

# Golf in the Gulf

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## MGCSA 'Desert Shield' Campaign Gathers Loads of Golf Gear To Send to U.S. Troops Serving in the Middle East

It's heartwarming when a simple but thoughtful gesture can expand into a full-blown campaign to help others.

Consider the fact that the Minnesota Golf Course Superintendents' Association is now prepared to send nearly 2,000 golf balls, dozens of golf clubs and sand rakes and hundreds of cups, flags and poles to U.S. military personnel serving in the Middle East.

**"And we expect even more** as the spring season approaches," said Joe Moris, head superintendent at Tartan Park in Lake Elmo and chairman of what he describes as "the largest sand bunker committee in the world."

The idea for the MGCSA's version of "Operation Desert Shield" came to Moris last December when he was chatting with Joe Buege during the association's annual conference at the Northland Inn in Brooklyn Park.

**Buege**, a full-time maintenance employee at Pebble Creek Golf Course in

Becker, told Moris that he had sent a half-dozen clubs, about 50 balls and several cups and flags to Air Force Capt. James Fairbanks, an old golfing buddy. Fairbanks, an F-16 pilot, really appreciated receiving the surprise gift in the Persian Gulf theater of operations.

**Moris and Cary Femrite**, head superintendent at Pebble Creek, picked up on Joe's idea, thinking it would be an excellent plan to collect as much golf equipment as possible and ship it overseas.

MGCSA President Tom Fischer gave Moris the green light to chair "Operation Desert Shield" and the campaign was underway. In January the MGCSA circulated a request to its membership, requesting members to collect all the miscellaneous equipment they could locate. The initial contributions were gathered at the MGCSA's January meeting at Woodhill Country Club in Wayzata.



*Cary Femrite, left, and Joe Buege  
Pebble Creek Golf Course*



*Joe Moris loads golf gear at Woodhill.*

"I had no idea what to expect," Moris said. "To my surprise, the donations filled my pick-up truck. I really was excited to be a part of this operation."

**The campaign gathered** additional momentum when Ed Karow, KSTP-TV sportscaster, brought a film crew to Tartan Park, interviewed Moris, filmed the donations and described the unusual effort on the 11 o'clock news on January 27.

**"After the broadcast** I literally received dozens of calls as to where people could drop off old clubs and balls," Moris said. "I assume golf pro shops will get a good response out of this plan as well in the spring."

"We are ready to ship what we have at this time," the Tartan Park superintendent said, "but please don't quit bringing what you can to help the cause. Just call me at 612/261-4656 or Cary and Joe at 612/261-4656, and let us know what we can do, or bring what you gather to the April 22 MGCSA meeting at Owatonna Country Club."

The whole idea is to give U.S. troops some recreation. Like Joe Buege said: "Anything we can do is better than nothing."