

Letters From Iraq...One Superintendents' View From the Front Lines

By ROB ADAMS

Superintendent, Ponds of Battle Creek

(Note: The following article will be one of a series that chronicles the trials and tribulations of GC Superintendent/Captain Rob Adams as he trained stateside and shipped out to the front lines of Iraq. Rob is the golf course superintendent at the Ponds of Battle Creek in Maplewood, Minn. He was called up to active duty out of IRR (inactive ready reserve). Rob began his stateside training at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri and then reported to Camp Shelby, Mississippi in June 2005 for more advanced training. It was here at Camp Shelby he was attached to the 876th Engineering Company out of Rhode Island. Rob was attracted to this particular unit because it was made up of hard-working Italians that shared his same strong work ethic.

(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, CGCS)

May 18, 2005

Things here are going pretty well. The weather is nice and they are treating us well. We finished the in-processing phase and are

now doing some basic soldier skills training. We have refresher courses on our rifle, the M16, our protective mask, and the radios. All of it is very basic and we go through it very fast. We also get the same briefings that the basic trainees get about military justice, code of conduct and the law of war. That was a half-day I will never get back. Tomorrow we go to a training site and learn how to clear a building and by clear I don't mean clean it. It is supposed to rain so it should be interesting. All of the soldier training will take about a week; then we will go on to our MOS school, which means job school. It will be a refresher on the engineering things that I do. We will be doing demolitions training, some construction, route clearing and recons and whatever else they feel like training us on. They don't have an idea of where we will be going so they just cover the basics on as many things as they can. That will be about two to three weeks. Then, again, it's on to who knows where.

May 20, 2005

Training is well. We finished up the basic soldier skills training on Friday. We had some good training. Like I mentioned we did the building clearing and learned to move in an urban terrain. It was fun. We had to capture prisoners and search and

detain them. Then we did the actual clearing of rooms in a building. We also learned how to enter a building through a window. You may see guys doing this on TV. It is taught to everyone that enters into the Army now. It is very realistic and almost any unit could be doing it when they get in country. Anyway, it was pretty funny to watch some of the teams throw 250 lb. guys through a window. Not too graceful. We also qualified with the weapons that we will be using, the 9mm pistol and the M16 rifle. I qualified expert with the pistol and qualified with the M16. So I guess I have to play some more.

Next week I start the engineer refresher course. Since I have been a Captain and completed more of my military schooling, I will be in a different class than the other three officers that showed up with me. They still haven't given me an overview of what I will be doing so I guess I'll find out Monday.

We had the largest group show up here in the last six months. Eighty soldiers and officers were supposed to show up and 29 did. That is really pretty good for the IRR activations. In case anyone does not know that is what I have been called up out of. It stands for Individual Ready Reserve. It is officers and soldiers that either haven't finished their commitments, or asked to be put in the IRR or just weren't smart enough to

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Letters from Iraq –

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get all the way out. It sounds like there are a lot of people in the same boat as I am. Anyway, we have a large group herenow – a total of 37 people. The new group is mostly Military Intelligence officers and most of them are Majors. Some have been out for five years or longer. Let me tell you they look like it. Not the greatest shape but I bet they didn't plan on being back in the Army either.

June 2, 2005

I now remember why I joined the National Guard all those years ago. I like this stuff to a point but I know it is only for a weekend and I get to go home. It feels like we have been here forever. Even the people in charge of us are asking when we will be leaving.

We have joined an active duty Captains Course and are learning about building and repairing roads and airfields. It's something that could be useful. We also had a major teach us (there are now five engineer officers in class) about contracting in the Army. She has been to Iraq already and said there are many engineer officers that are over there acting as general contractors. They deal with the locals to get things built. She didn't say

if that was on a base or off in the community. I can't believe they are sending people out into public without armed escorts.

