

Chris Cupit: Growing Up Golfer

BY TODD SENTELL

If golf is supposed to make you a better person, then consider the case of **Chris Cupit**, club manager of Alpharetta's Rivermont Golf & Country Club, member of the Georgia State Golf Foundation's Yates Scholarship Committee, a GSGA Executive Committee member and tournament official, a member of the Georgia Golf Course Owner's Association and Club Managers Association of America, Georgia Chapter.

It's believed that Chris has always been a better person, but golf has significantly influenced his life. He might not have had a choice.

The moment Chris was born 35 years ago his father, **David**, was enjoying the life of the first head golf professional at Dunwoody Country Club. Then the father became co-owner of a piece of future golf course property in the early 1970s-boondocks of north Fulton County, where common thoroughfares now stretch into north Georgia. Back then, the same roads came to an end at mom and pop feed stores and horse fields. Chris' introduction to golf came through the course's construction: the elder Cupit, **David**, had seven-year-old Chris and his sister, **Kara**, pick rocks from virgin fairways. Now Chris and his sister are minority owners of Rivermont and their mother, **Lynda**, is majority owner. I asked Chris what else he thought he'd do after growing up golfer, after growing up working in Rivermont's bag room, golf shop, halfway house snack shop, kitchen, grounds crew and performing payroll. "I probably would have gone to law school," he says, "but I always knew I'd be around golf."

If golf is in someone's genes, then Chris is affected. His father, who passed away last November, was one of eight brothers from a small Texas town. Five of them became golf professionals. One almost won a United States Open. A glass case in Rivermont's upstairs lobby is full of Cupit clippings, accomplishments, memorabilia and fond memories. Chris gazes into the case and gives a historical tour. He's asked if there's another American family so involved in golf. He doesn't have an immediate



answer. Neither one of us can come up with one. So the Cupits have it, and Chris is carrying on a legacy of involvement and contribution, starting with the GSGA five years ago when Rivermont hosted a GSGA event and Chris went up to **Layne Williams**, GSGA senior director of Rules and Competitions, and asked how he could become a rules official one day. Layne immediately gave Chris a walkie-talkie and put him on the seventh hole. Chris chuckles as he recounts his volunteer beginnings. "It just happens to be the hardest hole on the course, so I

stood up in the woods where I wouldn't get hit. I actually didn't know where to stand. I didn't want to be in the way." Did the rookie rules official ever have to consult the senior rules man on the squawker? "Oh, yeah."

His personal golf pedigree, like his family's, is substantial. Chris played on the golf team at Atlanta's Marist High School, then two years on the Georgia Tech squad. After seeing his starting roster possibilities dwindle with the arrival of **David Duval**, Chris made the team at the University of Virginia, where

he graduated. He's competed in a U.S. Junior Amateur Championship, two U.S. Amateur Championships, two U.S. Mid-Amateur Championships and three British Amateur Championships. He's made a run for a num-

thought he was their grandson. They love him and appreciate him. He works late. He sells the membership plans. He's in a Rivermont television commercial, preaching the benefits, asking the viewer to call him.

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ber of state amateur titles and even made it to the semifinals of the British Mid-Amateur Championship.

Now he's the ultimate host of Rivermont Country Club. As club manager he has to be visible and in charge of hospitality. On a recent afternoon the ladies' bridge club finished their lunch and, as they moved into small groups for lobby chit-chat, Chris walks by and you'd have

He's been overexposed to the game, and now he's proud to say his favorite volunteer role is his work on the Yates Scholarship Program for the last four years. "We'll read through 50 or 60 applications from the high school kids, kids of Georgia club employees and then we'll narrow down to the most qualified. Then we'll rate the different applicants and call them in for interviews. The interviews last a couple of

days and we get a chance to talk with them. That's by far the most rewarding experience. Finally, we'll make recommendations to the Board about scholarship amounts. To me, with my family being involved in golf and having grown up in the golf business and seeing all the employees the program benefits is exceptionally gratifying. To be able to give them some money for school is so wonderful. You know, a lot of these kids have given their lives to their club." Like Chris Cupit.

He works hard, and works long hours, and he smiles when he talks about the one who's waiting for him after a late-night club banquet. His blind-date wife, **Jennifer**. And it doesn't take a split second for Chris to recount his first memory of playing his beloved Rivermont. Those beautiful kid days when he'd start out on the first hole, on the women's tees. You know, it takes a real man of golf to admit that. ©

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