

# Letters From Iraq...One Superintendents' View From the Front Lines

By ROB ADAMS

Superintendent, Ponds of Battle Creek

(Note: The following article will be one of a series that chronicles the trials and tribulations of GC Superintendent/Captain Rob Adams as he trained stateside and shipped out to the front lines of Iraq. Rob is the golf course superintendent at the Ponds of Battle Creek in Maplewood, Minn. He was called up to active duty out of IRR (inactive ready reserve). Rob began his stateside training at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri and then reported to Camp Shelby, Mississippi in June 2005 for more advanced training. It was here at Camp Shelby he was attached to the 876th Engineering Company out of Rhode Island. Rob was attracted to this particular unit because it was made up of hard-working Italians that shared his same strong work ethic.

(Rob is more than willing to share his military experiences with his family, friends and colleagues back home. I was fortunate to receive permission from Rob to reprint all or parts of e-mails that he sends home as I see fit. He is allowing me to edit his communications as well (primarily spelling and punctuation), due to the time constraints placed on him. I hope you appreciate and enjoy his honesty, insight, and wry sense of humor as he experiences these life-changing events. Please keep him in your thoughts and prayers - Paul Diegnau, CGCS)

May 18, 2005

Things here are going pretty well. The weather is nice and they are treating us well. We finished the in-processing phase and are

now doing some basic soldier skills training. We have refresher courses on our rifle, the M16, our protective mask, and the radios. All of it is very basic and we go through it very fast. We also get the same briefings that the basic trainees get about military justice, code of conduct and the law of war. That was a half-day I will never get back. Tomorrow we go to a training site and learn how to clear a building and by clear I don't mean clean it. It is supposed to rain so it should be interesting. All of the soldier training will take about a week; then we will go on to our MOS school, which means job school. It will be a refresher on the engineering things that I do. We will be doing demolitions training, some construction, route clearing and recons and whatever else they feel like training us on. They don't have an idea of where we will be going so they just cover the basics on as many things as they can. That will be about two to three weeks. Then, again, it's on to who knows where.

May 20, 2005

Training is well. We finished up the basic soldier skills training on Friday. We had some good training. Like I mentioned we did the building clearing and learned to move in an urban terrain. It was fun. We had to capture prisoners and search and

detain them. Then we did the actual clearing of rooms in a building. We also learned how to enter a building through a window. You may see guys doing this on TV. It is taught to everyone that enters into the Army now. It is very realistic and almost any unit could be doing it when they get in country. Anyway, it was pretty funny to watch some of the teams throw 250 lb. guys through a window. Not too graceful. We also qualified with the weapons that we will be using, the 9mm pistol and the M16 rifle. I qualified expert with the pistol and qualified with the M16. So I guess I have to play some more.

Next week I start the engineer refresher course. Since I have been a Captain and completed more of my military schooling, I will be in a different class than the other three officers that showed up with me. They still haven't given me an overview of what I will be doing so I guess I'll find out Monday.

We had the largest group show up here in the last six months. Eighty soldiers and officers were supposed to show up and 29 did. That is really pretty good for the IRR activations. In case anyone does not know that is what I have been called up out of. It stands for Individual Ready Reserve. It is officers and soldiers that either haven't finished their commitments, or asked to be put in the IRR or just weren't smart enough to

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get all the way out. It sounds like there are a lot of people in the same boat as I am. Anyway, we have a large group herenow – a total of 37 people. The new group is mostly Military Intelligence officers and most of them are Majors. Some have been out for five years or longer. Let me tell you they look like it. Not the greatest shape but I bet they didn't plan on being back in the Army either.

June 2, 2005

I now remember why I joined the National Guard all those years ago. I like this stuff to a point but I know it is only for a weekend and I get to go home. It feels like we have been here forever. Even the people in charge of us are asking when we will be leaving.

We have joined an active duty Captains Course and are learning about building and repairing roads and airfields. It's something that could be useful. We also had a major teach us (there are now five engineer officers in class) about contracting in the Army. She has been to Iraq already and said there are many engineer officers that are over there acting as general contractors. They deal with the locals to get things built. She didn't say

if that was on a base or off in the community. I can't believe they are sending people out into public without armed escorts.

Anyway things are going fine. I miss my regular job and being home. This stuff can get old real fast. Once we get a clue when and where we are going, the tempo might pick up a bit, but for now it we are just lost puppy dogs.

June 13, 2005

Anyway we did get orders at the end of the week to go to Camp Shelby, Mississippi. It is the largest reserve and National Guard training center in the U.S. It has been around since WWI. This is where we will be going (myself and three other officers). I am reporting to the 876th Engineers out of the Pennsylvania National Guard. On their web site it has them being deployed from Jan 05 to Aug of 06 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. At this time I don't know if they are in Iraq or not. I do know that most call-ups are for a unit to be in country or deployed overseas for one year on the ground. That means one year in Iraq, Afghanistan or Bosnia. I imagine I will find out when I get to Mississippi what the deal is and when and where they are going. They are a mechanized (armored vehicles) unit like the one I was in the National Guard so I should not be too lost. Their web site does not have a lot of other information about

what they do. That is about all I know for now. I will keep you informed when I find something else out. I am in the Houston airport waiting to fly to Jackson Mississippi where we will bus to Camp Shelby. It is nice to get out of Fort Leonard Wood and get this process going. The sooner I start the sooner I get this done.

