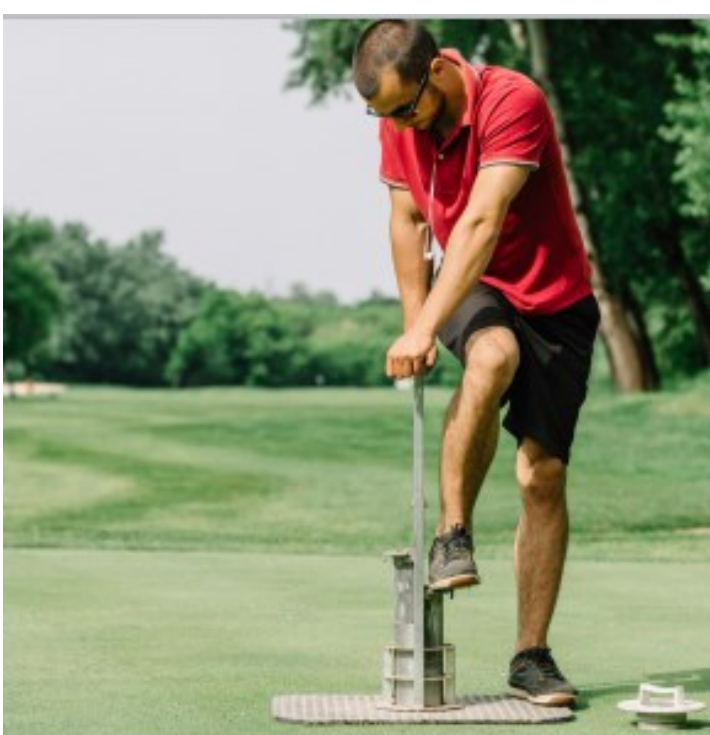
This association is really starting to roll. We have a calendar of events that offers the members some great opportunities for education, networking, and comradery. If you haven't attended or it's been a while since you attended a Walk and Talk with Frank Rossi you are missing out on a great opportunity to expand your knowledge as a Superintendent. I love these events and the GCSA-NY is eternally grateful to Frank for the support he provides. The GCSANY website, ([www.gcsaofny.org](http://www.gcsaofny.org)) is getting better by the week, if you need information about what is going on, register for an event, or catch up on BMP's, the website is your go to place. I personally make a visit every morning to see what is going on.

The Board and Ron are diligently working for you, the members. We want to hear your thoughts, ideas, suggestions, and complaints. This is your association and your opinion matters, we can only get better if we hear from you. Ron's weekly Pin Sheet is an awesome addition for the membership. This is year 5 of the GCSANY and we have come so far in a short amount of time and I'm so excited about where we are going to be 5 years from now.

Let's have a great 2024 season!

Joe Lucas, President





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# Executive Director's Message

GCSA of NY Members and Partners

Well, we certainly had a great kick-off to the season on April 17th at Lake Shore Yacht & CC. A record 54 attendees, with more than 50% being Superintendents and Crew from GCSA of NY golf courses. It really was a fantastic day, to include in our follow-up survey 100% Superintendents and Crew reported they would “highly recommend” attending Walk & Talk events to their peers.

Personally, this was a very special event for me as well. Simply put, this was my 1st GCSA of NY event and I could not have been more impressed! I finally got to witness the genius of Frank Rossi and could see first-hand why these Walk & Talks are so popular (plus, the banter between Frank and Joe Lucas was priceless). Plus, it was tremendous to meet and greet with so many of you from throughout our community.

I was also thrilled to share some of my observations and visions for the future. Over and above reviewing how I continue to applaud the Board for making the bold move to combine the Chapters, I shared details on how our GCSA of NY Members will always be our top priority! For 2024, our Membership focus will be on:

- **CURRENT MEMBERS:** Enhancing their engaging with the Chapter
- **CREW:** Increasing the number of Class C, D and EM members
- **NEW MEMBERS:** Expanding our penetration of having GCSA of NY Members at even more golf courses

More importantly, our primary motive with all of this will be to “help all members succeed”. Please know that this is my belief, my passion and my commitment. Over the course of this season, and for years to come, I look forward to making this a reality.

Feel free to reach out at any time!

