

SUPER(S) -N- SITE
Luke Cella, MAGCS



Scott Witte, CGCS -N-



Cantigny = Tanks. That is my childhood memory of the place and as kids we pronounced the g, unlike the formal French pronunciation (Can tee nee). Two or three times a summer the Cella and family across the street station wagons would find their way out to Wheaton with a bag full of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, a jug of lemonade, and a package of cookies. We'd spend the afternoon climbing on the tanks playing soldier outside the Museum. There was no golf course then, the First Division Museum was in its infancy and touring the McCormick Mansion was not an experience our moms wanted to go through with 10 kids under the age of 12. I've since taken my boys to enjoy "The Cantigny Experience" and immediately they think of the tanks.

Cantigny is owned and operated by the McCormick Foundation, one of the nation's largest public charities. The golf course is part of the historic 500-acre Cantigny Park, a park that is more of a complex that contains gardens, museums and top notch restaurants. No knock to Scott and his crew, but if the only reason you've visited Cantigny is to golf, you've only seen a portion of the operation. Cantigny hosts over 40 acres of formal gardens including a rose garden, a popular idea garden and over 20 other plant specific gardens. A stroll through will be sure to give you ideas for your course or home. The First Division Museum takes you through American history as seen through the eyes of the First Infantry Division interactively. There is always something going on at Cantigny, I urge you to visit with your family and spend the day, you won't be disappointed.

Cantigny Golf opened for play in 1989 as the "Best New Public Course in America," Golf Digest. Roger Packard designed the original 27 holes on 275 acres and Wadsworth Construction Company completed the work in 1988. Since 2003, Jacobson Golf Course Design has designed many updates to the original layout. Scott and staff have been putting those designs into action updating bunker complexes, adding new contours to approaches, moving cart paths, and adding drainage to keep



The Witte's, Scott and wife Sue, daughter Kori and son Alec.

the course current. The course is divided into three distinct nines, Woodside, Lakeside and Hillside. Play each nine and you will understand their distinctive names.

Cantigny Golf is also home to a 20-acre Youth Links. There are nine holes dedicated to growing the game. Want to play the course? Adults are only allowed out there in season with a junior golfer, otherwise you can wait for school to start.

The newest addition at Cantigny Golf is its Golf Academy. It is the only teaching center in the Chicagoland area to integrate all the performance components of playing into one location. Year round hitting bays, a 2-acre practice range tee,

and a 1.5-acre short game area are just the beginning to this complex. The professional staff can help with swing instruction, equipment fitting, physical training, mental training, practice techniques and course management. It is quite a complex that brings one of the main missions of the McCormick Foundation, education, to the golf realm. On top of all that, the landscape surrounding the Golf Academy is "zero input" - all native plants that don't require much maintenance.

Scott has managed the golf course since 1995, a year like 2010 that will be remembered for its extremely difficult growing conditions. Scott, a native of Brookfield, Wisconsin, received his

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bachelor's from Michigan State in 1991. Like most, Scott got his start in high school at a local course. He worked at Blue Mound Golf and Country Club during the summers under Carl Grassl. He worked a season at Barrington Hills Country Club as an intern under John Ebel followed by season at Merit Club under Oscar Miles in 1990. Upon graduation, Scott returned to Barrington Hills Country Club as the assistant under Mark Bobb before landing his first and only superintendent job at Cantigny.

The course has played host to many Championships, all under Scott's tenure: 3 Illinois Amateur Championships, A Western Junior Championship and a US Amateur Public Links Championship. It is currently certified as an Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System and has been so since 1993.

Cantigny is a unique place and offers Scott a unique set up. Scott oversees his team and has a golf course superintendent oversee each nine-hole segment. Scott, being true to his character, asked this article highlight each one of them. I asked a few questions of each (all of them commented it was like a job interview) to share Team Cantigny with you.



Team Cantigny, Steve Kurtsky, Tom Weigand, Jeremy Duncan, Scott Witte, Mark Kosbab, Pat Maksymiu and Romeo Diaz.

Patrick Maksymiu

Formal Education: Bachelor of Arts, Niagara University, in Business. Turfgrass Certificate, Penn State

Home Town: Flint, MI

Prior Work Experience:

Pat started at Cantigny in 2006. His resume includes: River Forest Country Club 02-06, Genesee Valley Meadows, Flint, MI for 6 years. He got his start on his family owned course, Cedar Valley Golf Club in Barrie Ontario.