Anyway things are going fine. I miss my regular job and being home. This stuff can get old real fast. Once we get a clue when and where we are going, the tempo might pick up a bit, but for now it we are just lost puppy dogs.

June 13, 2005

Anyway we did get orders at the end of the week to go to Camp Shelby, Mississippi. It is the largest reserve and National Guard training center in the U.S. It has been around since WWI. This is where we will be going (myself and three other officers). I am reporting to the 876th Engineers out of the Pennsylvania National Guard. On their web site it has them being deployed from Jan 05 to Aug of 06 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. At this time I don't know if they are in Iraq or not. I do know that most call-ups are for a unit to be in country or deployed overseas for one year on the ground. That means one year in Iraq, Afghanistan or Bosnia. I imagine I will find out when I get to Mississippi what the deal is and when and where they are going. They are a mechanized (armored vehicles) unit like the one I was in the National Guard so I should not be too lost. Their web site does not have a lot of other information about

what they do. That is about all I know for now. I will keep you informed when I find something else out. I am in the Houston airport waiting to fly to Jackson Mississippi where we will bus to Camp Shelby. It is nice to get out of Fort Leonard Wood and get this process going. The sooner I start the sooner I get this done.

June 17, 2005

Well, hello and I am finally here at Camp Shelby, Mississippi. I wish I were back at Fort Leonard Wood! It is hot hot staying in barracks without air conditioning. We are doing pretty much the same thing here as we did at FLW. We went through a medical screening, which I passed again, then we went through the administrative portion, which I passed again, and now we are going to start doing the training portion. It includes many of the same things we did at FLW but has some new things also. We train on land navigation, convoy operations, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and a lot more weapons training. We (still with the same three guys) are going to be here for about 15 days. That is supposed to be what happens anyway. We linked up with the 876 Engineers out of Pennsylvania. They are part of a bigger group known as the 2-28, which is a brigade combat team. The 2-28 is leaving on the 28th of this month for Kuwait

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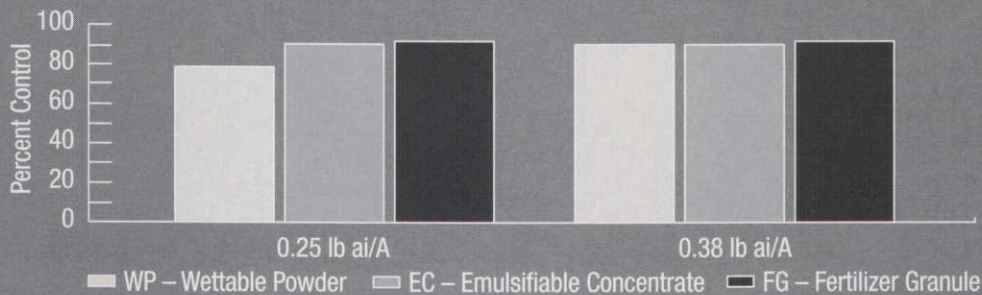
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Super Time Playing Pond Hockey

By MIKE NELSON, CGCS
Superintendent, Dacotah Ridge Golf Club

The weekend of January 21-22 I spent outdoors. Not ice fishing, skiing or snowmobiling.

Along with myself, there were around 760 people playing hockey on Lake Calhoun in Minneapolis. The first annual U.S. Pond Hockey Championships was the event. There were a total of 128 teams that were from around the country involved; 100 of the teams were in the Open Division, there also was a Women's and Senior Division

