

FOR RICK BAYLISS

THE CMAA ADVENTURE CONTINUES

Written by Dave White, Editor



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ometimes you can take a boy out of a private club, but as the old adage suggests, ‘You can’t take the private club out of the boy.’

So it is with Rick Bayliss, 2013 president of the Club Managers Association of America. Bayliss, elected at the recent CMAA World conference in San Diego, succeeds Lawrence ‘Skip’ Avery, president in 2012.

“I first started in this industry at the age of 11, as a caddie,” the new CMAA president offered.

“When I was 13, my best friend and I broke every labor law in the book at a small club in Michigan, doing everything from cleaning carts and busing tables. All of my mates also worked in the golf/hospitality business so it was a very social and fun environment...my best friends then and now continue to be in the industry.”

Bayliss has been chief operating officer of The Lost Tree Club, North Palm Beach FL since 2009. Previously, he managed Oakland Hills Country Club in Bloomfield Hills, MI; Kent Country Club in Grand Rapids, MI; and Travis Pointe Country Club in Ann Arbor, MI. In 2001, he was named Club Executive of the Year by Club Management Magazine.

While at Oakland Hills Country Club in Bloomfield Hills, MI, from 1997-2009 the club hosted four major championships including: the 2004 Ryder Cup Matches, the 2008 PGA Championship, the 2002 US Amateur, and the 2007 British Open IFQ.

Simultaneously to these events, he lead the club through a \$37 million in renovations and rebuilding, including the historic clubhouse, the south golf course, new practice/ short game, an indoor teaching facility and a new pool and tennis complex.

At Lost Tree the club is currently undergoing a \$28 million project including the recently completed construction of a new clubhouse and a new fitness and spa facility. Restoring, rebuilding, continuous improvement and constructing high performance teams has been his 'modus operand' throughout his career.

And that MO sets the stage for his term as the CMAA's president.

GETTING STARTED

Bayliss eventually became assistant manager at the small Michigan club while attending Michigan State University, and immediately following graduation, assumed the assistant manager's role at the Country Club of North Carolina in Pinehurst, N.C., joining the Club Managers Association of America in 1985.

for our members and their clubs through our dynamic educational content and programming. CMAA has weathered much since 1927.

"Our mission remains the same but our methods of delivery have expanded to embrace the latest technology including our online learning platform, CMAA University, as well as interactive social media like our member-only LinkedIn forums that bring together more than 1,500 members," Bayliss said.

There are a number of things on his 'to do' list including:

1. Membership - The number one priority is rebuilding membership. CMAA is working hard to rebuild its membership to pre-recession levels through innovative engagement and recruitment efforts including the Step Membership Program.

2. ClubSolutionsSM and Executive Education— We are expanding and educating our members and the industry on the facility and risk management solutions CMAA provides to its members and their clubs.

3. Industry partnerships – CMAA continues to work with the greater club and golf industry on alliances and partnerships that grow interest in our segment and ultimately

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"I've been extraordinarily fortunate to continue to grow both professionally and personally in the field ever since.

"The greatest assets in my professional life are a direct result of my membership in CMAA. The networking with peers, benchmarking, educational resources and tools I use everyday are all rooted in CMAA," he explained.

"This association unveiled how much I really didn't know after graduating from college. Peers encouraged my growth in this industry and were role models for professional commitment, and in ethical, value-based leadership. One can easily conclude that CMAA has given me the equivalent of an 'MBA' in our industry."

So what's on the Bayliss agenda for 2013?

"Our industry continues to face the 'new normal' post-recession. We are in a new world and cannot rest on the past reputation of our clubs or an old model of operating," he explained.

"We must be innovative, resourceful and open to change while staying true to our core mission. Like our industry, CMAA continues to evolve in order to maintain relevancy

illustrate the economic benefits it has to the broader community. Continuing to speak together, as a unified voice, through these partnerships is a high priority.

There are also a number of significant issues outside CMAA that are having or will have a profound effect on the club industry and clubs. For example, *Affordable Care Act (ACA)* aka 'Obamacare.'

"There's no doubt that the Affordable Care Act (ACA) will affect all employers, including clubs, in the coming years. Based on our economic impact report, more than 326,000 individuals work in the club industry nationwide. More than 90 percent of clubs currently offer health care insurance to employees, with the club median paying 80 percent of the premium on behalf of its employee," Bayliss explained.

"Like all businesses, clubs will need to make educated and thoughtful management decisions based on what is best for their individual operation. With much of the law yet to be written into regulation, it is difficult yet to foresee the full effect on our industry."

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I've probably known Rick as long or likely longer than anyone else in the club industry because we grew up in the same area of northern Michigan. In fact, our wives actually knew one another before Rick and I met, and we had the good fortune of all working together (with me trying to 'manage' this group!) at Birchwood Farms Golf & Country Club in Harbor Springs, Michigan.

