

WARD SUTTON, MCM, CCE, PGA MASTER PROFESSIONAL

wardsutton@pga.com

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Master Club Manager, Certified Chief Executive, and PGA Master Professional with extensive experience in multi-course operations and private club leadership. A servant leader, strategic thinker, and manager who empowers high-performing teams within the club experience. Committed to a partnership where I can leverage my expertise to enrich the lives of staff and members, drive ambitious club goals, and elevate the club's reputation within the community.

CORE COMPETENCIES

- Leadership
- Membership/Marketing
- Accounting/Financial Management
- Food and Beverage Management
- Club Governance
- Facilities Management
- Golf, Sports, and Recreation Management
- Interpersonal Relationships

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE



KENT COUNTRY CLUB, GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN **General Manager (2021-Present)**

Kent Country Club, established in 1896, is a full-service country club located in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Kent Country Club has 18 holes of championship golf designed by Donald Ross, 4 lighted tennis courts, 3 lighted platform courts, 4 lighted pickleball courts, a swimming pool, and a main Clubhouse of 36,000 square feet. The Club is incorporated as 501(c)(7) and has 425 members, with a gross volume of \$8,200,000 and food and beverage sales of \$1,900,000. The Club has hosted the Michigan State Amateur, Western Open, and the Grand Rapids City Championship.

- Coordinated successful membership-approved facility improvement plans of \$4,800,000, enhancing casual dining, patio, golf simulation, game room, workspaces, bunkers, and green surrounds. Beyond the facility improvement plan, over the past five seasons, I have been involved in \$5,900,000 in capital improvements.
- Increased full golfing member initiation fee in my tenure from \$5,000 to \$30,000.
- Commissioned 20-year reserve study, created capital funding plan, and five-year strategic plan.
- Developed board of directors' handbook, employee handbook, and standards of operations and performance manual for each department.
- Conducted new member orientations, new staff orientations, new board member and committee member orientations. Introduced daily management dashboards and key performance indicator review.
- Increased employee benefits and staff culture to be the employer of choice in Grand Rapids. Examples of improvements include complimentary staff childcare, 401(k) matching, flexible PTO, the Kent University Manager in Development program, employee scholarships, and an employee assistance program.
- Elevated member satisfaction in the food and beverage department from an average score of 2.7, on a scale of 1 to 5, at the beginning of my tenure to 3.9 at the end of my second season.
- Net Promoter Score from 41 to 65 within my first three years.
- Increased the Club's net value over time by 59% and lowered the debt level by \$1,500,000 in my tenure.
- Increased the Club gross/net property, plant, and equipment ratio from 17% to 45% in my tenure.
- Serve on the Greater Michigan CMAA Board of Directors as Education Chairman, serve as the Michigan PGA Secretary, serve on the CMAA National Research Committee, and represent Michigan PGA on the National PGA mentoring and coaching initiative. Annual contributor at CMAA Business Management

Institute, General Management/COO at Michigan State University, first tee starter at the Rocket Mortgage Classic, and teach HB321 Club Management and Management at Michigan State University. Speaking engagements for 2026 include Michigan State University, Ferris State University, Michigan PGA, and the Greater Michigan CMAA Chapter.



YAKIMA COUNTRY CLUB, YAKIMA, WASHINGTON
General Manager (2018-2021)

Yakima Country Club, established in 1916, is a full-service country club located in Central Washington. Yakima Country Club has 18 holes of championship golf designed by Vernon Macan, 4 lighted tennis courts, 4 lighted pickleball courts, a swimming pool, and a main Clubhouse of 28,000 square feet. The Club is incorporated as a 501(c)(7) and has 530 members, with a gross volume of \$4,200,000, including \$1,200,000 in food and beverage sales. The Club hosted the Washington State Women's Amateur, Washington State Junior Amateur, and the Women's Transnational Championship.

- Increased junior golf membership by 45 families by introducing more diverse amenities and services to the Club. Examples include pickleball, Finn Cycles, Frisbee golf, trivia nights, KE Camps, junior club leasing, junior golf tees, private-label beer brewing, and childcare services provided during Club events.
- Expanded member offseason Club utilization by 30%. Examples of offseason programming enhancements include engaging events, fitness classes, spa services, golf simulation, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, sledding, and member getaways and member travel.
- Enhanced the Club's net value over time by 5% during my tenure. Improvements that contributed to increasing the Club's net value included \$450,000 in operating efficiency gains without reducing services or amenities, energized the membership to increase time and money spent at the Club, and properly funded capital improvements that exceeded depreciation.
- Improved net operating profits by \$359,000 in 2020 during COVID-19 restrictions due to the introduction of enhanced to-go offerings, development of a packaged goods program, offering delivery services, virtual events, and outdoor experiences.
- Ambassador to the community through service to the Yakima Downtown Rotary, as a Yakima Chamber of Commerce Board Member, The First Tee of Central Washington Board Member, Central Washington PGA Chapter Secretary, Evergreen CMAA Board Member, and CMAA National Membership Committee Member.



