

# KOPPLIN KUEBLER & WALLACE

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## GENERAL MANAGER/CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER PROFILE:

### SAWGRASS COUNTRY CLUB

PONTE VEDRA BEACH, FL

#### THE GENERAL MANAGER/CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER OPPORTUNITY AT SAWGRASS COUNTRY CLUB

Sawgrass Country Club (SCC) is one of the most notable golf venues in one of the most significant golf regions in the United States. The General Manager/Chief Operating Officer (GM/COO) position at SCC is a tremendous opportunity for an individual who is not only passionate about golf, but is passionate about leadership, team development, enhancing the Sawgrass brand, building strong relationships with members and staff, and seeing this dynamic club continue to enhance its relevancy and position in its members' lives. He or she must never be complacent or satisfied with simply being "good." Over the past several years, SCC leaders have developed a vision for the Club's future including capital improvements in addition to new programs and activities that focus on ensuring that SCC is both germane and engaging for all its current and future members.

The GM/COO is a partner with the Board, his/her fellow senior staff and the member volunteers who help shape and evolve SCC. Taking full accountability for that role and being a sincere, engaging, approachable and outgoing personality, the GM/COO must be highly competent in the critical success factor areas noted throughout this profile. They are essential to long-term success and crucial in achieving the high member and staff satisfaction levels demanded by SCC.

This is truly a great opportunity for candidates who value the unique North Florida lifestyle Ponte Vedra Beach offers. Set in a community with the attributes of a large city, the area possesses many of the values and quaintness found in a small town. The quality of the schools, the wide assortment of outdoor activities and cultural events, and many other personal and family life programs can be found in the greater Ponte Vedra Beach and Jacksonville communities, making the GM/COO at Sawgrass Country Club one of the best positions of its kind in the country!

[Click here to view a brief video about this opportunity.](#)

#### SAWGRASS COUNTRY CLUB AND COMMUNITY

***The Sawgrass mission is to "provide an exceptional 'Sawgrass Experience' by combining our oceanfront location with excellent facilities, programs and services for the enjoyment of our Members."***

Sawgrass Country Club is the premiere member-owned, private club in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida. The Sawgrass experience is comprised of a recently renovated Beach Clubhouse, Golf Clubhouse, 27-holes of championship golf, a world-class racquet facility with 13 courts, and a new fitness and wellness center. All of this is bordering the Atlantic Ocean.

Conveniently nestled approximately 30 minutes from Jacksonville and its International Airport to the north and St. Augustine to the south, Sawgrass is in an ideal location and has a small town feel while easily accessible to major events and attractions. Importantly as well, St. Johns County Schools are ranked #1 in the state of Florida.

Sawgrass Country Club was founded in 1974 by Jimmy Stockton and developed into one of our nation's premier residential country clubs. Jimmy Stockton hired Ed Seay, before he became partners with Arnold Palmer, "to design a championship golf course to resemble Troon, if Troon had palms and ponds."<sup>1</sup> Ed Seay succeeded and Sawgrass Country Club was born.

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<sup>1</sup> GolfWorld.com May 4, 2009

Sawgrass Country Club hosted one of the PGA TOUR's premier events, THE PLAYERS Championship, for five years from 1977 to 1981, after which the TOUR moved the championship to their newly developed and present home TPC Sawgrass. THE PLAYERS is a championship for the best TOUR players and carries one of the richest purses in professional golf to this day. Jack Nicklaus, Mark Hayes, Lanny Wadkins, Lee Trevino and Ray Floyd all won one of the THE PLAYERS Championships held at Sawgrass Country Club from 1977 - 1981.

Sawgrass Country Club features 27-holes maintained to championship standards. The three 9-hole courses underwent a renovation project that was completed in the Fall of 2015. All fairways, tees and bunkers were part of the renovation project and substantial improvement work was completed on other areas including bridges, drainage, cart paths and irrigation.

The Club has embarked on the planning process to build a new Golf Clubhouse. Sawgrass continues to invest in golf, but the master planned enhancements will result in tremendous new or updated amenities in several other key areas of the operation as well, if approved by the membership early this year. The overall project that has been presented and is currently out for member vote totals almost \$25.0M, and will be a key part of the new GM/COO's focus in the coming months.

In addition to golf, Sawgrass Country Club also offers a stunning Beach Club, Tennis Club, and Fitness Center. The members consider the Beach Club to be the "social and tropical recreation center of Sawgrass Country Club." Significant renovations were completed in 2016 allowing the members oceanfront casual and fine dining, covered outdoor dining in addition to the seaside Pavilion Sandbar Bistro for a family friendly dining option. There are two pools at the beach club, a large family pool and an adult-only pool and the beach is just steps away.

The Tennis Center has been ranked among the nation's "50 Best" by Tennis Magazine and as a "5-Star tennis destination" by World Tennis. The Fitness and Wellness Center is equipped with state-of-the-art equipment and a well-trained staff. In addition to senior programs and junior athletic options the fitness schedule contains a variety of workout choices in addition to personal training options.

