

Tom Walker

Superintendent *of the* Inverness Club

It seems Tom Walker is where he should be — as superintendent of the Inverness Club in Toledo, Ohio. The 53-year-old Walker has a solid history at the renowned course, which opened in 1903 and has hosted several top tournaments. Walker began working at the course raking bunkers in 1966. He worked there for 10 years under superintendent Wilbert Waters while attending high school and college.

In 1976, Walker became the superintendent of Kettering Golf Club in Defiance, Ohio. He left Kettering for Highland Meadows in Sylvania, Ohio, in 1979. He returned to Inverness in 1980. He's only the fourth superintendent the course has ever had.

Golfdom: What do you like most about your job?

The people. Hands down. Without people, a magnificent golf course is just grass.

Golfdom: How have you learned to deal with the pressures of your job?

I keep things in perspective. There is war and famine in the world, and when it comes down to it, golf is just a game played in a pleasant setting. On my worst day, I see people on the range tee at noon, stuffing their ties into their dress shirts to hit balls rather than eat

lunch. I always snicker and think how lucky I am that this is my office.

Exercise is also essential for me. I cycle back and forth to work and love to ride whenever I get a chance. Stress is relative to different people. It is what I make of it, and stress need not be an issue.

Golfdom: In 50 words or less, describe a good day at work.

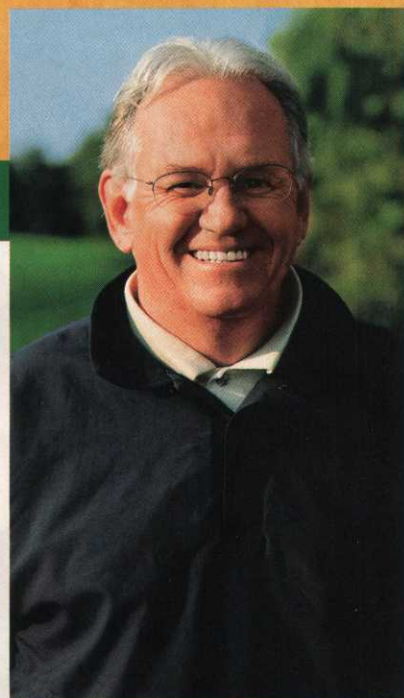
It's when I get to the course by 4 a.m., and the night is clear, the moon is full, and there's dew on the ground. Clear nights often mean sunny days. Also, a good day is when the staff is happier and the members seem to enjoy themselves more.

Golfdom: What is the most important issue facing superintendents today?

Moderation. We continue to push the envelope closer and closer to the edge. In my own mind I want to believe there is no edge as long as we have the necessary resources.

Golfdom: Finish this sentence: "The best thing that could happen to the golf course maintenance industry would be ..."

... for golf to continue to grow at the pace that it did in the mid-1990s. Unfortunately, that is not the case, and many clubs in the Midwest are struggling.



MIKE KLEMMER

Golfdom: What's the best advice anybody ever gave you?

A wise Zen Roshi once told me, "Just because you can, does not mean you should." Perhaps, at times we take green speed and course prep a bit too far, especially for major championships. Sadly, I did push it the last time, and I must admit I enjoyed myself.

Golfdom: What's the best advice you ever gave someone?

Plan ahead and prioritize. You can only do one thing at a time. A long successful career is nothing more than small steps taken one at a time.

Golfdom: Who are the three most influential people or groups in the golf course maintenance industry and why?

Joe Vargas of Michigan State University. His continued research in plant pathology and turfgrass cultivation includes bacterial wilt, black layer and the management of numerous turfgrass diseases. Vargas' work focuses on both cultural controls and the proper use of fungicides for the greatest efficacy and lasting control of disease.

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STANDING THE TEST OF TIME: Tom Walker

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Joe Duich, often called the co-father of Penn State University's turfgrass maintenance program with Burt Musser, is best known for his work in bentgrass breeding and developing new varieties. His research raised the bar in the turf industries for putting green bentgrass and stimulated competition within the industry for improved cultivars of turfgrass for use on greens.

Stan Zontec, agronomist of the United States Golf Association's Mid-Atlantic Region, has been the most devout steward of the industry. He is well-connected and speaks at international conferences. He is a favorite source of superintendents for information and consultation.

It is difficult not to mention Paul Rieke from Michigan State University for his work with sand topdressing and aeration/cultivation; and Jim Beard, the renowned scientist and author of "Turf Management for Golf Courses," for his pioneering efforts in turfgrass physiology.

Golfdom: If you could have dinner with anyone, who would it be and why?

William "Rocky" Rockefeller, the first

greenkeeper at Inverness Club. He was instrumental in the construction of the course and worked closely with Donald Ross, who designed it.

In the 1920s, Rocky designed many courses in the Great Lakes area. He was also the former Inverness Club Champion. He was well-educated and received a degree from The Julliard School in music. He was a proponent of formal education and enjoyed sharing his knowledge with fellow greenkeepers. He, along with Inverness Club directors, was instrumental in founding the USGA Green Section in 1920. Five years later he helped found the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America at a neighboring club, Sylvania Country Club.

It would be intriguing for me to tell Rocky how golf course management has evolved today, especially on the technology end.

Golfdom: What is your favorite movie(s)?
"Used Cars" and "Dogma."

Golfdom: What do you eat for breakfast?
Plain instant oatmeal and green tea with warm tap water — every day, without fail. ■

Who do you know who has Stood *the* Test of Time?

If there's a veteran superintendent who has made a difference in your life, we'd love to hear about him or her. Tell us how this particular superintendent has made an impression on you. What advice has this veteran superintendent given you to help you in your career or in dealings with life in general?

Send an e-mail to Golfdom's Larry Aylward at laylward@advanstar.com to share your story about this important superintendent. We'll print responses in an upcoming issue.



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