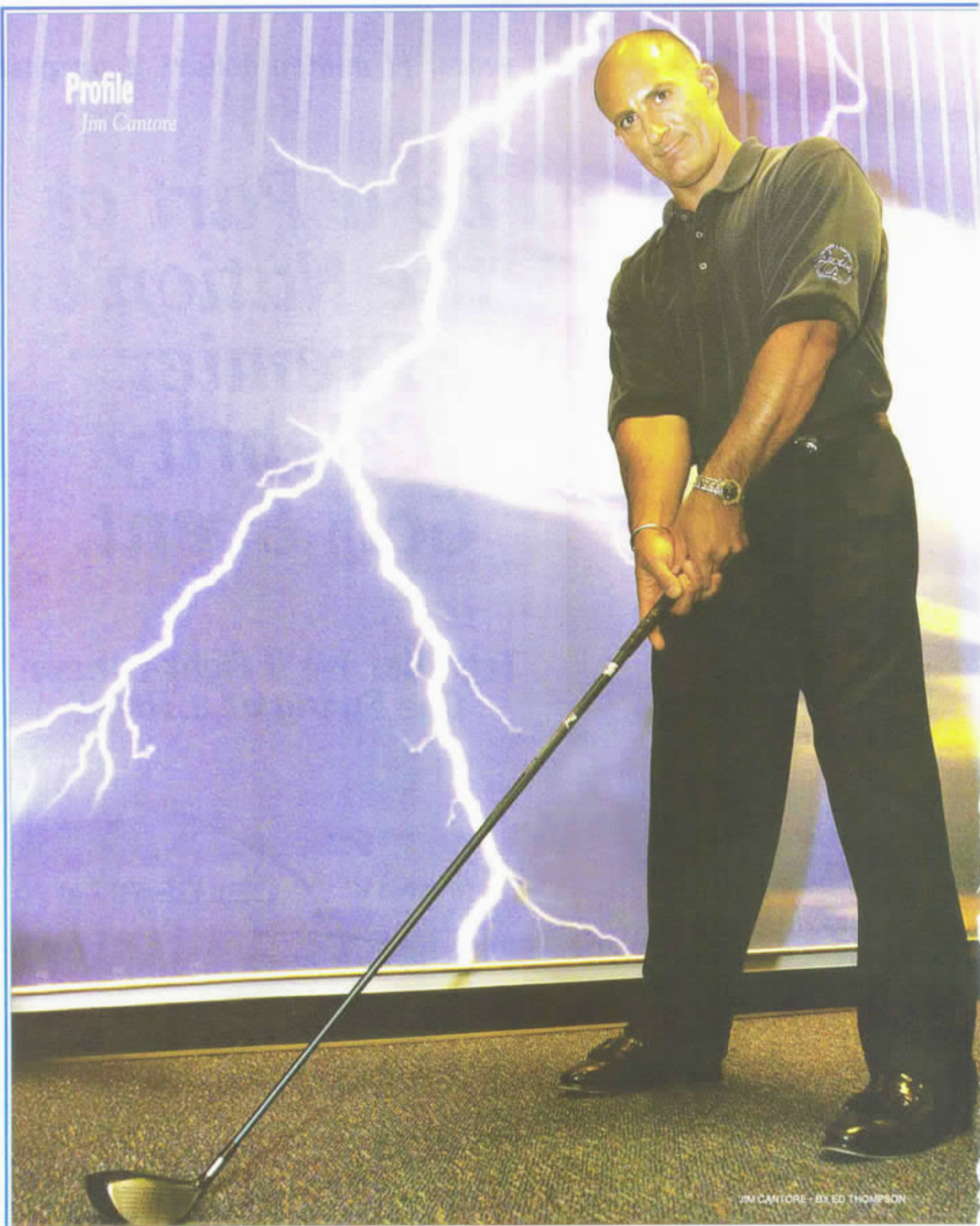


Profile
Jim Cantore



JIM CANTORE - BY ED THOMPSON

Hard Wired for Weather

America's most famous storm chaser admits he's a fair-weather golfer. "If the weather is bad . . . forget it, dude. I'm not going out there on a day when it's under 55 degrees."

