

Mike Bavier, CGCS Inverness C.C.

Among our peers (private clubs), we are unique because so many of our members live close by. Still, play was down in April and May. Over the 4th of July weekend it was so crowded here it was unbelievable. Our membership is still up; we have 20-plus associate members waiting to get in as regular members. All in all, we've done well. Even though the economy has slowed down things a bit, we have yet to feel the ripple effect at our club. Getting the weather straightened out would help us, along with helping everybody else in this crazy business.

Kerry Satterwhite, CGCS City of Bloomington, IL

Our play has declined over the past two seasons. Our rounds and revenues were down significantly last year, and this year we are continuing to see a downward trend. I think there are several contributing factors. The economy is certainly one but I don't think that has had the greatest impact. The weather extremes are part of the reason. We had a very cool, wet spring that segued into this latest heat wave and drought and our numbers have fluctuated because of that. I think that the growth of the game has flatlined or declined slightly but the number of new courses has continued to grow. The golfer has more options now and is taking the opportunity to play at all these new facilities, rather than play his weekly round(s) at his local course. I think the total number of rounds is still being played, they are just being played at several different courses rather than just one or two. The combination of these three factors has had a definite impact on the daily-fee courses.

Larry Flament Stonewall Orchard G.C.

This spring was terrible—cold and damp—and any decline in rounds I blame more on the weather than anything. Since the 1st of June, when the weather cleared up, we've been packing them in. It's actually helped that the rain has been missing us north or south, so we haven't lost days to rain. Rounds before June 1

were down, since June 1 our numbers are back up, so overall we are just a little bit below projections.

I think we're all feeling the effects of the economy some, but within our market niche our green fees are very competitive. The weather has had much more of an impact on us than the economy. I think people still want to get out and play golf. On the other hand, I don't think we'll see any spike in rounds this year.

Kerry Blateau, CGCS

The weather and the economy both contributed to my leaving a grow-in project for the Village of Bensenville. They were faced with dwindling tax revenues and were hesitant to commit additional funding needed to finish the grow-in. Of course, they wanted to open as soon as possible this season to generate revenue. With the poor spring weather, the grow-in development was slow and opening this season was doubtful.

When all of that was put together . . . unreasonable expectations with poor budgetary support . . . I decided to leave before I got an ulcer.

I think this is becoming more common . . . facilities still have high expectations but due to the economy, budgetary support is reduced. Add in the weather this year, and it is a challenge to provide a facility equal to expectations.

Tony Kalina Prairie Landing

I actually think the downtrend started last year, prior to 9-11. We had a cool wet spring and rounds were down. It seemed like there was no time for golf. The buzz was, people were busy doing a lot of other things . . . graduations, birthday parties, family vacations. Then, of course, came September 11 and the economic downturn associated with the volatility in the market . . . and another chilly, damp spring.

Through June 30, we were running about 17% below budget for rounds and 12% down from budgeted revenues. Profit-wise, we're offsetting

some of the decline in rounds with increased sales in the pro shop, food-and-beverage and banquets, and good cost-controlling management.

At our club, we entered the market during an economic boom period, and what we have noticed among our clientele is they are comprised of mainly successful young professionals who have decided not to join a private club but travel to play the wide variety of premier golf venues Chicago has to offer. Obviously, with the tightening of belts on the corporate end, we have seen a decline in the number of rounds coming in that could be classified as corporate business. Still, this speaks to the state of the Chicago-area golf market. I think we've probably reached or are approaching saturation in the five counties that make up Chicagoland. There are a lot of great places to play golf and a lot of competition between the outstanding facilities in our market.

Arguably, our market niche may be more recession-proof than others. We do see many of the same gentlemen and ladies coming in on the weekend mornings, Friday afternoons, etc. No doubt, though, discretionary income is down. Spending is too. We're marketing the golf course more aggressively and implementing new rate structures to attract new customers, offer new incentives to repeat customers and enhance our appeal to families. We're offering specials like two-for-one and three pay, four play. After all, the tee time is our commodity. We are looking to increase our profitability and you only get that by having someone filling your tee times. If nobody is on the tee at twilight, you've got to look for ways to get people to want to come play at that time. And discounting is one way to attract more. Look at things as if you were the course owner. As an owner, you'd rather have a foursome paying \$40 each in greens fees after 4:00 p.m. than have that tee time empty because the normal fees are \$68. Our profitability revolves around customers filling tee times. I believe the "added value" our customers perceive at PLGC is enhanced by our course conditioning, customer service and positive attitude standards.