The vision of the Club is all encompassing and the goal is to:

***"Enhance the 'Sawgrass Experience' by improving our amenities and service to achieve a higher level of Member satisfaction. We will make our golf, tennis, fitness, and beach facilities the best in our area, and ensure that all our facilities are inviting, functional and well maintained. We will offer a variety of enjoyable dining alternatives, wonderful food and maintain a level of service throughout the Club where every Member and guest is treated as a preferred customer. Our dedication to fiscal responsibility and appreciation of staff will further assure the long-term success of our Club. Our commitment on enduring excellence will securely establish Sawgrass Country Club as the first choice for those seeking the best private club experience in our area."***

#### **SAWGRASS COUNTRY CLUB BY THE NUMBERS**

- At present, there are approximately: 900 Full Members 125 Tennis Members and the remaining 450 are Social and other categories totaling nearly 1,500 member families in all.
- Initiation Fee - Full Member: \$30,000
- Dues – Full Member: \$807/month
- 27 holes of Ed Seay original design and redesigned by Robert Walker supports nearly 50,000 rounds of golf annually
- Overall operating budget is approximately \$15.0M
- Food and beverage volume is approximately \$4.6M
- The existing Golf Clubhouse is approximately 45,000 square feet and contains the golf shop, banquet rooms, as well as the Grill Room for dining
- Golf Shop is approximately 2,000 square feet and is owned by Sawgrass Country Club
- 13 Har-Tru tennis courts (5 lighted) are individually fenced and tiered with an active Junior Tennis Academy
- The Club's large Fitness and Wellness Center offers personal training and group classes. Physical therapy and massage therapy services are offered as well.

- The Club is organized as a 501(c)(7) and is a not for profit corporation
- The average age of members is 62 years and continuing to trend younger

**SAWGRASS COUNTRY CLUB WEB SITE:** [www.sawgrasscountryclub.com](http://www.sawgrasscountryclub.com)

### **GENERAL MANAGER/CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER - POSITION OVERVIEW**

The GM/COO functions in a CEO-like fashion, working very closely with the Board of Directors of the Club, and leading an active number of committees. The GM/COO is looked upon as the “face” of Sawgrass Country Club and is the primary “visionary” and protector of the mission and vision outlined above.

The role is complex, yet simple. The ability to “manage expectations at a high level of dynamic leadership and reasoning” is critically important, but a fair amount of that is accomplished simply by being present, approachable, accessible, diplomatic, and by having the necessary “gravitas” to be viewed with confidence by all constituencies. Possessing the intellectual firepower to “hold your own in an environment populated with highly successful members with great expectations” is crucially important and may be achieved by approaching it with just the right amount of sophistication. “Paying attention to the details” of maintenance, SOPs, overall member experience, staff culture and other key areas of success is critical.

The significant capital investment combined with a growing membership over the past few years has helped evolve the culture of Sawgrass Country Club as it further establishes and cements its role as “*the*” preeminent active lifestyle club and community in north Florida. Helping to “manage change” associated with these improvements and new members are critical success factors of the new GM/COO. Being the proactive leader and stable figure of the organization in this regard is hugely important.

Key attributes, characteristics and style of the successful new leader include:

- Actively participating and “thought partnering” with the Board, Committees, and contributors to SCC’s success. Ultimately, the goal is to “allow members to be members,” enjoying their time and volunteer contributions, and not making operating decisions but being policy makers and strategic partners instead.
- Naturally outgoing, conversant, respectful, and diplomatic, but able to say “no” when appropriate without alienating members or staff while doing so. Being respectfully confident and “connected” to the membership and team is critical.
- Must be a visionary and mission oriented; anticipating how the Club continues to evolve is important, as is being actively ‘networked’ in the industry to the point of being on the forefront of trends in clubs, communities, real estate, and economic cycles.
- Proactively leading the Team of highly qualified and many, long tenured Senior Staff with a highly transparent and uplifting style.
- Recognizing the need for the continuation of an “employer of choice” approach to attracting, retaining, and developing staff at every level within the greater SCC organization. Ensuring that both key management team members and all supervisor and line associates are clearly engaged in and supportive of a strong “Sawgrass Experience” culture is a critical skill set necessary for success.
- Being innately understanding, empathetic, reliable, and relatable to members and staff at all levels.
- Responsive vs. reactive, an exceptional communicator and listener.
- Financially astute and able to effectively guide a large scale (\$15.0M) operation, likely to increase in overall revenues at the completion of the major capital plan, assuming it is approved as expected.

Some of the broader management and leadership functions and responsibilities of the role include:

- Coordinating and administering the Club’s policies as defined by the Board of Directors.
- Reviewing income and costs, taking corrective action as necessary, implementing and monitoring all Club financials, while assuming responsibility of accuracy, timely review, and accountability for the overall adherence.