At the time, I was food and beverage manager and Rick was a bartender, and our eventual spouses were servers. While I'd love to tell you more about those early days, I can't or Rick will be impeached from this new role as the CMAA's President!!

Seriously, I couldn't be happier or prouder to see Rick achieve this honor. From those early days in that very busy summer club in beautiful northern Michigan, where the vast majority of members from some of the finest clubs in the country would spend two or three months in our resort community, it was clear that Rick had that special 'gift' necessary to be successful in the club industry.

Armed with a great sense of humor, a strong work ethic, tremendous patience and perseverance, and a pretty good intellect (ha!), Rick was destined for great things, either in this business or whatever field he chose to pursue.

After having been in each other's weddings, both attending Michigan State, seeing our children born and grow up about the same time, and always having those early bonds and ties back to Harbor Springs, MI, we've had the good fortune of sharing many successes, ideas, thoughts, challenges and opportunities over the years.

While Rick often reminds me that I have a few years on him, it's been fun and rewarding to feel a little like the 'mentor' turning into the 'mentee' as he has established himself as one of the top managers in the country.

I've actually worked with him on a few occasions for short-term projects, and have seen first hand how his skills and abilities have developed...to being a true 'strategic visionary' and being able to build consensus among very accomplished, sometimes disparate viewpoints of members.

He's 'masterful' at doing so...and, at the same time, has done an outstanding job of developing extremely high performing teams with members who clearly respect him because of the consistent, positive respect he gives to them. And, he does it with incredible clarity!

So, fast-forwarding over 30 years of friendship, I'm pleased to say that he and his family live on the same street, one house removed in Jupiter, Florida.

My respect and admiration for his consistent and continued success – from humble roots in northern Michigan to having led the club hosting the most successful Ryder Cup in history, to leading one of the prominent memberships and clubs in the country in Lost Tree Club in North Palm Beach, FL, to the presidency of CMAA.

Rick has been on a well-deserved ride and I'm really glad to have had a chance to see it first hand for so many years!

~ Kurt Kuebler, partner, Kopplin & Kuebler

First, I owe my career to Rick, and that's not an exaggeration!

I first met Rick in 1997 during an interview with him at Oakland Hills Country Club. It wasn't just Oakland Hills that drew me to Michigan...it was the dinner after the interview at a restaurant in Birmingham with Rick, my wife Robin and me. Just the three of us. After that dinner, back at the hotel Robin and I looked at each other and said, 'Wow, I can learn something from this guy.'

I knew that here, finally, was a boss...no leader, from whom I could learn and grow as a superintendent. Emphasize leader, not boss. He was never the boss, although it was never in doubt who was in charge. Not because the word "boss" was on the office door but because true leadership, Bayliss leadership, is easy to follow.

During my first year at the club, there was a Monday outing...a big, money-making outing. It rained of course, and the golf course was wet. In my opinion too wet for carts and that meant the outing was canceled, with a huge loss of revenue to the club.

Now a normal "boss" would have overruled that call, putting revenue ahead of the superintendent's wishes. Fair enough. But not Rick. With a raised eyebrow ... and his butt on the line for the lost revenue, he said, "Your call, Cookie!" I knew this was intentional. Rick was laying the groundwork, establishing a working relationship that would pay dividends in the future for us as a management team and for the club – dividends far beyond any revenue we may have lost that day.

I learned this lesson: If you want loyalty from your staff during the tough times, then you'd better give that support unconditionally during the simple times, even if it means you sacrifice a little of yourself in the process.

Rick Bayliss changed Oakland Hills C.C. during his tenure. He didn't change the drapes...he changed the culture, changed the paradigm, changed the future. He took a sinking tugboat and turned it into the QE II. Tenacious. Persevering. Dedicated.

I was so, so lucky to have crossed paths with Rick and I will be forever grateful for the opportunity he gave me. Not only is he the most talented person I've ever worked with, he's a gentleman too. The CMAA is in very good hands.

~ Steven Cook, golf course superintendent, Oakland Hills Country Club



Water, the availability and/or the cost of it, remains a significant issue for many private clubs. So, “it is important that clubs demonstrate their value as small businesses within their local communities,” Bayliss stated.

In reality, the private clubs generate about \$14 billion worth of business in a year.

“CMAA illustrates the value of the industry with our annual economic impact information and further through our work with Golf 20/20. We must arm our clubs with the information they need to ensure that they are considered fairly in these decisions and not relegated to being viewed simply as ‘recreation’ for a community. Our clubs have been and will continue to be one of the most viable small businesses in the communities with significant economic impact.”

At the same time, clubs are faced with water shortages, rising utility costs and sometimes seasonal labor shortages. “Necessity is the mother of invention,” Bayliss suggests.

“Given the recession, clubs have already been forced to do more with less. These efforts, even in my own club, have helped to create a more streamlined, efficient operation. As our club facilities age and the global spread of sustainability and environmental efforts continue, we must embrace these measures to reduce utility consumption using modern technology and best practices.