BY PATRICK JONES

Combine the kinetic energy of Jim Cantore's on-air personality with enough charged ions, and there's the potential to spawn a cumulonimbus cloud. The Weather Channel meteorologist's zeal for shifting atmospheric conditions can billow with the intensity of one of those blackening, anvil-headed columns that dump gully washers on late summer afternoons.

Don't expect any gloomy precipitation to rain down from Cantore, though. He reports on the weather's every foul mood, but his upbeat, no-nonsense broadcast demeanor evinces the trustworthy warmth of sunshine. Whether reporting live in the throes of hurricane-force winds from an Atlantic Ocean beach or anchoring updates behind the desk in rolled-up shirt sleeves from The Weather Channel's Atlanta-based studios, Cantore beams across the screen as reliable and steadfast while forecasting remains an inexact science.

If only his short game and middle irons were as dependable.

Cantore labels himself a "periodic golfer" because of the demands of his on-call profession and the balancing act required with a family that

includes a daughter and son. But when the lengthy June to November hurricane season finally fizzles out, there's no place he would rather be than on the golf course.

"I love golf," Cantore says. "Half the fun of golf is just being outside on a beautiful day. Whether I'm playing good golf or bad golf, it doesn't matter. I don't need much of an excuse to get out on a great day and chase the little white ball around."

A native New Englander, Cantore didn't latch onto golf until he relocated to Atlanta and launched his career with The Weather Channel in 1986. It's a delayed start that he regrets, particularly since he worked at The Quechee (Vermont) Club in his youth and failed to take advantage of the course at his disposal.

"You know when you look back on your life and think of the mistakes that you made – the big ones – that was one of them," Cantore says. "I never took advantage of playing for free, or taking lessons, when I worked there."

His initiation into the game came on Bobby Jones Golf Course, the venerable, rough-around-the-edges Atlanta municipal track that has welcomed its fair share of first-timers over the decades. Cantore, playing in The Weather

Channel's annual employee "Hacker's Tournament" scramble, admitted to some "highs" and "lows" (expected weatherman vocabulary) getting around the course in his inaugural round. He has been hooked on the game ever since.

Cantore now embraces golf's challenges almost as much as he thrives on confronting an incensed Mother Nature head-on. His preferred method of tangling with the latter is staring her down at the height of her fury while a nationwide viewership – The Weather Channel reaches 87 million homes – vicariously tunes in with collective mouths agape. Nurturing types in the audience want James to step inside to safety for a hot cup of soup. The thrill-seekers

THE CANTORE FILE

Born: White River Junction, Vermont

In The Bag: Cleveland Launcher 460 driver, TaylorMade RAC irons, Odyssey putter

Handicap: "Somewhere in the 20s," after being sidelined with an Achilles heel injury in April 2004. "I can get it around 15 if I'm playing and working at it."

Low Round: 83 at Eagle Watch Golf Club in Woodstock, Ga.

Dream Foursome: Bill Murray, Adam Sandler and Donald Trump



watching on cable yearn to strap on Jimbo's Gore-Tex garments and evade airborne palm fronds and beach loungers that threaten bodily harm in 100 mph winds.

"I have always loved the weather," Cantore says. "But I never knew it until my dad said, 'Jimmy, you need to go study the weather. You're a friggin' nut. You stay up all night when there's

a forecast for snow. You can't wait to see the first flakes."

Heeding his father's insights, Cantore earned a bachelor's degree in meteorology from Lyndon State College in Vermont and then immediately joined The Weather Channel. His passion for all things climatological flourished once he was

remunerated to sashay into harm's way.

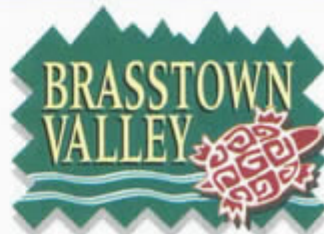
"After going out in (storms) and covering them live for the first time, it was like, 'This is incredible. I wish (The Weather Channel) would send me out to Tornado Alley for the whole season and broadcast from there,'" Cantore says.