Ron Stepanek, Executive Director





# Board of Directors



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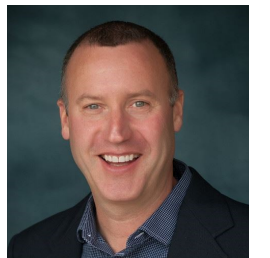
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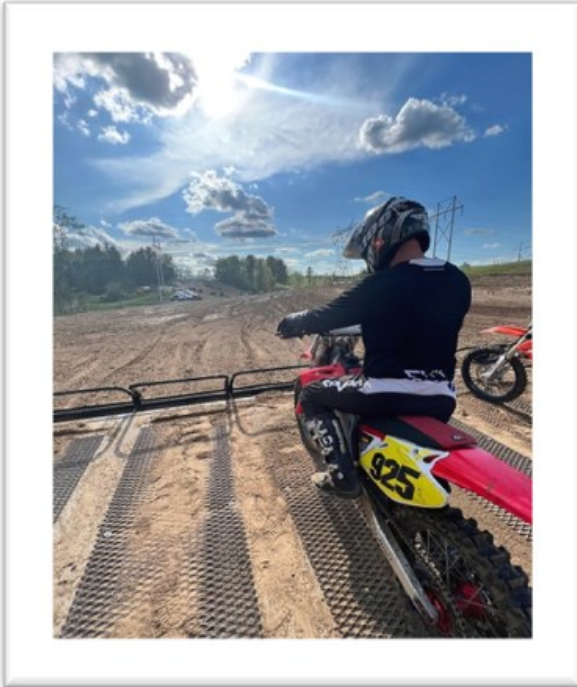
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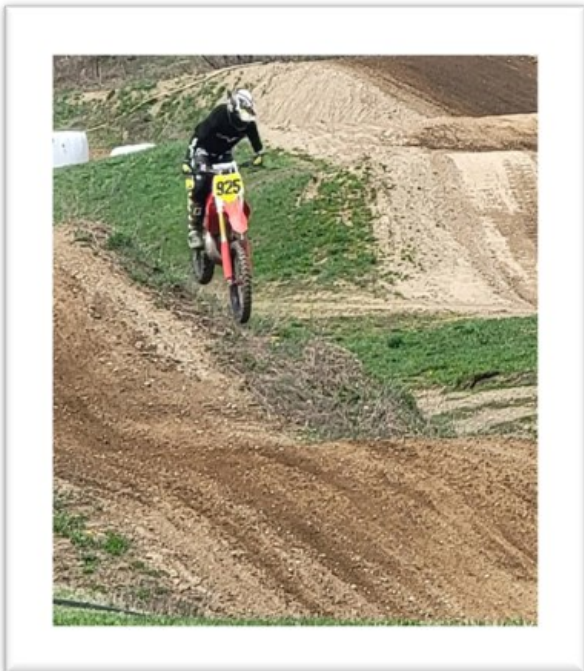
## TOUCHING GRASS

### Highlighting Member's non-golf course pursuits



**Mike O'Neil**, originally from Honesdale, PA, has been the Superintendent at Leatherstocking Golf Course in Cooperstown since 2018. Prior to arriving at Leatherstocking, Mike led the team at Bellevue CC in Syracuse, was the Assistant at Shelter Harbor and intern at Pinehurst.

A 1999 Penn State graduate, Mike shares a love for skiing, wakeboarding, and motorcycles with son Faustin. Over the last 10 years, through broken bones and determination Mike took his motorcycle hobby into competitive motocross racing (+40 division) at tracks at Unadilla, High Voltage, and Jack's Racing. Mike's passion for this type of activity relates not just to competition, but also to mental and physical demands. *"It's challenging and requires technical skill and forces my mind to focus on racing safe and still have fun at 47"*.



**Tell us about your first Car:**

*"Early eighties Cadillac Cimarron, brown."*

**What advice would you give twenty-year-old Mike?**

*"Don't be afraid to fail and pursue your dreams."*

**If you were king of the world, what would you change about the game of golf?**

*"Yardage finders would be illegal."*



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## It's OK to make time for you

*Making the right decision isn't always easy, or even possible.  
Mike Tollner reflects on what that can do to your mind and body.*

As superintendents, we often find ourselves making difficult decisions with the best interests of the golf course in mind. This can sometimes upset club members who don't understand the reasoning behind the decisions we are forced to make.

