

Katterheinrich must wait awhile to relax

By HAL PHILLIPS

In late August of this year, the pressure will finally be off John Katterheinrich, head superintendent at venerable Interlachen Golf Club in the Minneapolis suburb of Edina.

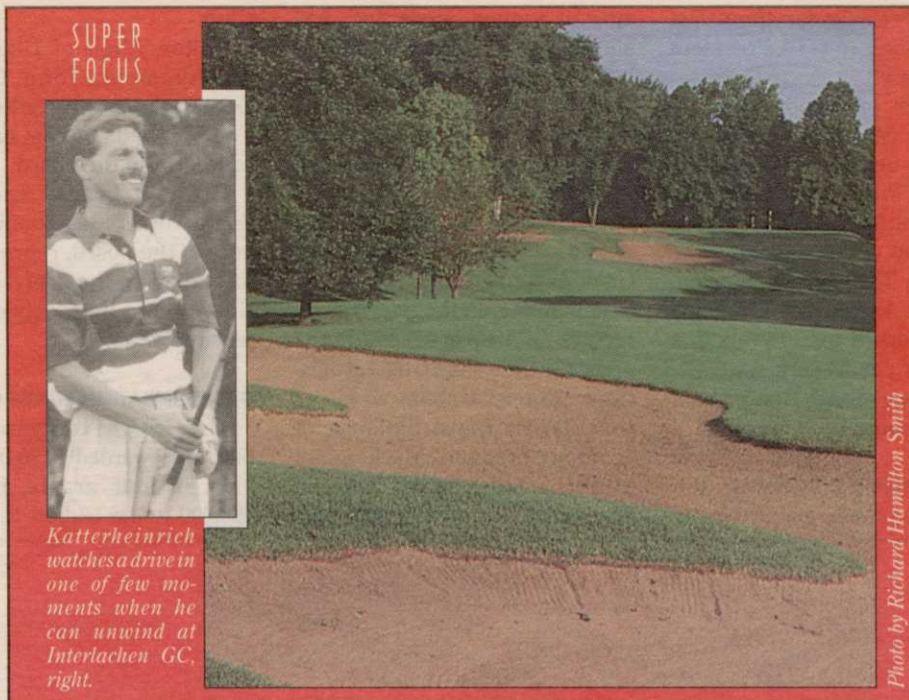
By Aug. 20, the top female amateur players in the world will have come and gone, as the Walker Cup will be held at Interlachen from Aug. 17-19. Coincidentally, Aug. 20 will also mark the end of Minnesota's toughest weather period, when soaring temperatures subject golf courses to intense disease pressure.

Then there's the pressure of hosting your first big event, a U.S.G.A. event for that matter.

"The tournament comes at the toughest time of year for us, that six-week stress period from July to the middle of August," Katterheinrich explained. "At the end of those six weeks, we could potentially look our worst. We're hoping for a year like the last one, when it was pretty cool all summer."

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Interlachen is a Donald Ross design, built in 1911. All the greens are original and Katterheinrich hasn't done anything specific in preparation for the 1993 Walker Cup. Instead, renovations — mostly bunker work — have taken place over an



Katterheinrich watches a drive in one of few moments when he can unwind at Interlachen GC, right.

Photo by Richard Hamilton Smith

extended period of time.

Almost every trap on the course has been rebuilt to the original specifications. Architects Geoffrey Cornish and Brian Silva handled some of the work, but most was carried out by Katterheinrich's crew of 30.

"Interlachen has got to be one of the most photographed golf courses in the country," said Katterheinrich, who noted that many of the shots were taken during the 1930 U.S. Open, won by then-media darling Bobby Jones. "So by looking at all the old photos, you can see exactly how the bunkers looked back then.

"You'd be amazed at how much they've

changed. From years of trap edging they lose their original shape. The grass fingers get a lot smaller. Over time, a bunker can become one half the size it was designed to be.

"By using a soil probe you can tell where the original depth is. Some of these bunkers had three or four extra feet of sand in them. Basically, what we did was restore the original capes and bays, then shelled them out a bit."

The members at Interlachen have spent the last 15 years restoring different aspects of the course. The result was a resounding thumbs up from U.S.G.A. officials.

"We haven't changed a thing for the Walker Cup," said Katterheinrich. "The U.S.G.A. liked it just the way it is."

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Katterheinrich came to Interlachen in 1990. He arrived by way of Lost Tree Country Club in North Palm Beach, Fla., where he was head superintendent for seven years. With input from members like Jack Nicklaus, he was involved in numerous renovation projects at Lost Tree, which helped him when he came north.

Not many would understand a move from sunny Florida to Edina, Minn., where snow falls by the foot and courses don't open until April 1. But it was a natural for Katterheinrich.

"I was born in Minnesota and still have family here," he explains.

He moved to the Dayton, Ohio area as a boy and matriculated to Ohio State University, where he earned his degree in turf management in 1980. After 10 years in Florida, he's back in the north country preparing for his first big tournament.

The first test will come in early July.

"I just spoke yesterday to a guy from ABC who's going to do the aerial shots of each hole in July," said Katterheinrich. "So I will probably stripe the fairways specifically for that photo session."

So if you're looking for signs of late-summer course stress, compare the aerial photos with ESPN's live shots from Interlachen.

If you're looking for signs of late-summer superintendent stress, talk to Katterheinrich on Aug. 17, then call him back on Aug. 20, when the pressures are off.

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