Oversees: Lakeside

Best part of Cantigny:

The people

Favorite Cantigny Hole:

#4 Woodside, because it is an uphill shot encompassed by native area and has a very good tee to green visual.

Toughest part of the job: I have trouble leaving the place each day because I always feel there is something that can be improved or made better.

What I feel I bring to Team Cantigny: Leadership and experience.

What Team Cantigny thinks of me: They think well about me as I do of them.

Best lesson I've learned from Scott: Enjoy the things you have.

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Steve Kuretsky

Formal Education: University Wisconsin, Madison, Bachelor in Soils Science with Turf Specialty

Home Town: Minneapolis, MN

Prior Work Experience: In his 4th season at Cantigny, worked in lawn care for the previous 10 years. Worked at Rush Creek Golf Club in MN, University Ridge, and the O.J. Noer Research Center in WI.

Oversees: Golf Academy and Irrigation on all 36 holes

Best part of Cantigny: Freedom to make my own decisions and run my department the way I see fit.

Favorite Cantigny Hole: Lakeside #1, the butterfly hole. The reconstruction last fall really improved the playability of the hole.

Toughest part of your job: Keeping the 20+ year old irrigation system functioning and together.

What I feel I bring to Team Cantigny: Management skills learned from past positions.

What Team Cantigny thinks of me: I can be counted on.

Best lesson I've learned from Scott: There are a lot of things but number one is his management style – he is really good at breaking things down in their simplest form and not missing the details.

Mark Kosbab

Formal Education: Associates Applied Science – Turf Management, Joliet Junior College

Home Town: Chicago, IL

Prior Work Experience: Medinah 1998-2003, Riverside Golf Club 1997

Oversees: Hillside

Best part of Cantigny: The outdoor environment that it offers, including the native areas and the wildlife it supports.

Favorite Hole at Cantigny: #4 Hillside, it's an easy hole from the player standpoint, but challenges me as a superintendent.

Toughest part of your job: Labor management, running the crew as efficiently as possible.

What I feel I bring to Team Cantigny: Knowledge and experience, but we all seem to be the same that way. I bring a passion for turf management to the team.

What Team Cantigny thinks of me: I'm the comic relief on the team, I love my job and am very passionate about it.

Best lesson I've learned from Scott: Being efficient as possible with the resources available to us at any given time.

Jeremy Duncan

Formal Education: Bachelor of Science from Illinois State in Agricultural Business

Home Town: Peoria, IL

Prior Work Experience: Started in the spring of 2006 at Cantigny, worked at Village Greens in Woodridge for 2 years and various courses in central Illinois.

Oversees: Woodside

Best part of Cantigny: The people that I work with.

Favorite Hole at Cantigny: #3 Woodside – has a great look from the tee especially with the new bunker renovations.

Toughest part of your job: Always wanting perfection, but finding it impossible to achieve each day.

What I feel I bring to Team Cantigny: I'd say a positive work ethic.

What Team Cantigny thinks of me: I'm easy to get along with.

Best lesson I've learned from Scott: Importance of being prepared and having a plan.

Scott has created a great work environment for his staff, it is apparent in the final product they all produce. Scott's greatest challenge at Cantigny is staying on top of the changing soil chemistries. Cantigny is irrigated with effluent water from the Wheaton Sanitary District. Constant fluctuations in water quality, particularly salinity, wreak havoc with the structure of his soils. Scott monitors his soil structure and tweaks his programs to create the best possible growing conditions for his plants.

Scott's newest venture is keeping bees at Cantigny. As with all his undertakings, he has jumped right in and is learning as much as he can about apiculture. He explains, "I'm learning it on the fly" (no pun intended). Scott recently phrased the "Bee Barometer" to communicate with the community that golf courses are valuable environmental assets. Bees don't live in toxic dumps and like birds, are great indicators of a stable and healthy environment. The honey Scott has collected is sold onsite and the proceeds go back into his Audubon program, a buzz, golf can use anytime.

He resides in Bartlett with his wife Sue, his son Alec and daughter Kori. Scott is closing in on his tenure as the Midwest President this fall. He recently learned of a local beekeepers association, I'm sure they could use his help and leadership at some point in the near future.

Cantigny is a unique facility with a unique Superintendent, Scott Witte, CGCS. **-OC**