I was recently faced with a situation like this at our club and fell into a position where I felt like I was in a no-win situation. The outcome of this decision was bound to upset some of our members, but I felt it was in the best interest of the golf course. As it turns out, the person who ended up being affected by my decision the most was me. Afterward, I spent many hours second-guessing myself and the decision I made when, deep down, I felt that I had made the right call. I also reacted emotionally during a phone call after the long afternoon of back-and-forth with the decision makers of the club. This situation became one that I took home with me and struggled with, long after the workday had ended.

As managers, we must make decisions with conviction and stand behind that decision once it is made. But it can be difficult to leave these things behind when we leave work, and we can't always make the right decision every time. These types of situations can have a lasting impact on our mental health and can affect us in many ways. In addition, we face a multitude of issues and problems daily at our jobs. These can range from turf stress issues, an irrigation break or a disgruntled member of the staff.

On the other hand, we also face difficult decisions that affect our memberships, like when a 2-inch rainfall forces you to ground carts and a member has a tee time booked with three guests from out of town. All these situations require us to make quick, on-the-fly decisions that can influence us and our own well-being more than anyone else. And it is critical — and often difficult — to decide whether to pick up your sword and shield and head to the battlefield, or to park your cart and head home for the day, knowing that the course will still be there tomorrow.

Mental health in the golf industry has become a hot topic in recent years. At the 2023 GCSAA Conference and Trade Show, I was fortunate to attend a great session about mental health, "Emotional Wellness in the Turf Industry." Judging by the fact that the session was standing room only, it quickly became clear that this is important to many of us.



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The ability to strike a balance between what is best for the golf course and what will make the membership happy can be a difficult and trying accomplishment. But it's also critically important that we find the balance between our professional lives and our personal lives, and good mental health should be at the forefront of every superintendent's list of goals.

Many of us are perfectionists, and we strive for perfect conditions every day because that is the standard we hope to achieve, even though it is impossible. We also face the difficult task of finding a good work-life balance, which can also be nearly impossible at certain times of the year. Finding that balance is, in my opinion, the key to strong mental health. It's also something that I've tried to focus on myself over the past few years, and I am still trying to perfect how best to achieve it and what it means for me.

Whether you spend your time outside work at the gym, with your family, or speaking to a therapist is a choice each person must make on their own. But whatever it is that brings you to the place where your life feels balanced, that should be as high up on the priority list as having the golf course in tournament condition. Work-life balance is not something that is always perfect. It takes dedication and the ability to be flexible — both in work and in life. Sometimes you will need to dedicate those extra hours during a week that has a busy golf schedule, or during a construction project with a deadline. But, when possible, you should also try and dedicate extra time to being away from work and getting that painting project done at home, or making sure you can get to your child's soccer game or spend an extra hour hiking in the woods. The main goal of a healthy work-life balance should be to be successful as a superintendent, and to have a personal life that is both en-

joyable and fulfilling.

One of the greatest things about life is that we can continue to learn about ourselves and grow over time. Finding a good work-life balance is an ongoing and dynamic process that may never be perfected, much like the game of golf. The demands of our jobs can be extremely difficult and stressful. Being a key decision maker can be taxing, both mentally and physically. Figuring out what good mental health and work-life balance means to each of us is personal and may look very different to different people. The key is to set goals that work for you and to strive toward reaching those goals, no matter what.

*Mike Tollner is the superintendent at Bellevue Country Club. This was his second Golf Course Industry contribution.*

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**LEAN ON US**

The GCSA of NY is an association of nearly 300 members, who are leading golf course superintendents and industry experts from Western New York, Finger Lakes, Central New York, Utica, Albany, the Southern Tier and across the state. The association is dedicated to serving all members while being a unifying body within the golf industry. Our core purpose is to promote the:

- Welfare of the game of golf
- Science and art of golf course management
- Organizational and business effectiveness of our profession
- Professional image and well-being of our members through comprehensive educational, communications and management means