- Securing and protecting the Club's tangible and intangible assets not limited to grounds, facilities, and equipment by adhering to operating policies and procedures and direct performance of subordinate staff.
- Consulting and proactively presenting recommendations to the President and Board, and/or appropriate Committees relating to capital improvement, construction, maintenance, materials, supplies, equipment, and services. Ultimately, "owning" the projects while working closely to assist and guide in their concept, design, execution, and related successes.
- Developing and leading a top-quality proficient management team to drive business results, operate profit centers within established guidelines, actively coaching, instilling team accountability, and rewarding successes.
- Managing the development of the Club's strategic and annual business plans.
- Developing, maintaining, and administering a sound organizational plan; initiating improvements as necessary in conjunction with Human Resources as it relates to personnel.
- Serving as the "Behavior Model" for direct reports and all levels of employees; setting the appropriate "tone at the top" for others to emulate in terms of how he/she interacts, responds, motivates, and executes.
- Securing positive strategic networking opportunities within the industry via associations or affiliates as reasonable to further elevate SCC's "brand" and ensure forward thinking and trend awareness.
- Producing and presenting reasonable measurements (metrics) of performance for accomplished community goals or targeted areas of improvement in areas of safety, quality, cost, delivery and direct or indirect relations among membership, residents, and employees.
- Reviewing efforts of all marketing and membership programs created for potential and present members and residents, and offering industry thoughtful recommendations when and where needed.
- Ensuring the highest standards are consistently met for food, beverage, sports and recreation, and entertainment.
- Actively interacting and fostering a feeling of "belonging" within the Club to enhance the prestige of SCC; broadening the scope of SCC's public obligations as a participating community member.
- Actively conferring with administrative personnel and reviews activity and operations to determine changes in programs, operations, or personnel.
- Leading, developing, participating, and supporting organizational efforts to achieve goals as established for Membership sales.

## **INITIAL PRIORITIES OF THE NEW GM/COO**

With the expectation that the new GM/COO will commence his/her role in late Spring/early Summer 2018, the following priorities have been identified as recommended primary focus:

- Observe, listen, ask questions, and learn about the culture and history of Sawgrass Country Club. Be patient; the Club is very open to changes and improvements, but you must first understand the culture, overall history, expectations, etc.
- Meet and sincerely interact with and engage as many members as possible, *"be present!"* Build trust whenever and wherever possible, schedule interactive times and follow up on details. *"Be involved and in charge!"*
- Ensure appropriate programs and procedures are in place to guarantee consistently exceptional member experiences in each key amenity, and within the programming for all demographics.
- Work closely with the F & B team to ensure that an appropriate foundation of success is in place in this department, both in the culinary and service execution sides of the operation. F & B operations are of utmost importance to the membership and meeting a majority of members' expectations in this area is a critical success factor. Service standards and consistent delivery thereof is an important area of focus.
- Spend time with the team, in all areas of operations, getting to know them, their abilities, and aspirations, using this time to further communicate the vision and mission of SCC.
- Develop the Board and Committee relationship, working to create a strong bond and communication exchange of diplomatic openness.

- Ensure the significant capital projects currently in the planning process are on track and that you clearly understand the reasons for their implementation and expected outcomes, as well as to plan for operations once completed. Phase 3A and 3B will likely be at critical junctures upon arrival and jumping in to ensure outstanding execution will be hugely important.
- Develop a tracking and plan to provide the Board with a thoughtful “State of the Club” report following ninety (90) days of commencement. This document will be part of the ‘roadmap’ to success, staff, plan, budget and other tactics and strategies for short and longer-term goals.

## **CANDIDATE QUALIFICATIONS**

A minimum of 10 - 15 years of progressive leadership/management experience in (preferably) a private member-owned country club with multi-dimensional operations, or leading hospitality operations outside of the club industry in a similar hospitality operation.

To perform this job successfully, an individual must be able to perform each essential duty. The requirements listed above are representative of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

## **EDUCATIONAL AND CERTIFICATION QUALIFICATIONS**

A Bachelor’s Degree from a four-year university or college is highly desirable, preferably in Hospitality Management, as is post-secondary education including an MBA (or equivalent industry experience).

From the club industry, Certified Club Manager (CCM) designation is necessary with further certifications being preferred as a commitment to on-going and lifelong learning and networking.

## **SALARY AND BENEFITS**

Salary is open and commensurate with qualifications and experience. The Club, along with the typical senior staff benefits, offers an excellent bonus and benefit package.

## **INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO APPLY**

Please upload your resume and cover letter, in that order, using the link below. You should have your documents fully prepared to be attached when prompted for them during the online application process.

**Preparing a thoughtful letter of interest and alignment with the above noted expectations and requirements is necessary.** Your letter should be **addressed to Leedom Kettel, President and the SCC Search Committee**, and clearly articulate why you want to be considered for this position at this stage of your career and why SCC and the greater Ponte Vedra Beach area will be beneficial to both you and the Club if selected.

**IMPORTANT:** Save your resume and letter in the following manner:

“Last Name, First Name Resume” &

“Last Name, First Name Cover Letter”

(These documents should be in Word or PDF format)

Note: Once you complete the application process for this search, you are not able to go back in and add additional documents.

For directions on how to upload your resume and cover letter [visit this page](#).

[Click here](#) to upload your resume and cover letter.

If you have any questions please email Patty Sprankle: [patty@kkandw.com](mailto:patty@kkandw.com)

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