



The Power of Three

By Joe Barks, Editor

Achievements at The Kansas City CC Under Mark Bado's Leadership

- Fifty-six percent growth in Junior Golf over three seasons, through programs including Parent/Child tournaments, Night Golf as part of Halloween Party, Tournament of Champions with neighboring clubs, and play-with-pros events; 25% growth in ladies golf participation, through twilight events and small interest-group tournaments.
- F&B sales improved 10% in 2014 and 15% overall since 2008; to-go menu revenues for major holidays increased by nearly 50% since 2008.
- Expansion of fitness center and programming to increase revenues by 72% in six years; annual fitness visits increased from 25,000 to 45,000.



Mark Bado's introduction to the club industry came after he earned his B.A. in accounting, with a minor in business and economics, from Bethany College, and then became a senior auditor for a major accounting firm. That led to a client relationship with Oakmont (Pa.) Country Club—a relationship that Bado developed, and performed in, so well that Oakmont eventually hired him as the club's Controller.

From there, Bado was all-in to make club management his chosen profession, and he ascended rapidly through General Manager/COO positions at Wildwood Golf Club (Allison Park, Pa.) and The Country Club of Peoria (Ill.), before assuming the top duties at The Kansas City Country Club (KCCC), in Mission Hills, Kan., in 2008.

In addition to earning Certified Club Manager and Certified Club Executive certifications as part of his immersion into the discipline, Bado also achieved the designation of Master Club Manager in 2012, becoming one of less than two dozen professionals in the field throughout the world to have completed the requirements for that status.

And in 2014, Bado reached another elite career milestone when he was named the recipient of The Mead Grady Award, for distinguished management of a country/golf club with fewer than 600 full-privilege members, through the Excellence in Club Management Awards co-sponsored by the McMahon Group and *Club & Resort Business* (see box, pg. 52).

Winning the Numbers Game

Not surprisingly, when asked for his thoughts on what "excellence in club management" entails, Bado draws on his accounting roots to describe the concept as a linear equation. "A great club product revolves around three assets: membership, staff, and the physical plant," he says. "Club managers must focus on bringing all three together, to provide an experience that consistently meets the expectations of those who are paying a premium for the club experience."

During his time at KCCC, Bado has drawn on his accounting background and financial acumen to lead the enhancement of the club's facilities through major golf course and clubhouse renovations; a pool complex improvement that included the creation of an acclaimed cafe; and development of a robust fitness and wellness program that has taken full advantage of an expansion that created a two-story fitness center prior to his arrival. He has also guided the creation of a 25-year capital plan designed to unfold in five-year, incremental units, and implemented zero-based budgeting that is measured on a weekly basis and includes incentives for departments that hit key targets and budget items.

But throughout his career, and particularly at KCCC, Bado has also demonstrated that his value as a club manager extends far beyond merely doing an excellent job counting his



Ideas Implemented Successfully at The Kansas City CC Under Mark Bado's Direction

- During new-menu rollouts, culinary team and servers participate in "F&B Jeopardy" training, where game-show format is used to pair ingredients with dishes.

- Foodservice employees who serve on Safety Committee participate in scavenger hunts to ensure knowledge of where emergency equipment and supplies are located.

- "Doggy Dip" event (see photo at right), complete with build-your-own Bloody Mary bar and light snacks, was held on last day of pool season to allow members to bring their pets to swim with them in one of the club's four pools, with toys provided and races organized. The idea turned a mixed-emotion, end-of-year occasion into what is now a highly anticipated annual opportunity for unique family fun.



Bado became KCCC's new General Manager/COO in 2008, and has since led improvements and expansions for all parts of the physical plant and property while generating new vibrancy within both the membership and staff.

property's beans. As described in the monograph he wrote for his Master Club Manager certification ("There's No 'I' in Club," *C&RB*, December 2012), Bado's leadership formula also calls for a strong mix of the human element, both in how members' needs are anticipated and addressed, and in how the staff serving those members is trained and developed.

For All to See

KCCC has had a long-standing tradition of formalizing, as part of the club's regular management routine, the process through which fresh ideas can be generated to enhance the member experience and effect new efficiencies in club operations ("Bringing New Ideas to the Table," *C&RB*, April 2007). Bado embraced and elaborated on this approach after his arrival, establishing requirements for each department to develop at least two ideas each year that can be submitted to the local-chapter and national Idea Fairs sponsored by the Club Managers Association of America.