### KEY BENEFITS TO JOINING



- ✓ Ongoing access to our nearly 300 members, who are willing to offer support and share their expertise
- ✓ Friendly and inclusive networking opportunities via golf tournaments, education, meetings and other social activities
- ✓ Multiple scholarship programs to aid your family and/or staff
- ✓ Weekly email updates and quarterly newsletters
- ✓ Government relations and community outreach
- ✓ Support and services from our dedicated Executive Director
- ✓ Access to information and resources from the GCSAA National Office

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*For Questions and Support*

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## So You Want to Build a New Shop? Q&A with Fellow GCSA of NY Members

Over the last several years (despite covid-19 OR maybe because of it), new maintenance facilities seemed to be popping up across our region. We took a minute to ask a few questions to 5 Superintendents who oversaw the planning and building of their own facility. These projects were all completed within 5 years of each other and we were curious about the similarities and differences each experienced in this once in a career opportunity. This is the first of a multi-part to this story. In the issue we visit with:

**Rick Holforth:** Country Club of Rochester

**Andy Eick:** Mohawk Golf Club

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1. How long did it take from proposing the new facility to receiving the certificate of occupancy?

**Rick Holforth:** 3 years

**Andy Eick:** 2 years

2. Did the facility come in at budget and on schedule – and if not, what were the reasons? Total cost.

**Rick Holforth:** Yes. \$1.2M for first phase.

**Andy Eick:** No, Covid and building materials delay. \$2.5M

3. What is the square footage of space that's dedicated to golf course maintenance, and how did you arrive at that number

**Rick Holforth:** 8.5M limited by physical location

**Andy Eick:** 12M first phase, 7M second phase. Used 1M per hole rule.

4. Was pesticide storage and fill area part of the plan?

**Rick Holforth:** Yes. Second phase

**Andy Eick:** Yes. Second phase.

### Country Club of Rochester





## Mohawk Golf Club



### 5. Radiant slab, HVAC, or both?

**Rick Holforth:** Both

**Andy Eick:** Both, plus unit heaters for smaller areas

### 6. What was the most enjoyable part of the project?

**Rick Holforth:** Demolition of old shop and when the end was in sight, moving in.

**Andy Eick:** Demolition of old shop, moving in and setting up

### 7. On a scale of 1 to 10, where would you put the new facility as it relates to meeting expectations and goals?

**Rick Holforth:** 9

**Andy Eick:** 9

### 8. What, if anything, would you have done differently?

**Rick Holforth:** Small details, door locations, light switches

**Andy Eick:** More ventilation through cold storage

### 9. What's one piece of advice you can share that you learned on this project?

**Rick Holforth:** Grinding room and parts storage can never be big enough! Go big.

**Andy Eick:** Be flexible and prepared to make adjustments.

---

**Rick Holforth, Country Club of Rochester**

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**585-381-1844**

**Andy Eick, Mohawk Golf Club (formerly)**

**[aceick81@gmail.com](mailto:aceick81@gmail.com)**

**774-210-0455**

# My Melrose Equipment Managers Experience

By Chris Hyman, EMCP - Level 2, Equipment Manager

Cobblestone Creek Country Club

GCSA of NY Class EM Member



As an individual passionately dedicated to the Equipment Manager Professional, I applied for the Melrose Equipment Managers Experience in the Fall of 2023 and was fortunate enough to be selected to attend the 2024 GCSAA Conference & Trade Show in Phoenix, AZ along with four other Equipment Managers.

The application itself included seven short answer questions. The questions covered personal and professional experience in the industry. I found that the questions were easy to answer because of the passion I have for our industry. These answers were then reviewed and graded by five equipment managers that are on the GCSAA Equipment Managers Task Group. I appreciated that they were read by industry peers who understood the ins- and outs- of what EMs do every day. This task group is different every year, so if you applied before and weren't selected, don't give up - apply again!

I received a call in the late fall from GCSAA Board Member Doug Dyksta informing me that I was selected. A few weeks later I received an email from the GCSAA Foundation to work out the details for the airfare, hotel and conference registration. These costs are all covered by the Foundation if you are selected!!

On the Sunday before the conference and trade show began, I flew in and was able to check in at registration. That night we had a meet & greet reception hosted by the GCSAA Foundation at the hotel where a group of us EMs ended up "going to Nerdville" discussing cutting units for quite a while. After this reception, I attended the Reel Turf Techs ([www.reelturftechs.com](http://www.reelturftechs.com)) reception.

