

Cupit loves the challenge at tough Canterwood track

By TERRY BUCHEN

GIG HARBOR, Washington — From its inception, the Canterwood Golf and Country Club here was designed to be the toughest golf course in the Pacific Northwest, and to be the finest. Robert Muir Graves' design accomplished both goals.

"In 1988, the course had a slope rating of 154, and was considered by some to be too tough and unfair," explained superintendent Mark D. Cupit, CGCS. "With Graves' help, we've been improving the course through minor changes such as tree and brush removal; bunker modifications; landing area widening, etc.

"Some of the pond edges have been filled in; landing areas have been reshaped; collars around greens have been widened; new tee boxes have been built. These improvements are ongoing. The club has a long-range goal that extends for several more years of slight improvements. I feel that these improvements will help our golf course become more user-friendly. Our slope rating has been reduced to 141.

Larry Gilhuly, regional USGA Green Section director/agronomist, has his office here at Canterwood. "Thanks to Larry," said Cupit, Canterwood is going 'spikeless' this year — "which we are real excited about."

Cupit's other golf course projects/improvements, both short and long-range plans, include: Making tee surrounds more easy to mow around; completing extensive drainage work; adding landscaped recirculating water features; adding primary rough into non-maintained natural areas; and replacing tall Douglas Firs with flowering trees such as apple, dogwood, cherry and plum.

"I have been superintendent here since the club's inception in 1985, and it's been quite interesting watching the transformation from the toughest course in the Pacific Northwest to a tamer version without losing the course's identity and



Mark Cupit, left, keeps Canterwood playing to a 141 slope rating.

integrity," Cupit continued. "Robert Muir Graves has done a great job with the continuity of the course."

Cupit's entire family is into golf, in one way or another. His uncle Jackie Cupit played on the PGA Tour from 1961-75. He was rookie of the year in 1961; won four times on the tour, including the Western Open and Canadian Open (where his brother Buster came in second). In 1963, Jackie frittered away a two-stroke lead with two holes to play at The Country Club for the U.S. Open. In the playoff the next day, Julius Boros shot 70, and Jackie shot 73.

In addition to Jackie and Buster, Cupit's other two uncles, Bobby and Jerry, played on tour at one time or another. Currently, his uncle Buster owns a golf course in Texas; his uncle David runs a golf course in Atlanta; and his uncle Jackie is a teaching pro in

Dallas. Both of Mark Cupit's sons — Jason, 19, and Brian, 17 — are avid golfers with single-digit handicaps also."

Cupit is happy at Canterwood but he's not a potted plant.

"Larry Gilhuly and I went to China

three years ago where we consulted on a future golf course next to the Yellow Sea," Cupit explained. "My boss developed the course."

Closer to home, Cupit presides over 18 employees, including one head equipment manager, an assistant mechanic, one assistant, and two foreman/irrigation staff members.

"I have a very able and stable staff, over 80 percent with five or more years of service, which we are very proud of here, realizing that the club is only eight years old."

"The club recently bought a border collie, which was trained for sheep and cattle herding. His name is Boss, and he's used for Canada geese control. Last year we had between 60 to 80 geese — this year, zero. Boss is 4 years old, cost \$2,000 and as far as Larry and I know, is the only border collie used for geese on a course in Western Washington.

"Larry is recommending the border collie alternative to everyone."



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MASTERS — ALL

Gary Grigg, far right, past president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, was one of three superintendents awarded Master Greenkeeper status during the British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association (BIGGA) conference in England this winter. Left to right are Master Greenkeepers Mark Broughton of Morecambe GC in England and Ian MacMillan of Balbirnie Park GC in Markinch, Scotland, BIGGA Chairman Dean Cleaver, and Grigg. Grigg is superintendent at Royal Poinciana GC in Naples, Fla. There are now 14 Master Greenkeepers in the world, including Americans Terry Buchan, Bob Maibusch, Richard McNab and Bill Montague.