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MIDWEST PERSONALITIES



Name: **Bob McCallum, Orchard Hills Golf Club, 10 years**
 Job title: **Manager of Golf Course Operations**
 Date of birth: **January 14, 1958**
 Place of birth: **Fort Wayne, IN**
 Current residence: **Rosemont, IL**
 Spouse: **Myra, 13 years. My life changed for the better "once and for all" when I met and married Myra.**
 Children: **Eric, 28**
 Pet: **Quincy, a gray cat**
 MAGCS member since: **1976**
 College/degree: **Bachelor's degree in agronomy from Eastern Kentucky University—major in turf, minor in business management**
 My favorite childhood memory is: **I was a medalist in IHSA sectional golf.**
 My personal hero: **My grandmother, who taught me how to prioritize my life in this order: God, family, work. Also because she kept my feet warm as a baby.**
 My professional mentors: **Warren Bidwell, Raymond Schmitz, Ken Lapp**
 Favorite actor: **Peter Sellers—he was hilarious as a comedic actor.**
 Favorite musical performer: **Yanni**
 Favorite restaurant: **Lawry's The Prime Rib**
 Favorite "pigout" food: **Pizza**
 Favorite professional sports team: **I'm a diehard Chicago Bears fan.**
 Favorite pro athlete: **Undertaker—I respect anyone that can "one hand press" the Big Show!**
 Favorite pro golfer: **Ben Hogan, since he had arguably the smoothest golf swing of all time and was able to overcome the auto accident that had doctors saying that he might never walk again and certainly never compete as a pro golfer. He not only worked at rehabilitating himself to walk but went on to compete and win again on the PGA Tour!**
 My handicap index: **10.7**
 My favorite place to play golf is: **Big Run. It's a great golf course because it is not extremely long yet it requires you to play a lot of position shots and really requires a great deal of thought in order to score well.**
 My best/most memorable round ever: **Callaway Gardens, Georgia, because I was 14 years old and defeated my dad for the first time by holing a 6-iron on the last hole.**
 The most interesting/exotic place I've ever traveled: **Acapulco, Mexico, deep-sea fishing for sailfish**

The book I've been recommending lately: ***Cat and Mouse***
 The last great movie I saw: ***The Color Purple***
 Favorite TV show: **Coverage of the Masters Tournament**
 Favorite color: **Blue**
 In my spare time, I enjoy: **Golf, movies, wine and dine, travel, fishing.**
 Three words that describe me: **Loyal, driven, organized**
 What I enjoy most about my job: **I enjoy being so close to the environment and wildlife outside.**
 What I dislike about my job: **Wearing a respirator.**
 I'm a Midwest member because: **I am proud of my profession and want to be an active participant in it.**



Name: **Kevin Barto, St. Charles Country Club, 1 year**
 Job title: **Assistant superintendent**
 Date of birth: **August 18, 1977**
 Place of birth: **Raymond, IL**
 Current residence: **St. Charles, IL**
 Spouse: **Engaged to Chrissy**
 MAGCS member since: **2000**
 College/degree: **University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; ornamental horticulture degree specializing in turf**
 My favorite childhood memory is: **My family's lawn-care service.**
 My personal hero: **Grandpa Barto and Grandpa Rosenthal**
 My personal mentor: **My parents**
 Favorite actor: **Denzel Washington, Ashley Judd**
 Favorite musical performer: **I like almost all music.**
 Favorite restaurant: **Chili's**
 Favorite "pigout" food: **Pizza**
 Favorite professional sports team: **St. Louis Cardinals**
 Favorite pro athlete: **Michael Jordan**
 Favorite pro golfer: **Tiger Woods**
 My favorite place to play golf: **Shoal Creek Golf Course in Raymond, IL**
 My best/most memorable round ever: **A round at Shoal Creek in Raymond. I had just purchased a new driver and on the second hole I hit my tee shot and the driver head flew into the creek. My buddy and I used bunker rakes to recover the head so I could return the club.**
 The most interesting/exotic place I've ever traveled: **Puerto Rico**
 The last great movie I saw: **National Lampoon's Van Wilder**
 Favorite TV show: **CSI and sports.**
 Favorite color: **Blue**

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In my spare time, I enjoy: **Spending time with Chrissy, hanging out with friends, listening to music, and playing golf, basketball, darts or pool.**

Three words that describe me: **Hard-working, reliable, cautious**

What I enjoy most about my job: **Being outside and taking care of Mother Nature.**

What I dislike about my job: **Early mornings?**

I'm a Midwest member because: **Of the learning opportunities available from networking with other industry professionals.**

Quotable: "I would like to thank all of the managers and employees that I work with at St. Charles Country Club, Cog Hill Country Club, Skokie Country Club, Butler National Golf Club, Busch Stadium, Panther Creek Country Club, and the turf department at the U of I for helping teach me new things. I appreciate all of the friendships that I have acquired through the years and wish the best of luck to everyone."



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