## DAY 1

On the first day of the conference (Monday) we all had a networking breakfast with the GCSAA board members, and even learned what the Government Affairs does for our association. Other equipment managers and even superintendents have often asked me what the benefit of GCSAA membership really is. There is so much that goes on in the background of the organization that most of us will never know. The presentation from the Government Affairs group was an eye-opening experience. This is a group of people that are the watchdogs for us from the federal level down to the local government where laws and regulations are being written. I believe that these people are some of the unsung heroes of our association.



Many Golf Course Superintendents and Equipment Managers may have never heard of the late Ken Melrose or the Melrose Equipment Managers Experience. In 2012, The Melrose Leadership Academy was established by Ken Melrose, retired CEO and chairman of the board of The Toro Co. and is supported by a gift to the GCSAA Foundation from The Kendrick B. Melrose Family Foundation. The program's goal is to positively impact both the Golf Course Superintendent that is selected and ultimately, the game of golf. Originally established for Superintendents, graduates gain knowledge to help advance their career by participating in tailored educational sessions at the GCSAA Conference and Trade Show. There they engage with highly regarded industry experts and network with GCSAA leadership, industry leaders, and certified peers at various receptions, events and numerous educational sessions.

In 2019, Ken believed that the already successful program should be expanded and The Melrose Equipment Managers Experience was established. The Equipment Managers have a similar experience as the Superintendents, but theirs is geared toward the equipment management side of the industry with the addition of financial support to complete Level 1 and 2 of the Equipment Management Certificate Program (EMCP).

The application requirements are fairly straightforward:

- ◆ you must be a current GCSAA, Class EM member in good standing and
- ◆ must not have attended the GCSAA Conference and Trade Show in any of the previous two years prior to selection into the program.
- ◆ Past recipients, active Equipment Manager Task Group volunteers, EM members working for current members of the GCSAA Board of Directors or the GCSAA Foundation Board of Trustees, and immediate family of GCSAA staff members are not eligible to apply.

Melrose Leadership Program: <https://www.gcsaa.org/foundation/education/melrose-leadership-academy>

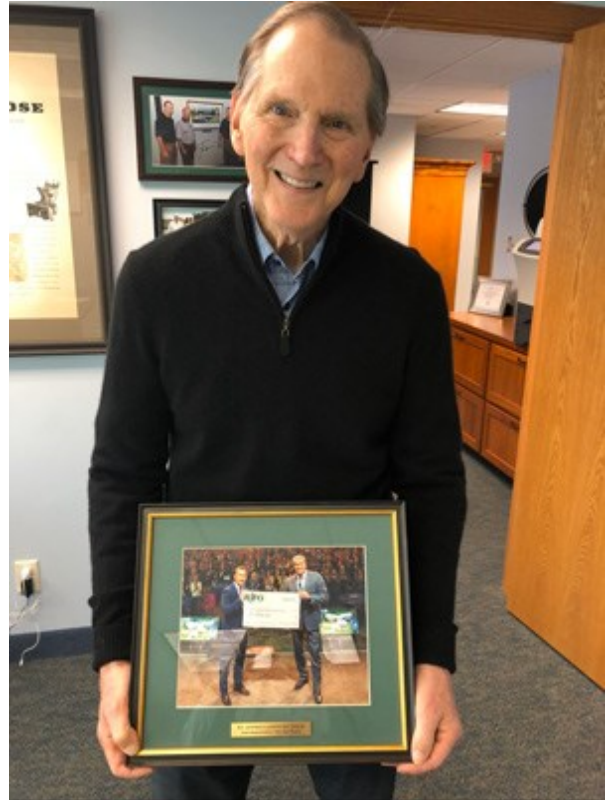
In the afternoon, we went over to the Phoenix Country Club to have a facility tour and see some of the latest technology that is in our industry. That evening was the GCSAA welcoming reception, which was a great time of networking. I was able to catch up with some old friends that I have not seen for a while and was able to meet some new ones that I have been following on social media.