Remaining in one place for an extended period to report is one thing



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Cantore definitely can't be accused of. His broadcast locations change as quickly as – well – the weather.

"I think a lot of people count on The Weather Channel to get them through the storms," he says. "That's always a priority for me.

Viewers count on me when I am out in the field. I know a lot of them are thinking, 'I wonder if Cantore is out there getting pounded.'

"There's something I love about being pounded by the weather," Cantore adds. "I can't really explain it."

Perhaps because of his frequent firsthand exposure to blizzards, tornadoes, hurricanes, nor'easters, squalls and gales, to name a few

Who better to ask for advice on avoiding lightning on the course than Cantore? So we did.

"The only way you should die from lightning on the golf course is if it's the first strike and you haven't even heard thunder at all. You just happen to be at the wrong place at the wrong time. That's the only way. Other than that, when you hear the thunder or see the lightning – you know the storm is coming in – it's just time to go in. It's not worth taking the risk. If you're caught on the course, find the lowest spot that you can. You don't want to stand under the biggest tree. That's a huge mistake because it's the biggest target. The charge will come down the tree and come out through the roots. In essence, you're standing right under the lightning rod. The best thing is to keep making your way in. Just try to get in and get out of the doggone thing. The next best thing is to find a restroom facility on the course with a concrete floor and go hang out in there until the storm safely passes."

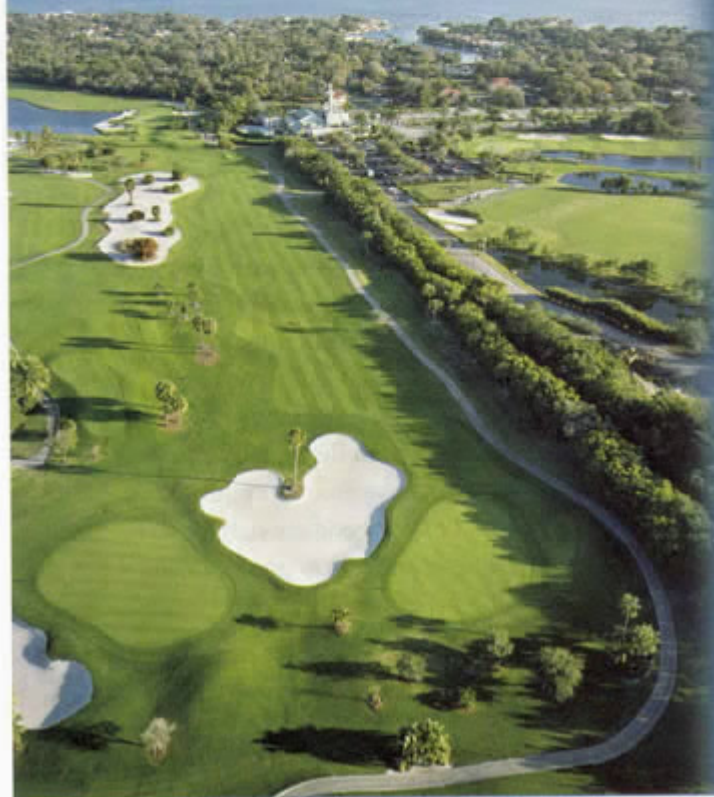
working conditions, Cantore confesses, surprisingly, to being somewhat of a fair-weather golfer. He likes "dressing up for a wild time out there" in unfavorable elements if there's competition involved, knowing the golf outing will include "a ribbing from the guys" in the foursome for the poor playing conditions.

"But if the weather is bad, and the golf is just casual playing with nothing

on the line, then, forget it dude. I'm not going out there on a day when it's under 55 degrees," he says. "It's not going to happen."

And who can question the fortitude of Cantore, host of The Weather Channel's "Storm Stories" series, on that decision?

There's only so much "pounding" one golfing meteorologist can endure. ♦



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