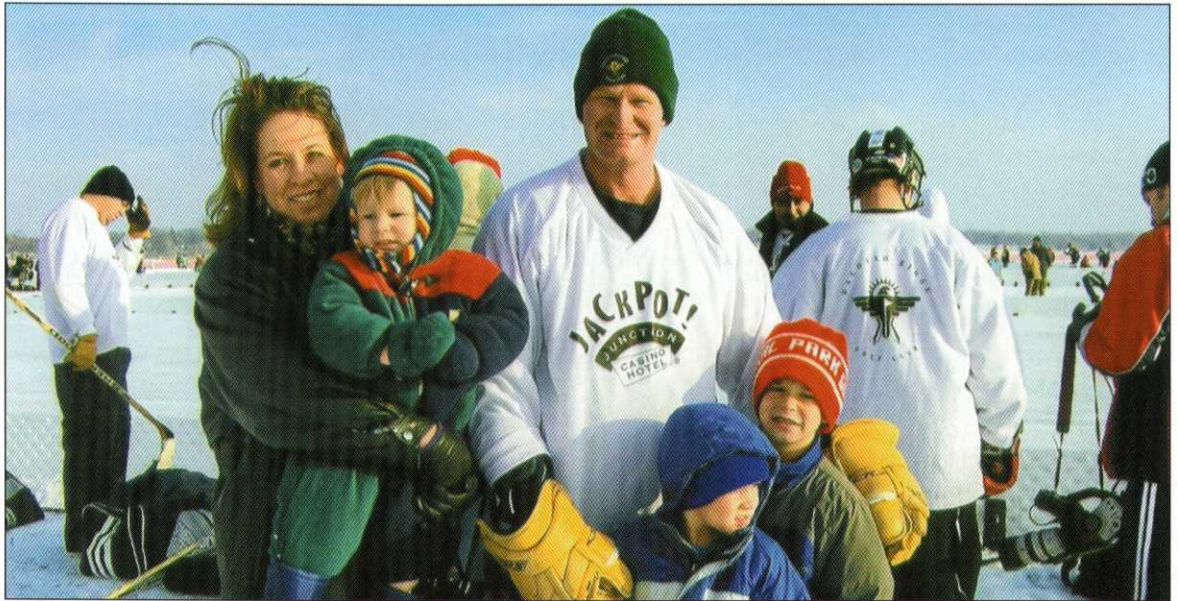
Here is how the format went. Each team played four

skaters on the ice at a time with subs that rotated in. There was no goalie; the area to shoot at to score was a six-foot wide goal that was six-inches high. The middle portion of the goal was blocked off leaving a foot at each corner of the goal to shoot at. We played 17-minute halves with a 3-minute break in the middle. In order to accommodate the number of teams there were 25 rinks constructed that were about the size of a regulation rink. The rinks had 18-inch high boards to contain the puck. The puck was to stay on the ice except for the occasional saucer pass and in true pond hockey fashion teams on deck had to shovel the rink.

This was hockey the way nature intended – on the pond, outside in the elements with cold fingers from lacing up in the snowbank. Pond or outdoor hockey has a special place for many hockey players, as this is where they were able to hone their skills, hang out and make new friends.

The weather was great for the event, it was just cold enough to keep things frozen. The wind had a bit of a bite but it was pond hockey so the weather shouldn't be perfect! The ice conditions were very rough in some spots and sometimes the puck would bounce your way, sometimes it didn't.

I scouted the rosters of the teams we were playing against and became a little concerned when I saw some former U of M and NHL players. We played three games on Saturday and while we skated competitively with each and every team we played we managed to stay out of the win column. The competitive juices were flowing and there was what I'll call "spirited play" at times. At the end of the day we were all exhausted but everyone on team Jackpot Junction/ Dacotah Ridge had a great time. I'm already looking forward to next year. My groin and back muscles should be healed by then.



TAKING A BREAK FROM THE HOCKEY GAMES ON LAKE CALHOUN IN MINNEAPOLIS for a little family time is Mike Nelson, CGCS, Dacotah Ridge CC. with his wife Michelle, Parker (2), Joshua (5) and Blake (7)

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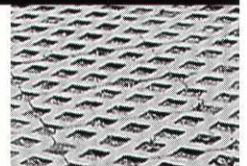
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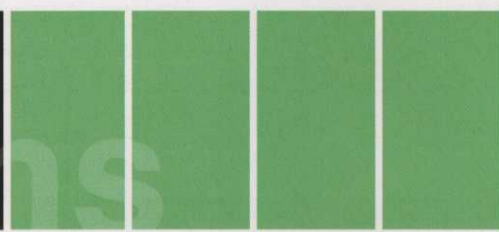


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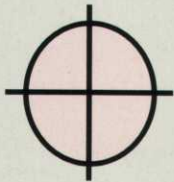
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MDA to Play Hardball in 2006?

