

# The Best of the Best



**Editor's Note:** *The profile of Bob Jones of Desert Mountain Club on page 48 of this issue is the final installment of a series highlighting the 2012 winners of the Excellence in Club Management® (ECM) Awards co-sponsored by the McMahon Group and Club & Resort Business. Previous profiles of 2012 winners appeared this year in the April (Michael Chase), May (Paul Skelton) and July (Eric Dietz and John Dorman) issues of C&RB.*

*With the nomination and judging process for the 2013 ECM Awards now underway, C&RB interviewed Kevin Vitale, CCM, to gain more insight into how the ECM Awards have come to be known as the preeminent recognition of exemplary performance in the club industry. Vitale, General Manager/Chief Operating Officer of Baltusrol Golf Club in Springfield, N.J., is serving as Chairman of the 2013 Selection Committee, which is comprised of leading General Managers and industry executives from throughout the U.S. and Canada (see opposite page for the full list of Selection Committee members).*

*The deadline for submitting nominations for the 2013 ECM Awards is December 6; more information on how to nominate a candidate can be found at [www.clubmanageraward.com](http://www.clubmanageraward.com)*

**Q Kevin, what distinguishes the Excellence in Club Management Awards from other honors and recognition that managers in the**

**club industry can achieve?**

**A** The separation of the Excellence in Club Management Awards from other industry awards is on several fronts. First, the nominations come from the clubs themselves. The application and information required is extensive, and selection of winners is solely by managers' peers in the industry; McMahon Group and Club & Resort Business are not involved in the judging.

The winners are then recognized nationally at a special awards dinner held in conjunction with the Club Managers Association of America's annual conference, where they have the opportunity to include their families, as well as Board members and staff from their clubs, as part of the awards ceremony. Presentations are also made at each individual winner's club, and all winners are profiled in *Club & Resort Business* magazine.

**Q What have your peers in the**

**industry who have earned ECM recognition over the years told you about its impact on their careers and how they manage their clubs after receiving the award?**

**A** The recognition is rewarding and confirms the managers' accomplishments to their membership, peers and the club industry.

I believe it is a satisfying experience to the managers, and they are very proud of the accomplishment. Having their families and clubs involved in the awards ceremonies is a dynamic and emotional experience.

Surprisingly, it does not change the impact on their careers or how they manage. To be an ECM winner, you need to be special and in the top 1% in the industry to begin with. The winners are highly regarded professionals who have made a major difference in the success of their clubs.

**Q What is involved for the nomination and final decision-making processes for the ECM awards?**

**A** Well, it is a process—as it should be. It starts with the club President nominating his or her General Manager. The nomination application is detailed and specific, and requires a great deal of work to accurately communicate the accomplishments during the manager's tenure and the impact and results of those achievements. These are not "lifetime achievement" awards—they relate specifically to a manager's perfor-



**Kevin Vitale, CCM, General Manager/COO of Baltusrol Golf Club, Springfield, N.J., is serving as Chairman of the 2013 Selection Committee for the ECM Awards.**

mance at his or her current club.

Once the applications have been completed and submitted, the Committee starts its process. I have been fortunate to work with some of the top GMs in the

country on the Committee. My first experience on the Committee was eye-opening, because the majority of applicants have had spectacular careers, making the judging of nominations very difficult.

Once the Committee has made its selections of the final candidates, the process can get stressful. The decision-making at this point is splitting hairs, and you understand what your vote means for the manager and the clubs involved. At the end of the process, the committee selects one manager for each of the four Awards categories, which are based on size and type of club. At that point, it is a rewarding feeling to know we have done our best to identify “the best of the best” from among so many impressive nominations.

**Q Why should club Presidents want to submit nominations for their General Managers?**

**A** For a couple of reasons: First, it allows the club to recognize and reward their manager for the job they have done at their club. Secondly, it gives the club national exposure on what makes their club so special for its members and the club industry.

**Q When the Committee is reviewing ECM nominations, what are the most common characteristics and accomplishments that seem to distinguish those who emerge as award winners?**

**A** Most often, the list of accomplishments is long and over a period of years. It identifies higher services, member value, capital improvements, team building, etc. The managers are proactive

in nature, and are constantly trying to improve their club.

**Q Screening ECM nominations can be fairly involved and time-consuming—why do those on the Committee feel it’s important to devote time and effort to the process?**

**A** It is our industry, and what we do for a living. Club managers take a great deal of pride in what we do and are dedicated to excellence both in our own work and our industry. So it is extremely important that if we are going to select a manager who performs at such a high level and reward them with this award, we need to do our part in the selection process.

**Q The Awards also include “Rising Star” recognition for an Assistant Manager, from nominations submitted by General Managers. What’s the value of achieving this recognition for someone on your staff?**

**A** I think the “Rising Star” award is the most rewarding for the committee to select. It represents the future of the industry and clearly helps the award winner along their career path to become a GM one day. Assistant managers want to work at a club where they can learn and develop, and ultimately run their own club. Clubs that get involved in the “Rising Star” part of the ECM Awards understand that.

**C&RB**

## 2013 Selection Committee

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Baltusrol Golf Club  
Springfield, N.J.

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**Jay DiPietro**  
Boca West Country Club  
Boca Raton, Fla.

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Colleton River Plantation Club  
Bluffton, S.C.

**David Chag**  
The Country Club  
Brookline, Mass.

**Robert Crifasi**  
New Orleans Country Club  
New Orleans, La.

**Elizabeth Di Chiara**  
The Canadian Society  
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Etobicoke, Ontario, Canada

**Brian Kroh**  
John’s Island Club  
Vero Beach, Fla.

**Richard Lareau**  
The Briar Club  
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The Union League  
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St. George’s Golf & Country Club  
Etobicoke, Ontario, Canada

**Kirk Reese**  
The Los Angeles Country Club  
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**John Schultz**  
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National Club Association  
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