June 17, 2005

Well, hello and I am finally here at Camp Shelby, Mississippi. I wish I were back at Fort Leonard Wood! It is hot hot staying in barracks without air conditioning. We are doing pretty much the same thing here as we did at FLW. We went through a medical screening, which I passed again, then we went through the administrative portion, which I passed again, and now we are going to start doing the training portion. It includes many of the same things we did at FLW but has some new things also. We train on land navigation, convoy operations, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and a lot more weapons training. We (still with the same three guys) are going to be here for about 15 days. That is supposed to be what happens anyway. We linked up with the 876 Engineers out of Pennsylvania. They are part of a bigger group known as the 2-28, which is a brigade combat team. The 2-28 is leaving on the 28th of this month for Kuwait

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and then following on to Iraq. They will then go to Ar Ramadi north west of Baghdad and be working with the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force. So that should tell you where I am going. Not the cush job that I wanted but I did not really think that I would end up somewhere nice and cozy. Anyway, they are leaving the 28th and we won't be done with training by then so we will hook up with them in country. The good thing is that my year in country starts sooner than later and I could be home before my year and a half is up. Most of the 2-28 has been on orders from January of 05 and will be done around August 06 if everything goes ok. The unit seems pretty good of the guys we met. Most of them are home now before they leave for Iraq. We got most of our "battle rattle" as we call it, which includes all of the armor vest and everything. Hopefully I won't need it. I don't know specifically what I will be doing in the engineer battalion because we haven't met the commander, but they didn't know we were coming either (big surprise there). It was a shock to them to see four Captains walk in and say we're here. Anyway once we finish training we have to wait for a plane to take us overseas which I

guess can take a while so there may be a chance of my getting home one more time before I leave. Otherwise, things are ok and I still am in good spirits, a little more sarcastic, but good spirits anyway.

June 24, 2005

Hello all. Hope all is well with you guys. I heard the weather there is heating up - over a hundred degrees with high humidity. Well, welcome to my world and buck up little soldiers. We have the added bonus of chiggers. They are little bugs that bite you all over when you sleep in addition to gnats and mosquitoes. Well that's enough whining about being down here. No sense in complaining, it is better than where I am going. Let's see where did I leave off from last week. Well we finally met the Battalion commander. He is a squared away guy and seems very competent. He graduated from West Point so he is probably not a dummy either. Anyway, we talked to him and got an idea of what he is looking for and where he might put us within the battalion (BN). It is going to get a little vague sometimes because I do have to keep some things out of public view. That is just in case there are any Taliban members among you, especially over at the workhouse (this is a reference to the Ramsey County Correctional Facility that supplies the inmates and corrections officers

that work on the Ponds at Battle Creek GC). Nevertheless, the BN is leaving this week and will eventually end up in Ar Ramadi. We will be doing various missions to secure the area and defeat any insurgent we encounter. Pretty much that is everyone's mission; to search out and capture or interrupt insurgent cells. It doesn't matter what kind of unit you are in, you can be assured you will be doing presence patrols and knocking on doors. The Iraqi police are still in the process of being trained and organized and the coalition forces are giving them a hand when needed. As for me, we are continuing to do training. This week we did land navigation and some classes on radios, GPS and IEDs (improvised explosive device). Those are the little honeys you hear about in the news all the time. They make them out of everything. This weekend we will be firing our weapons and except for the gas chamber next week, we will be done. We still don't know when we will be shipped over but hopefully not until after the 4th of July. I am trying to get home that weekend to see the family before I set sail. Anyway, that is all I have for you this week. Take care and if I don't see you on the fourth have a good weekend. Peace out to all the homies.

*(Editor's Note: In the next issue, Rob ships out to Ar Ramadi, Iraq, one of the more hostile regions in the country.)*

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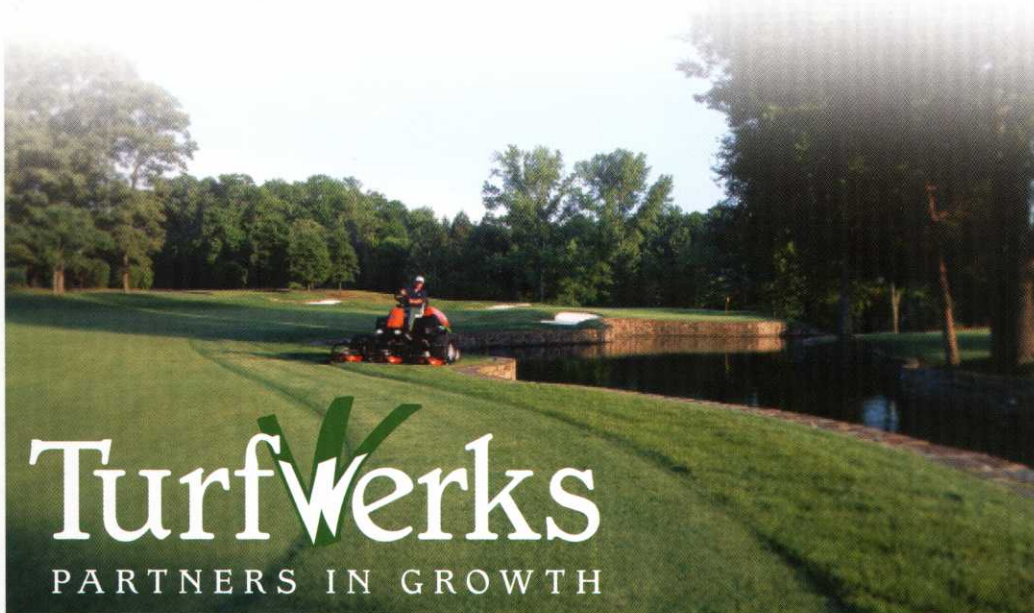
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