

PART IV

Letters From Iraq...

One Superintendent's View From the Front Lines

By ROB ADAMS

Superintendent, Ponds of Battle Creek

(Note: The following is part four in a series of communications that chronicles the trials and tribulations of Golf Course Superintendent / Captain Rob Adams as he serves his country in Iraq. As revealed in this segment, Rob comes home on leave to spend quality time with family and friends. He returns to Iraq and continues to share his thoughts and experiences regarding the local Iraqi people, the Iraqi Army and Police force and the insurgency. Rob is the golf course superintendent at the Ponds of Battle Creek in Maplewood, Minnesota.

(Rob is more than willing to share his military experiences with his family, friends and colleagues back home. I was fortunate to receive permission from Rob to reprint all or parts of e-mails that he sends home as I see fit. He is allowing me to edit his communications as well (primarily spelling and punctuation), due to the time constraints placed on him. I hope you appreciate and enjoy his honesty, insight and wry sense of humor as he experiences these life-changing events. Please keep him in your thoughts and prayers - Paul Diegnau)

January 23, 2006

Well I better write one of these before I go on leave to let you know how things are going. I am fine and am looking forward to getting out of this place even if it is only for a short time. Unfortunately it hasn't been that quiet over here and the bad guys have not left yet. We are making progress with the people here though. We take two steps forward and then the insurgents knock things back one step. On the positive side, after the bombing at the police recruiting center in Ramadi people got back in line to be screened and hired to be policemen. There were over five hundred that showed up and they hired three hundred or more. The people are willing to stand up and take charge of their own security. I hope. They will be trained for 10 weeks as police cadets, then they will come back here to start their duties. It will be a while before they will be able to do it without us backing them but at least we have some hired. The last recruiting event we had only six people showed up.

The Iraqi army is coming around and they have been doing a good job cleaning up bad neighborhoods. You have probably heard it before, but we will clean up an area and it will be secured for a while. Then we will move to a different area and the bad guys will move right back in. We just don't have enough people to stay in every place. We use the Iraqis for this, and when the police are ready we will use them. The insurgents are definitely losing support but they are still willing to attack and run and hide. They have been doing it for a long, long



time. Things continue to move slowly forward so eventually they will fail. "That's about all I have to say about that" (Forrest Gump)

I am extremely excited to be getting out of this place. I don't care if it is fifty below and miserable every day that I am home as long as I am not here it will be great. I can't wait to see my family and friends. I leave here on the 1st of February and it takes about 4-5 days to get home. Hopefully I will get to see most of you. Well I better get some work done. Take care and see you soon.

February 28, 2006

Sorry to say I made it back but only after a two-day delay in Dallas. Apparently all you have to do to stay out of Iraq for a couple of days is have the airport lose your luggage. Well, unfortunately they found it and I was sent on the next available plane. Sixteen hours of flying and I am back. They did not cancel the war on account of me being gone so I guess I will be here for a little longer. Rumors are all over as far as when we will be getting out of here. The recent violence all over Iraq is not helping our case for getting out of here early. It is just another ploy by the insurgents to stir things up and delay the formation of the Iraqi government. The bad guys are very good at these types of things and the majority of the population being poor and uneducated; they will believe whatever they hear. So as always it was the Americans who bombed the Mosque. We have been out in the communities asking them what they think happened and the educated, wealthier people know it was the insurgents and the poorer people think it was either us or the Shia. Again, Ramadi is mostly Sunni. Well, we can't expect much. They have been battling each other for thousands of years. Hopefully cooler heads will prevail and we can move forward. I do hope

someone will smack the crap out of the Iranian president though. He is not helping the situation. I heard a funny joke the other day though. Bush has announced his exit strategy... "We are leaving through Iran". Anyway, things haven't changed much here. Ramadi is still Ramadi.

It was very nice being home and seeing so many of you guys and sorry I wasn't able to see everyone on this now pretty extensive list. I hope all is well with you guys and I will keep up the updates. Hope to see you soon. Take care.

March 18, 2006

Since there is so much stuff going on in and around Iraq I thought I would give you an update. First of all, I am fine. Nothing too far out of the ordinary happening around here. On a good note, they have announced to us that we will be leaving Iraq around the beginning of June. (Don't tell the Bad Guys). That should put me home around the end of June. I really hope to be home before the 4th of July. Subject to change of course. That would put us on par with everyone else meaning they serve about 11 months in country. Well either way, it gives us all a little light at the end of the tunnel. Getting back to Iraq... not much in this area as far as the violence. Like I have said before, it is mostly Sunni here so there isn't a lot of Shia to try and kill. A great deal of these killings are stemming from the fact that they don't like each other and haven't for thousands of years. Some of them are reprisals for the years when Saddam was in power and some are just power struggles within families, tribes and villages. They already have their own gangs set up. A lot of this has to do with the bombing of the sacred Shia temples but it might not have even been the Sunnis who did it. The insurgents are working to make sure that the newly forming government fails because then they will win. The insurgents are very smart and they know how to get others to do the work for them. In Baghdad, where there is a mix of religions and sects, they just create a little friction between the two and let them start fighting each other. The political parties will blindly stand behind their own people and point fingers at the other. Sounds familiar. They aren't looking far enough ahead to a unified Iraq. It may never happen in our lifetime because it is such a foreign concept. They have no idea what it is like to live where one set of people doesn't have absolute power over the other. Most of the people I get

(Continued on Page 11)