By PAUL DIEGNAU, CGCS, Keller Golf Course

It has come to my attention that the "playing field" may be changing in the great state of Minnesota. What do I mean by this? The end of the 2005 golf season produced some interesting, yet perplexing inspections by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture on a handful of Minnesota golf courses. I will attempt to provide a "heads up" on some of the emerging issues in the following paragraphs.

An attendee to a November 2005 pesticide re-certification class informed me that the MDA announced the hiring of 10 additional agricultural inspectors. That, in itself, might be considered a small miracle during these tight-fisted financial times. But, more importantly, how many new inspectors will be targeting golf operations? That remains to be seen, but judging from events that occurred last November, change may be in the air.

Late last fall, several golf courses were visited by MDA personnel to conduct "use-observation inspections" of their

pesticide application operations. Mind you, these visits occurred, to the best of my knowledge, after the spray rigs were put away for the winter. Interestingly enough, the inspector(s) was not interested in speaking with the golf course superintendent, but with the individual that made the last pesticide application. Here is an example of how an inspection played out at one of these facilities:

The inspector arrives on site and asks to speak with the individual who made the last pesticide application.

Upon meeting the individual, the inspector requests a copy of the label of the product that was last applied (in this case it was a chlorothalonil product).

The inspector proceeds to read the label and simultaneously quiz the applicator.

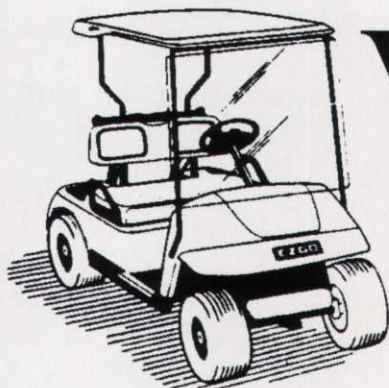
Specific questions asked during the inspection included: What type of safety eyewear was worn? What type of foot protection was used? What type of gloves

was worn? Was a respirator worn? Was anyone playing on the golf course during the application? How close to surface water did you spray? What was the wind speed during the application? Do you have a record of this application and can I see it?

In this particular example, the golf course was cited for improper gloves (leather - it was cold out!), improper respirator (respirator was sold to golf course by a local safety company as a pesticide respirator - inspector said cartridges were wrong type), and over application of product (6.0 oz. / M vs. the 5.5 oz. / M label rate). Additional citations were avoided because the golf course was able to prove that the eyewear worn during application met ANSI safety standards. Additionally, the golf course was closed during application, thereby avoiding possible re-entry violations. The inspector also identified several other "requirements" that may be grounds for future application violations. Wind speeds must be measured using a hand-held wind meter or an on-site weather station during the application period and recorded on the application record. If an applicator does not measure wind speeds during

