

FEATURE II

Brian Placzkowski, *Royal Melbourne Country Club*

Not Your Average Bunker



I've read before that golf mimics life or maybe life mimics golf. Since I've become the Assistant at Royal Melbourne, I've found many parallels between our profession and a part of my life. As we all know, this month marks the ten-year anniversary of 9/11. This tragic day has touched all of us in many different ways. This day holds particular significance with me, because nine years ago this month I found my naive, Midwest, suburban behind in the middle of the hottest, dirtiest, scariest Afghani desert I would have never thought to imagine. You might wonder what the heck I was doing there. I was on deployment with Task Force Panther of the 82nd Airborne Division. Over the next six months as an infantryman in the 1st Battalion 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, I would experience good and bad events that will stay with me for the rest of my life. I often have people ask me, "What was it like?" It's not that I don't want to talk about it, but I don't always know what to say. You see, there's not much that I can compare it to that they would understand, and many people walk away confused. You might wonder how, but in only my second season as an assistant superintendent at Royal Melbourne Country Club, I've found a surprising amount of similarities between being a soldier in Afghanistan and an assistant superintendent in the Midwest (no offense Dave!) and I thought I'd take a minute and share a few with you.

The biggest thing the Army prepared me for was this whole early to bed early to rise mentality. I commonly saw the sunrise, set, and rise again all without ever going to bed. After long summers like the last two, I sometimes feel the same way. The biggest thing I had to get used to was not having to put on body armor and carry a rifle to the bathroom in the morning. Another likeness I've noticed is the shocking similarities between scouting for diseases on hot muggy mornings and climbing through the mountains looking for the Taliban. You can run into them at any place and time and when you do it almost always means it's going to be a long day. The only thing is, Pythium doesn't shoot back.

My favorite comparison is when you find yourself in a foreign country, trying to provide a service to help people who don't speak your language... is very similar to dealing with golfers who want to know why the greens are slow, why their balls plug in the bunker, and why we aerate the golf course every year. Both missions start with the best of intentions and end with people walking away shaking their heads. And then there's wanting to jump out of a perfectly good airplane. Well, on second thought I haven't quite found anything to compare that to except maybe going to a green committee meeting, but if I think of something better I'll let you know.

Both missions start with the best intentions and end with people walking away shaking their heads.

This September 11th take a minute and whether you thank a soldier, thank a firefighter or thank God, take a moment and be thankful for the great country we live in and for all the brave men and women everywhere in any capacity that fight hard every day to preserve it. **-OC**