Letters From Iraq—

(Continued from Page 10)

to talk to will just keep their mouth shut and wait to see who will be next in charge. All they want to do is raise sheep. I am totally convinced that the reason that a lot of the people here have not evolved out of the Stone Age (except for satellite TV hooked up in the mud hut) is that they have nothing to lose when the next guy steps up into power. They have nothing that the leaders would want except for their loyalty, which they easily get by threatening them (a concept that has been employed here for centuries). Anyway, enough preaching; you probably have your own opinion about this place and the war. I think everyone is in agreement that it could have been done a little better. Around here the insurgents are targeting the new police recruits. We are having pretty good success hiring police here and shipping them off for training. The bad guys have been targeting the police stations with suicide bombs. My company does a lot of the force protection around these places. If we build a bigger wall they build bigger bombs. The police are doing a pretty good job hanging in there. The Iraq army guys that I work with are coming along pretty well. They do a pretty good job and are starting to act like real soldiers. The problem is that the upper echelon guys are old school and slow to change. They are very short sighted and can't plan a trip to the bathroom. That is true

literally, but that is another story. All right, I think I have written enough. I think you guys can figure out the rest. I will give you the "Iraq for Dummies" scorecard: Insurgents bad, Iraqis scared, Iraqi army getting better and police being blown up a lot.

April 16, 2006

Happy Easter everyone. Hopefully this will be the last major holiday I spend outside the U.S. Sorry I haven't written in a while but things have been pretty busy around here. My guys are all still doing well and not much has changed with the missions we do. As we get closer to getting out of here, things will get even busier for us. Since the new set of Marines has taken over, it has gotten a little dicey for them. They are going into places that haven't really been visited too much by us. They are doing a good job but it is at a price. You have probably seen or heard about it in the news. Once again, to correct the news; the Government Center in Ar Ramadi hasn't been overthrown. It just gets attacked every once in a while or maybe a few times a week. It is all a blur to me. It is pretty well defended and the insurgents take a few inaccurate shots and run away. They are pretty good at video taping themselves during attacks. They must edit the piece out where they get chased out of town by a helicopter or F18 Hornet. We have not seen too much of the sect killings that they have in Baghdad. We did have one incident but not too much otherwise. You think we have race relation problems in the United States? Say

the wrong thing over here and wham-oh, it's off to see Allah! We are still working with the Iraqi army and they are doing pretty well. They haven't shot each other in a few weeks. They do, however, have a problem with the dogs in the neighborhoods. Apparently the Sunni/Shia thing must happen with dogs also because the Sunni dogs don't like the Shia soldiers and the dogs usually lose that one. The dogs leave the U.S. guys alone pretty much. They understand "come one step closer and it's going to be a bad day for you" must be universal dog language or something. The people here haven't changed. Having a new government probably will not affect them much. They will still be led by those that intimidate them. Being Sunni, they will resent anything that government puts in place. That is if they can get one in place. The propaganda operation by the insurgents is pretty good. Most of the people are uneducated and will believe anything they hear. In our area the Coalition Forces are rumored to be responsible for blowing up a doctor's clinic that we planned, financed and hired local contractors to build. It was about 90% complete before we decided to blow it up. Well, that is what some of the locals have been told. We didn't in case anyone is wondering. Otherwise we keep trucking along. Everyday gone is one day closer to home. I can't wait. Until then, everyone be safe and take care.

(Continued on Page 12)

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Letters From Iraq—

(Continued from Page 11)

May 14, 2006

Hello all. All is well in Iraq. Well that isn't really true but it sounds good. Another month has gone bye and there isn't a whole lot to say. After a while here it gets to be like the movie Ground Hog Day. You wake up and do the same thing everyday with the exception that sometimes people shoot at you and sometimes they try to blow you up. It changes things up a little and keeps everyone on their toes. We have been pretty steady with our regular missions and have increased with some of the building and fortifying missions. I don't know if I ever explained that or not but my company does a few things. We patrol a large section of highway and then we also have heavy engineer equipment like bulldozers and loaders. I have guys that run the equipment and they are kept extremely busy. Every time the bad guys blow something up we

go and repair it as best as we can. We also do a lot of force protection things like put up barriers or build fighting positions. Anything we can do to keep the soldiers safe from bullets and bombs. We also do missions to interact with the local people. Sometimes we go by ourselves and sometimes we take some Iraqi soldiers with us. I can't say all the stuff we do but some-

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times it gets interesting and sometimes you just get hot. Speaking of which, we hit 100 degrees again and it is only mid May. I am glad I will be out of here before it gets really hot again. I will take the cold winters any day over the heat. No wonder the people are in such a bad mood. I think they are all fighting for the air conditioners. Here is another little story to show how corrupt some of the

people can be. Last month a high-ranking Iraqi officer was caught stealing air conditioners from the huts and buildings that the Iraqi soldiers live in. Apparently he was bringing them to Baghdad and selling them. Now there is a guy that you want leading troops. Like I said before in one of the updates... the younger guys do pretty well leading troops while the older guys that have seen all the corruption just fall in line and continue the chain. It is really the norm over here. Hopefully someday they will get tired of it all and figure it out for themselves or they may be watching some of the politicians in the US and figure out if they can do it so can we. Well I guess I did have some stuff

to say. I am really looking forward to getting home and living the American dream. We have it so good at home. Unless you have been in a place like this it is impossible to know how good we have it. Well I may do one more of these things before I leave just to sum things up. I appreciate all the support from home. I hope to see you all when I get back. Take it easy.

-- Rob

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