

Keith Peterson -N-



The Peterson family: Beth and Keith with Brian, 7, and Emily, 4.



Calumet Country Club

Keith Peterson, golf course superintendent of Calumet Country Club, is hosting the October meeting for the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents. Keith has been the superintendent at Calumet since 1999, when he made the move after four years as course superintendent for Medinah No. 3.

Dixie Highway and 175th Street is not exactly a new location for this course; however, it was originally built at 95th and Cottage Grove in 1901. The Illinois Central railroad owned the land where the club currently sits and with a land trade in 1921, Calumet moved south to Homewood. Donald Ross worked his magic to create the course, which is enjoyed by the club's 170 golfing members.

In 1957, when Interstate 80 was built on the north edge of the property, Packard shortened three holes. Apparently having three greens in the middle of express lanes was too much of a hazard for all involved. Fifteen of the 18 greens, then, are original, but the routing has changed over the years. Today the course measures 6,559 yards from the back tees and 6,326 yards from the middle tees. The signature hole is number 14, a 210-yard par 3, heavily guarded with bunkers. The green is pitched forward, like most of the greens, and you don't want to be above the hole. The trick is mastering the small (5,000 square feet on average), rolling greens and avoiding the rows of trees that line the fairways. Number 13 is Keith's favorite hole due to the challenge of hitting a narrow uphill tee shot. The green is small with subtle break, giving the host superintendent a definite advantage.

Keith loves golf and the outdoors. Born and raised in Coal Valley, IL (near the Quad Cities), he worked with his brother for a few summers at his hometown Oakwood Country Club. He then enrolled at Danville Community College where he graduated in 1992 with a turf degree. He did his summer internship at Rock Island Arsenal prior to graduation. His first real job was as assistant golf course superintendent at Hilldale Golf Club in Hoffman Estates. He started at Medinah Country Club in 1993 as the assistant on Course No. 1 and

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Photos by Jim Trzinski.



Calumet's clubhouse frames hole no. 5, a 423-yard par 4.

moved through the ranks over a seven-year period, serving as course superintendent on Course No. 2 and Course No. 3. In 1999, his last year working at Medinah, he hosted a PGA Championship. Keith had more than paid his dues and was ready to take on the many challenges at Calumet Country Club.

In his first full year there, he realized the single-row irrigation system needed to be updated. Installation of a new double-row irrigation system came in 2000. A new pump house was also included in the project; Keith convinced club leadership to dig a pond for his water source in a low-lying area on the 14th hole. The fill taken from the pond had to be put somewhere, so Keith decided it was a good time to accomplish another goal. The fill became the base for a new 24,000-square-foot bentgrass driving range tee that more than doubled the existing tee space.

When asked what has been the biggest challenge since coming to Calumet, Keith mentions having to deal with budget cuts to his operating and capital budgets while still providing exceptional playing conditions. He has also struggled with selling the membership on the need to remove established trees for the good of the

course. Algae was at times a problem on his no. 8 green, and members were resisting his request to remove 10 trees surrounding the green. Keith informed them that the only way to improve the green was to remove the trees. He finally persuaded them to cut down the trees, and the condition improved.

Keith gets the most out of his employees by treating them with respect. He also is not shy about praising his staff of 12 crew members, a full-time mechanic and his assistant. He describes his assistant, Roy Voss, as conscientious and hard-working. Keith often helps his crew accomplish tasks by working along with them. He is more than willing to help rake bunkers to meet a deadline.

In 2001 Keith expanded his greens to their original size. Using an old photo of the original greens, he was able to determine that he had lost 10 to 15 feet in the back and the corners of the green. He mowed the bentgrass areas on his banks, aerated and filled them with sand. His accomplishment provided numerous cup positions in areas previously unused.

Restoration of the tee boxes had also begun during the 2001-02 season. Along with the conversion of 11 tees from oval to square came the

addition of six new forward tees. The new tees were built using bunker sand that was undergoing replacement at the time. Keith said the soil that had washed into the sand provided suitable moisture retention. The tees are firm and do not dry out quite so fast.

Keith has a brother, Brad, and two sisters, Terri and Vicki. His father, Don, is a retired machinist, while his mother works at Orion High School, Keith's *alma mater*. In 1992, he married his high school sweetheart, Beth, a nurse at St. James Hospital in Chicago Heights. They currently live in Crete with their two children: Emily, 4, and Brian, 7. It's been said that having a pet is like having a child. The three other "kids" in the Peterson family are Hercules, a yellow Lab, Dakota, a Sheltie, and a border collie named Riley. Now that's what I call taking up your free time.

Keith's love for his job is nothing compared to the passion he shows towards his family. He helps coach his daughter's soccer team and also works with her to sharpen her tee-ball skills. His son is also involved with soccer, and Keith is especially excited about Brian's involvement with wrestling. Keith wrestled through high school and stays in shape by working out before work five times per week. He also started wrestling in an Old-Timers' Club. Other fathers from his son's team formed this group, which also includes former college wrestlers. They travel to wrestling tournaments where Brian and Keith are often on the mat at the same time in different matches. His children enjoy watching him wrestle and Keith is encouraged that his children haven't laughed at him yet.



No. 3 green; the hole is a 403-yard par 4.



A view of the 148-yard, par-3 17th.