HIDDEN VALLEY COUNTRY CLUB, RENO, NEVADA
General Manager (2012-2018)

Hidden Valley Country Club, established in 1956, is a full-service country club located in Reno, Nevada. Hidden Valley Country Club has 18 holes of championship golf designed by Billy Bell Jr., 4 lighted tennis courts, 4 lighted pickleball courts, a swimming pool, and a main Clubhouse of 35,000 square feet. The Club is under IRS 277, has 450 members, and has a gross volume of \$3,500,000, including \$900,000 in food and beverage sales. The Club hosted the Nevada State Amateur, Western Athletic Conference Championship, and the Legends Tour Patty Sheehan and Friends.

- Well-versed in water rights, water management issues, asset development, and cell tower construction, which positioned the Club to acquire cash of \$425,000 in the sale of excess land, \$6,900,000 in the sale of excess water rights, and \$44,000 in annual cell phone tower lease payments to overcome deferred maintenance.
- Advocate of catering business through local organization involvement, which increased business 23% and established 67 monthly member dining events with engaging and entertaining concepts.
- Directly involved in menu creation, sanitation standards, and costing to achieve objectives, which produced a successful department and consistently delivered a 35% food cost of goods sold.
- Oversaw clubhouse capital improvements of more than \$2,000,000.
- Created innovative partnerships with local television, print media, real estate companies, and community organizations, adding \$80,000 to the market facility without increasing the marketing budget.

- Ambassador to the community through service to Leadership Reno Sparks, as a Reno Young Professional Network Board Member, The First Tee of Northern Nevada Board Member, Sierra Nevada PGA Chapter President, Northern California PGA Section Vice President, and host Section 2020 PGA Championship Committee member.



HIDDEN VALLEY COUNTRY CLUB, RENO, NEVADA **Head Golf Professional (2006-2012)**

- Increased the department's net operating revenue by \$89,000 in the top-performing year through increasing merchandise sales by \$72,000 and outside tournament growth by \$53,000. Ping Regional Club Fitter of the Year in 2012.
- Expanded player development programming participation by over 80%. 343 members took individual lessons, 85 women participated in golf schools and clinics, and 145 juniors participated in PGA Junior League, golf camps, and clinics.
- Seven assistant golf professionals under my leadership became leaders at other facilities, such as General Managers, Directors of Golf, Head Golf Professionals, and Administrators for Golf Associations.
- Raised over \$421,000 for the First Tee of Northern Nevada, PGA Associate Scholarships, Northern Nevada Junior Golf, Washoe County Sheriffs, Step 2, and the Food Bank of Northern Nevada.
- Contributor to over 30 industry articles in PGA Magazine, Sierra Sun, Biz Nevada, Reno Gazette Journal, Northern Nevada Business Weekly, and the Los Angeles Times.
- Responsible for all membership communications, i.e., weekly website updates, monthly newsletters, and over 250 impactful social media posts annually.



SEVEN OAKS COUNTRY CLUB, BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA **Head Golf Professional (2004-2006)**



STOCKDALE COUNTRY CLUB, BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA **Assistant Golf Professional (2001-2004)**

EDUCATION



MASTER CLUB MANAGER - CLUB MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA



CERTIFIED CHIEF EXECUTIVE - CLUB MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA



PGA MASTER PROFESSIONAL - PROFESSIONAL GOLFERS' ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA



BAKERSFIELD COLLEGE - Associate of Arts in Anthropology



PURDUE UNIVERSITY GLOBAL - Bachelor of Science in Organizational Management
Summa Cum Laude



MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY - Master of Science in Management, Leadership, and Strategy
(Expected Completion Fall 2027)

HONORS

- 2026 Michigan PGA Section Professional Development Award
- 2025 Greater Michigan CMAA Manager of the Year
- 2018 Northern California PGA Section Golf Professional of the Year
- 2016 Northern California PGA Section Bill Strausbaugh
- 2014 Northern California PGA Section Professional Development Award