While this focus has generated at least one entry judged to be the best in the country each year, awards have always been a secondary objective and benefit, compared to the primary intentions of the practice: driving continued innovation that can be applied in the form of both visible and behind-the-scenes improvements (see examples in Ideas box, above) and fostering a culture through which all members of the team strive for collective growth (all posters made for

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Bado (right) has applied integrated team management techniques to work closely with KCCC department heads, including Executive Chef Andrew Kneessy, CEC (left), to ensure successful implementation of innovations such as the club's acclaimed Pool Cafe.

Idea Fair submissions are displayed prominently throughout KCCC's management office and back-of-the-house areas, as permanent reminders of the types of concepts that can help to distinguish the club and its operation).

Bado has also put a strong emphasis on individual growth by encouraging his staff's pursuit of continuing education and professional development, both through participation in industry organizations specific to each manager's discipline, and also through Benchmarking Exchange Trips that are arranged with other premier clubs. At the same time, he has formalized the importance of inter-departmental understanding, as a critical tenet of integrated team management. In addition to traditional weekly staff meetings, managers also have regular meetings with other departments, not only to ensure that everyone is aware of schedules and issues that may need resolution, but also to further the understanding and sense among all team members of how the club must operate as a whole through its connected parts.

This approach also extends to how the KCCC Board and membership interacts with staff. Each Board member experiences an all-day orientation that includes a look at behind-the-scenes operations as part of a tour of the entire club. Board members are also invited to the annual "Greens and Grounds" luncheon, to help them gain a better understanding of the golf course maintenance operations and staff.

After seven years of this consistent approach to keep facilities, membership and staff all in step toward the pursuit of continued excellence and improvement, KCCC, under Bado's leadership, has become a living model of the value of scrapping outmoded club-management organization charts—where the General Manager is in the middle of a "top down" pipeline, and departments have no interaction—for one designed to ensure effective circulation of communication and ideas within the staff, and also among the staff, the membership, and its Board.

The integrated team approach, Bado says, is the best way to "create a positive environment and give everyone on the staff the best opportunity to succeed." And that, he notes, will always add up to the best way of "getting everyone out of their silos, so we can all work together to provide a quality product for our membership."

C&RB

Honoring Excellence



The Excellence in Club Management (ECM) Awards were established by the McMahon Group, Inc., the St. Louis-based consulting firm, in 1997 and have been co-sponsored by *Club & Resort Business* since 2006.

The annual awards are selected through nominations submitted on behalf of qualified candidates by other parties. Award recipients are selected solely on the basis of their achievements at the club they currently manage; "lifetime achievements" are not considered.

Awards in four categories are given each year:

- **The James H. Brewer Award**, for a manager of a Country/Golf Club with 600 or more full-privilege members
- **The Mead Grady Award**, for a manager of a Country/Golf Club with fewer than 600 full-privilege members
- **The Mel Rex Award**, for a manager of a City, Athletic or Specialty (Non-Golf) Club
- **The "Rising Star" Award** for an assistant club manager

A Selection Committee comprised of a peer group of leading club managers conducts the judging for the ECM Awards; the McMahon Group and *Club & Resort Business* are not involved in the selection of the winners.

The Selection Committee for the 2014 Awards was chaired by Kevin Vitale, CCM, General Manager/COO of Baltusrol Golf Club, Springfield, N.J. A full listing of judges, in addition to information on past winners and on how to nominate candidates for future years' awards, can be found at the special website for the ECM Awards, www.clubmanageraward.com

The deadline for submitting nominations for the 2015 ECM Awards is November 20, 2015.

In addition to in-depth articles in *Club & Resort Business* that detail the achievements of each ECM winner, individual presentation ceremonies are held at their clubs. All winners are also honored at the Excellence in Club Management Awards Dinner, held each year in conjunction with the Club Managers Association of America World Conference. The 2015 Awards Dinner will be held next February in San Diego, Calif., and will once again be sponsored by **ClubCorp**, **Denehy Club Thinking Partners**, **Preferred Club**, **Toro** and **Yamaha Golf Car**.