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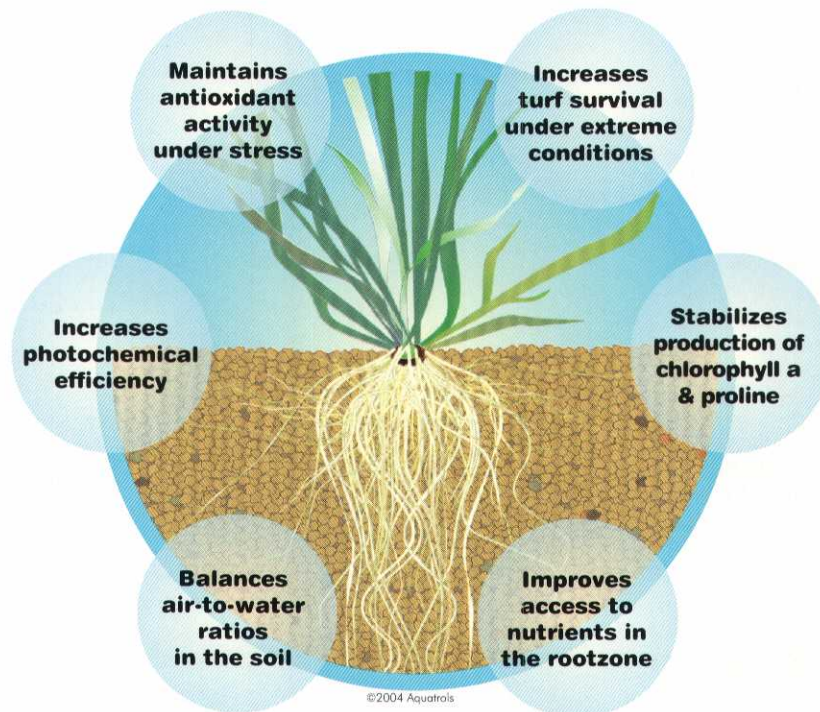
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MDA-

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application, MDA inspectors will reference wind speeds at the St. Paul / Minneapolis Airport and cite accordingly. All product containers must display the entire product label until the container is destroyed. If the label is removed from the container for reference prior to application and the partial container is returned to storage, the label must be re-attached to the container (taped, glued, etc.) It should be noted that the golf course referenced above has not been fined (as this article went to press) pending completion of the review process.

After reading the scenario above, do you see the inconsistencies surrounding this inspection? Grab your Daconil label and follow along. The PPE requirements for non-WPS use makes no mention of a respirator requirement. The protective eye wear requirement makes no mention of specific safety requirements. Daconil carries a "warning" label and is a general-use pesticide. As I understand it (please correct me if I am wrong!), Minnesota pesticide law does NOT require non-commercial golf course applicators to maintain application records for general-use prod-

ucts. So the BIG question becomes...how can MDA inspectors ask to see records we are not required to keep or to record wind speeds on these same documents? I'm confused. I won't even begin to comment on where the honesty factor figures into this cross-examination, Gestapo-like inspection process when, in reality, a more open-minded, constructive, working relationship would be far more productive.

Another incident occurred on a Minnesota golf course this past summer that has the potential to significantly impact golf course maintenance operations and revenues. A golfer was playing a golf hole that ran parallel to a fairway on another hole that was being sprayed with plant protectants. The golfer hit a wayward shot into the adjoining fairway where the spray had not yet dried on the plant. This golfer filed a formal exposure complaint with the MDA. An MGCSA member contacted the MDA to discuss the situation. This conversation revealed the fact that the Department of Agriculture was unaware of common spraying practices that are carried out on golf courses across our state on a daily basis. Instead, they believed that golf courses did the

bulk of their spraying during nighttime hours.

The labels on the most commonly applied golf course pesticides require the product to dry on the plant prior to re-entry by the golfer or other maintenance staff. If this re-entry interval requirement is strictly enforced, one can only imagine the repercussions to our maintenance operations and the facilities' bottom line. Currently, the direction/action that the MDA will choose is unknown. One can only hope for status quo.

There are lessons to be learned from all of this. Make sure you, as superintendent, are familiar with the state pesticide laws and let that knowledge guide the decisions you make during the course of an inspection. Make sure your applicators know the label, inside and out, of the product(s) they are applying and, more importantly, they adhere to the requirements of the label. Make sure your incident response plan is complete and up to date. As was also demonstrated above, the laws appear to be open to individual inspector interpretation.

Good luck in 2006!!!

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