## DAY 2

Tuesday started with another breakfast with past Melrose recipients, as well as GCSAA CEO Rhett Evans. After breakfast it was off to classes and more networking. This day was packed with both advanced education offerings and refreshers on some of the basics. All the classes were taught by other Equipment Managers, so the presenters were relatable.

## DAY 3

On Wednesday I attended the sunrise celebration and grand opening of the trade show. Then it was off to the trade show! Aside from all the networking, this was by far my favorite part of the week. It was great to see the latest equipment technology in the industry and what is still in the development stages. For me, being a former turf equipment sales representative, it was also a day of catching up with some of my former manufacturers' TSMs (Territory Sales Managers). I was able to participate in the Reel Turf Tech's live GCSAA podcast with Trent Manning and I also sat in on some education at the Hector's Shop booth by Hector Velazquez (host of GCSAA Inside the Shop). It was nice to finally meet Trent and Hector in person! The evening was filled with more receptions, networking, and great food.



*Ken Melrose: The former CEO of The Toro Co. and a generous supporter of golf course superintendents and equipment managers passed away in 2020.*

## DAY 4

The final day at the conference began with the annual meeting. I strongly recommend to anyone that attends the conference that they attend this meeting. After some more time on the trade show floor, I attended the ceremony for the 2023 CTEM (Certified Turf Equipment Managers) and Edwin Budding Award. At the end of the day, I attended the send-off celebration which included the introduction of the new GCSAA board members, several awards (including the College Turf Bowl winners - congratulations to my alma mater, SUNY Delhi, for taking 10th place this year!), and the send-off message titled "No Excuse" from keynote speaker Kyle Maynard.

The Melrose Equipment Managers Experience was amazing for both myself and the other recipients. I cannot write enough on the value of the networking that took place that week. I now have several contacts that I can reach out to for help on issues and I regularly chat with all four of the other EM recipients. There were several things I learned that I have incorporated into my maintenance and shop organization programs as well as my approach to diagnostics. Since attending the conference, I have also taken advantage of the Equipment Managers Certificate Program (EMCP) study guides and exams being covered by the Melrose Equipment Managers Experience. I am now waiting for the last step toward becoming a Certified Turf Equipment Manager (CTEM). If you are an Equipment Manager or a Superintendent that is interested in attending the 2025 GCSAA Conference & Trade Show in San Diego, I would strongly encourage you to look into the Melrose Equipment Managers Experience or Melrose Leadership Academy. The applications will become available on August 1st and will close on September 15, 2024.

**Chris Hyman, EMCP - Level 2**

Equipment Manager, Cobblestone Creek Country Club

GCSA of NY Class EM

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Email: c.hyman9900@gmail.com

**GCSA of NY Fun Fact**

- ◆ Going into 2024, Chris Hyman was the only GCSA of NY Class EM Member (Mechanic / Equipment Manager)
- ◆ As of May 1st, we now have 6 Class EM Members
- ◆ All Mechanics / Equipment Managers are encouraged to join! Contact Chris or the Chapter Office to learn more!



*Hyman proudly displays his GCSAA EMCO Level 1 and Level 2 magnets on his tool box!*

# Golf: Beyond the Scorecard

Carl Schimenti, Urban Environmental Scientist  
Cornell University

As an avid golfer, I anxiously await the start of golf season in New York. Handicap posting officially began April 15<sup>th</sup>, but the true start of golf season – for me at least - is marked by greens adorned with a single pin, the sight of tee markers as I drive in, and the smell of the first mow on greens. There is some science behind that smell, which is attributed to green leaf volatiles and is meant to be a defense activation mechanism after herbivory (Scala et al., 2013). Ironically it only increases my (evolutionary?) urge to take a dollar-sized divot; the ultimate defoliation. Fellow golfers, rejoice!

This feeling of the golf season starting is one I look forward to all winter. It gives me energy, creates excitement, and frankly, makes me giggle like a second grader. This feeling is difficult to put a price on, but it's worth SOMETHING. Certainly, more than a single greens fee. That sort of noticeable but abstract value could be classified as an **Ecosystem Service** provided by the golf course. Ecosystem services refer to the benefits we can get from ecosystems, in this case, a golf course. While other ecosystem services are more tangible, e.g. the carbon sequestration of a wetland or the erosion control of turfgrass, the value I'm referring to is a **Cultural Service**, or a non-material benefit I've derived. I can feel the emotional and mental boost as I embark on another year's worth of my favorite recreational activity.