“Access to labor is always an issue.” At times the private club industry has depended on seasonal laborers from off shore locations, who can work in the

U.S. through certain temporary work visas. Bayliss suggests there are resources at home.

“We must seek pools of candidates from untapped sources including returning and retiring military veterans as well as student and younger individuals new to the workforce,” he added.

CMAA has long been involved in private club governance, especially with the creation of the GM/COO concept, to better delineate roles and responsibilities of private club board members and paid managers leading to collaborative governance in clubs.

“Without exception, whenever we

have seen club directors exposed to CMAA and our commitment to executive education, they have been not only impressed, but also come away with a stronger commitment to the GM/COO approach to leading and governing clubs,” Bayliss added.

And what about all those friends Bayliss alluded to earlier? Many of them are deeply involved in the private club industry... friends, as part of a support system, and others who have learned much from Rick Bayliss over the years.

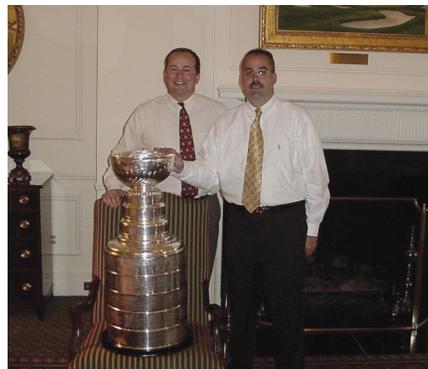
Rick’s leadership certainly had an

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Page 20: Rick Bayliss, 2013 CMAA president, GM/COO The Lost Tree Club

Page 23: Clockwise starting upper middle, pictured left to right: Stanley Cup, Rick Bayliss & Marc Ray, CCM, CCE; Rick Bayliss & David Renker with the Ryder Cup (the best friend that worked with me as a young lad); Brian Peaper, director of golf and Rick Bayliss in Lost Tree’s new pro shop; Lloyd Gillespie, CCM, Rick Bayliss, Barbara & Jack Nicklaus, Sheri Herb, Mike Kostelnik at The Lost Tree Club

Page 100: Top to bottom: Pat Crowell, Rick Bayliss, Rees Jones and Steve Cook at Oakland Hills Country Club; Pat Crowell, Steve Cook, John Morad, Frank Sheckell, Mike Mihalich, Rick Bayliss, Padraig Harrington, John Frasco, Don Kegley, Jeff Trimmer, Paul McIntosh, Bill Larkin with the Wannamaker Cup at the 2008 PGA Championship at Oakland Hills Country Club



impact on friend and colleague Marc Ray, now general manager/COO of The Vintage Club, Indian Wells, CA., who worked with Rick at Oakland Hills.

“I remember the tremendous amount of leadership and resolve Rick displayed...as he laid the groundwork for Oakland Hills to host the U.S. Amateur (2002), The Ryder Cup Matches (2004) and the PGA Championship (2008).

“As anyone who has ever put on one of these events knows, the planning and preparation for these events starts years in advance. Making things even more challenging was the fact that on September 11, 2001 the U.S. came under attack.

“Many don’t recall, but the Ryder Cup matches actually scheduled for 2003 were moved back a year to 2004...the first Ryder Cup on U.S. soil after 9/11. It turned out to be the most financially successful Ryder Cup in history at the time. Not so great for the American golfers, but still very successful.

“None of which happens by accident and only with an extraordinary leader, leading an extraordinary team. I’m proud to call him a mentor and a friend,” Ray opined.



Others who have felt the Bayliss impact, worked with him at various events. To wit: Kerry Haigh of the PGA of America and the 2004 Ryder Cup and 2008 PGA Championship at Oakland Hills.

“Throughout our working relationship, he was a true professional in everything that he did. He showed great respect for the feelings of his club membership while at the same time understanding many of the logistical and business issues that were being dealt with in making these major championship events operate successfully at a private country club.

“Rick has great people skills,” Haigh offered, “and is extremely knowledgeable about the golf industry and business of golf, and always has the needs and desires of his club membership at the heart of every decision that was made.

But there was always time for ‘downtime.’

“At the end of a long day of work, Rick was always asking if we wanted to go down to the local ‘pub’ for fish and chips. In other words, he also wanted people to have a good time when working,” Haigh added.

Pat Crosswell, Oakland Hills, director of golf during those busy years from 1997 to 2008 with a US Amateur, a Ryder Cup and PGA championship, recalls Bayliss as a GM he enjoyed working with, and a trip they made “each year to play golf in Florida. Rick’s game was respectable but the real reason he was invited was that he could cook a great New York strip steak.”

And so it is for Rick Bayliss – a private club devotee who has had such an influence on so many people in the private club industry – from being an 11 year-old caddie to assistant general manager to general manager, to president of the Club Managers Association of America...pretty much a dream come true! **BR**

