



Hole 17, 174 yards, par 3



Hole 6, 179 yards, par 3

Rivermont

GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB

BY JARRELL JOHNSON
Photography by Shannon Bower

If you love what you do and you feel that it matters, then the passion will show. This is the collective philosophy of a unique management team, with 31 years of dedicated service to the members of Rivermont Golf and Country Club. This team of involved club professionals continuously strives to improve its facilities, service and membership relations. A more welcoming clubhouse would surely be difficult to find. There is a passion in this club as you walk into the grillroom, filled with smiling faces and jovial conversation. This passion permeates throughout the Men's, Women's, Senior and Junior golf and tennis groups. This is a fun and exciting place to play and socialize.

Equitable Life developed the Club and the community in 1973. It was built as the cornerstone of a vast real estate complex that began a development trend in North Fulton County. The project was visionary in its scope and has truly held over time. **Bill Barkley** served as the general manager and **David Cupit** as director of golf, coming over from Dunwoody Country Club and bringing **Tommy Lyman** with him. This location in the mid-seventies was viewed by many as "the sticks" and the club struggled.

Barkley and Cupit purchased the club in 1980 and immediately rebuilt the greens. Rivermont's membership swelled to a waiting list by the late 80's, spurred somewhat by the 400-north boom. The Cupit family took over sole ownership of the club and still maintains that family atmosphere. After an extended bout with illness, David passed away in 2003. Today the club is under the daily guidance of David's son **Chris** and General Manager/Golf Professional, **Tommy Lyman**.

To be loyal is to be faithful too. A longevity unfounded in the country club environment is cherished at Rivermont. Lyman has served the membership for 31 years and Director of Tennis, **Mark Suiter**, has reigned over the courts for 20 years. These gentleman and their staff are truly committed to providing a high integrity, top quality golf and tennis experience. Lyman followed David Cupit from Ansley to Dunwoody Country Club and then to Rivermont in 1973. The respect and honor for each other was never compromised and the membership reaped the benefits. It has been echoed by many members that Lyman puts on the finest golf events period. Suiter, the clubs clay courts "czar"

for 20 years, mixes passion with discipline in teaching, administration and tournaments. He is past president of the Georgia Professional Tennis Association and has 29 years experience teaching juniors and adults. His respect for the game and its history is unparalleled.

When club manager **Chris Cupit** speaks of commitment, it translates to the long haul. He depicts a family philosophy of lasting relationships. "Rivermont is proud to have hosted the Atlanta Amateur four times, the sectional qualifying for the USGA's Senior Open 16 times and the state qualifier for the Buick Open since 1988." Cupit, an accomplished golfer who has competed in multiple United States and British Amateur Championships, currently serves as Vice President of the Georgia State Golf Association. Cupit would like to help the existing membership of GSGA be more aware of its programs. Cupit is especially proud of the club's commitment to the Georgia State Golf Foundation's Yates Scholarship Fund. The Rivermont Men's Golf Association holds an annual tournament in the fall with proceeds going towards the fund. Rivermont member **Judge Jeffrey Kollman**, who has served on the committee that handled scholarships before the Foundation, spearheaded this commitment. Through his and the club's efforts, over \$50,000 has been raised over the last 10 years. Kollman notes that the "Rivermont Model" for scholarship contribution could easily be mirrored by a majority of private clubs in Georgia.

The club also maintains a capital commitment to its members. Recent revampments included the men's and women's locker rooms, the golf pro shop and architect **Mike Riley's** redesign of the driving range and practice area in 2003.

Arguably one of famed architect **Joe Lee's** finest designs, this picturesque 18 provides a formidable challenge to players of all abilities. The layout mirrors **Herbert Warren Wind's** assessment that "Lee built extremely interesting courses that were pleasant to play." With a par of 72 and a length of 6767, its characteristics are those of tree-lined beauty, creekside charm and small greens. This is not an "attackers" course, but a "thinker's" layout requiring short game finesse. The characteristics of each hole demand a number of difficult strategies, resulting in many "risk reward" opportunities. Rewards for the brave are nonetheless considerable.

The front nine is a bit tighter and longer than the back and bears its teeth right out of the gate. Hole no. 1 is a fantastic opener. A solid drive must be

accurately placed. There's a creek on the left that is a real worry and a forest of trees to the right. That same meandering creek crosses the approach to a 4-bunkered green that slopes from back to front. The seventh is a monster of a par 5 playing 561 yards and truly not a hole for the feeble. An errant drive to the left will find a creek and one lost right is tree bound. A poor drive requires a lay-up in front of the crossing creek, leaving 180 yards plus in an attempt to get home in three. Four bunkers defend a bitty three-tiered green. Let your mind wander here and the card will accept double or triple.

The back nine presents several opportunities to make up for the sins of the front. Birdies are invited on holes 11, 13 and 14, but par on the five's 10 and 12 are defining round setters. Sixteen, seventeen and eighteen provide for a climatic finish. Rivermont's signature hole is the "famed 17th." It's certain "death or glory." High drama literally defines this 120-foot drop from tee to a shallow green flanked by trouble. The 17th is known as "the Evil" hole because world-renowned dare devil **Evil Knievel** challenged the hole by three-wheel golf cart in the mid-seventies. It's still debatable whether intentional, Evil plunged over tee boxes down the embankment and supposedly managed to save par.

The 18th is an exceptional finishing hole. A memorable view from an elevated tee, this 415-yard par 4 requires a slotted tee shot to a tight fairway. A creek and OB waits on the right and a lake beckons to the left. The green, surrounded by three bunkers, slopes four ways and a lazy putter will take three to finish. This course, laid out over compelling land, simply provides a stiff challenge and seems to be resilient to modern day golf technology.

Everything changes, but here the important things really have not. Interestingly, memberships are a remarkable value. Because of a debt service long since removed, Rivermont is able to provide perhaps the best private club value to be found in the Atlanta area. Rivermont Golf and Country Club is all about family. Family-owned and operated and a club that a member from all walks of life proudly calls home. ☺

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