For most golfers, It won't take long for the high of returning to the golf course to fade. They will undoubtedly be sobered, as the game of golf douses their high with a metaphorical bucket of cold water: the first double bogey. As explained expertly in [a famous Robin Williams skit](#), golf is an impossible game which threatens to turn that positive cultural service into **DIS**-service by creating stress, anxiety, and anger. As the famous author Mark Twain said: "golf is a good walk spoiled". Despite these challenges and frustrations, a golfer should still recognize the variety of benefits they accrue during a round that go beyond the scorecard.




## Physical Benefits of Golf

Let's start with the physical health benefits of golf. Golfers can take between 6,300 and 16,500 steps per round, burning between 500 and 2400 calories in the process (Gabrellieri, 2011; Murray et al., 2016). As a moderate intensity activity, golf is associated with improved cardiovascular, respiratory, and metabolic health (Murray et al., 2016). Perhaps the most eye-popping statistic is that golfers live an average of 5 years longer than non-golfers, although that is almost certainly confounded by other variables such as income or ethnicity (Lee et al., 2004). Golfers will forget that regardless of their score, they are reaping these physical health benefits that benefit both in the short-term and long-term. Considering the energy requirements, the R&A even goes so far as to say doctors should refer their patients to play golf (The R&A, 2016). Eat your vegetables, drink some water, and go play golf, it's good for you!

## Social Benefits of Golf

In addition to physical health benefits, playing golf with others promotes social cohesion. Older folks are significantly more likely to experience social isolation, which puts them at risk for a variety of negative health conditions such as dementia, depression, anxiety, heart disease, and stroke (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2020). Playing golf with others presents an opportunity to increase their social interaction and create meaningful social bonds with other golfers. Golf also offers participants of all age's opportunities for intergenerational interaction and improved confidence in social settings (Murray et al., 2016). My personal experience validates these findings. Growing up as a high schooler playing skins games against plumbers, lawyers, doctors, and bartenders was a crash course in interacting with people from various walks of life. I learned how to converse with people two or three times my age and build confidence in an environment outside of the high school bubble. On paper, these people had little in common, yet somehow golf was the thing that brought them together as a unifying interest.



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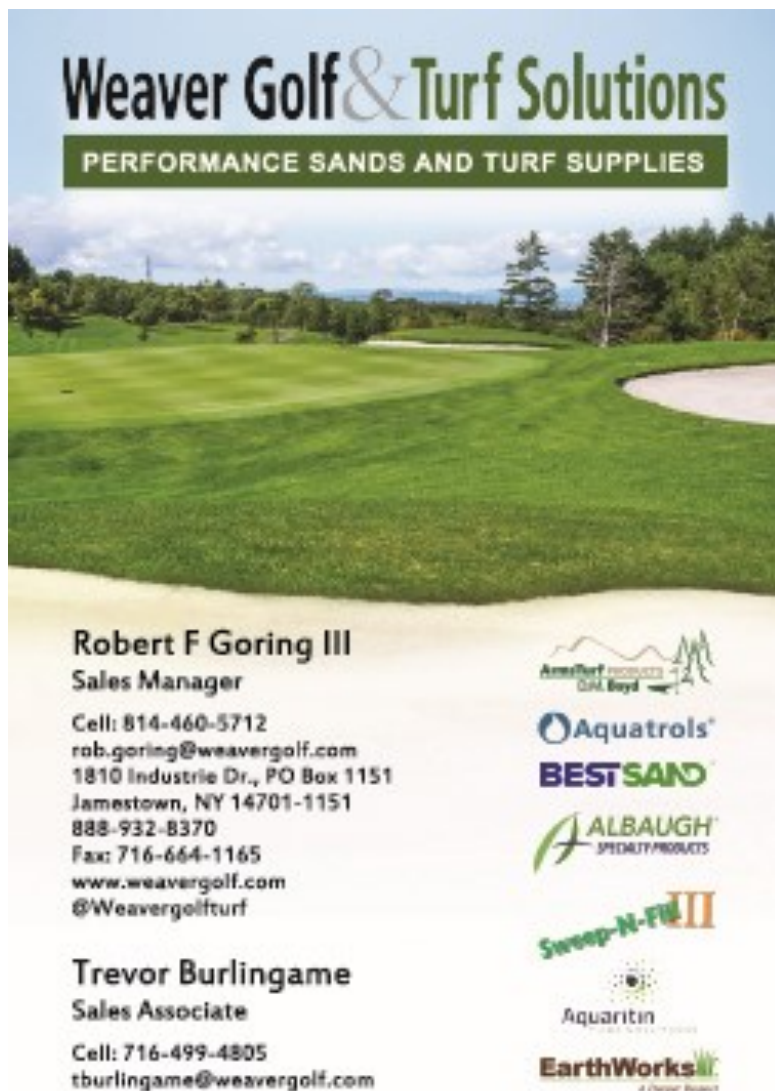
## Emotional Benefits of Golf

