

# TOP Assistants

## Chris Cantrell knows the definition of hard work

*Editor's note: Top Assistants will feature a question-and-answer session with an assistant superintendent every month. If you'd like to nominate someone for the feature, please send an e-mail to Larry Aylward at [laylward@questex.com](mailto:laylward@questex.com).*

Counting summer internships, Chris Cantrell celebrates his 20th anniversary in the golf course maintenance business this year. Cantrell has been the assistant superintendent at Chattanooga (Tenn.) Golf and Country Club since 1995.

"In my more than 20 years as a superintendent at Chattanooga Golf and Country Club, I have not worked with anyone who works harder than Chris," says Jeff Hollister, the club's superintendent.

Cantrell also has been a tremendous influence on other employees, Hollister says. We caught up with Cantrell recently and asked him a few questions:

**Golfdom:** What's your favorite part of the job?

**Cantrell:** I have always enjoyed the construction side of the business. I work for a very progressive club that is always trying to improve its facilities for its membership. Over the years we've tackled many projects, and through those I have enjoyed the learning experiences and the friendships that are made while trying to reach a common goal.

**Golfdom:** Who has been the biggest influence on your career and why?

**Cantrell:** I've never accomplished anything in my life alone, and I owe many people my gratitude and sincere thanks. It begins with my Christian faith, and I owe it all to Christ. I also have a mom who taught me to work hard and never lose sight of what is important. My

wonderful wife, Nicole, is my greatest supporter and friend. My boss and mentor, Jeff Hollister, continues to teach me not only the science of the industry but the importance of relationships and communication. Tim and Wes Gilbert, two brothers who own Windstone Golf Club, taught me all the fundamentals I still rely on today. Plus, they gave a smart-alec kid a chance in the beginning. Mark Stovall, superintendent at Lookout Mountain Golf Club, first taught me how to manage a crew and is the best net worker, bar none.

**Golfdom:** What's your favorite product or piece of equipment and why?

**Cantrell:** I really like the Toro Groundsmaster 4500D. It delivers a great cut on our bermudagrass roughs; it's easy to operate, and it will climb virtually any slope. Although we only use it twice a year, the Cushman Core Harvester might be the best piece of equipment ever.

**Golfdom:** If you could change something about the industry right now, what would you change?

**Cantrell:** I believe that unrealistic expectations are slowly strangling the game of golf. Golf courses across the country are spending more time and labor to make sure hazards, especially bunkers, are pristine. Greens are only acceptable if they are rolling above an 11 on the Stimpmeter. Roughs have to be flawless. Golf course budgets continue to rise in order to meet those expectations. It is very important to provide a good, consistent golf course, and



if we accomplish this task, then the golfer is ultimately responsible for the lie of his/her ball. Golf was intended to be played in the elements, and it is the golfer's challenge to adapt to the golf course — not the golf course adapting to the golfer.

**Golfdom:** Describe yourself in one word?

**Cantrell:** Dependable.

**Golfdom:** What is your favorite hobby and why?

**Cantrell:** Outside of golf, I enjoy running. I took it up about 10 years ago in order to lose a few pounds. Since then, I have run several marathons and hope one day to qualify for the Boston Marathon.

**Golfdom:** What's your favorite vacation spot?

**Cantrell:** Ka'anapali in Maui, Hawaii.

**Golfdom:** What is your favorite golf course besides your own?

**Cantrell:** Manatee County Golf Course in Bradenton, Fla.

**Golfdom:** If a movie were made about your life, what actor would play you?

**Cantrell:** I tell my wife that most people mistake me for a younger George Clooney, but without question I look more like Matthew McConaughey.

**Golfdom:** It's your last day on Earth. What would you do?

**Cantrell:** I would take my family (Nicole and three English Springer Spaniels) on a hike. It was a disaster the last time we tried it, so it might be a good time to try it again. Afterwards, we would go home, fire up the grill, and it's steak and shrimp for everyone. ■