The last cultural service I'll address is one of mental and emotional health. My anecdotal experience with golf is one that centers on mental wellbeing. Whether it's the opening of the course in the Spring, or just a normal weekend round, I can feel my mood improve when I'm at the course. However, it appears the research investigating mental wellbeing from golf does not totally agree with my experience. While some studies show there can be positive improvements in mood, stress or anxiety, there is also data showing that anxiety can increase due to focusing on performance (Murray et al., 2016). Further confounding evidence is seen in surveying efforts from Anderson et al. that showed no differences in cognitive function before and after golf rounds (Anderson et al., 2015). Perhaps I'm an outlier, but it would be nice if I weren't!

Golf, as a recreational activity, should reliably improve our mental wellbeing. I say that because research of urban green spaces soundly places wellbeing benefits as a leading justification for those areas (Jabbar et al., 2022). The physical characteristics of a golf course are similar to any other green space: trees, grass, plants, and flowers, yet the addition of a golf club in someone's hands magically makes those mental wellbeing benefits disappear. It might just come back to the quote from Mark Twain. Golf is all-consuming to the point that you forget that you are strolling around in a beautiful grassland. Golfers are so busy staring at that tiny ball that they forget to look at the vistas, the topography, the plants, and the animals. Sometimes literally, they are stuck in the sand.

It's possible that golfers could benefit from some advice that broadens their attention away from their score. One phrase that may help is: "look up and out". The act of pausing to look up from the horizon and out across the course can help golfers truly appreciate the setting they are in. They might even take a deep breath. These are practices routinely employed during mindfulness training (see: Paul MacCormack). Perhaps, you promote this activity by creating a sign to remind golfers of this at scenic spots on the property. Anything that actively reminds golfers that they're in nature is something that can benefit their mental wellbeing, and by extension improve the cultural services your course provides.

These cultural services are just one of a variety of ecosystem services that golf courses can provide. Our research program at Cornell will continue to explore these ecosystem services so we can discover how to best optimize them on golf courses, thus improving value to our golfers and the environment. This is how we can ensure that golf remains not only a source of enjoyment, but a conduit for cultural enrichment and environmental stewardship.



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# Walk & Talk With Dr. Frank Rossi

## 2024 Schedule

**CNY: April 17 at Lake Shore Yacht & CC\* Adam Engle**

**WNY: May 15 at Crag Burn GC\* Terrance DiLoreto**

**FL: June 5 at Midvale CC\* Nevin Hess**

**East: July 17 at Teugega CC Nick Perrucci**

**South Sept. 25 at Cornell Chris Sitko**

*\* Meet & Greet Ron Stepanek*

## RECAP: Walk & Talk—April 17 at Lake Shore Yacht & CC

54 Attendees, 48 Attended

- 21 From Golf Courses
- 21 Class AFs / AF Partners
- 6 others

**100% of Golf Course Superintendent & Crew attending “highly recommend” these events!**

### WHAT THEY LOVED

*Whole event was well done.*

*Conversing and learning from Frank and other superintendents*

*Banter between Joe Lucas and Frank Rossi*

*Networking and seeing a course I had not seen before*

*Walking the golf course*

*Seeing superintendents I haven't seen in a while*

*Banter between everyone on management topics and ideas*

*Peer comradery*

*Chicken Francaise was outstanding*

*I honestly wouldn't have changed anything*



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