A popular catchphrase often spoken at presentation ceremonies following competitive events is 'there are no losers here today, everyone is a winner'. The sincerity of the catchphrase is undoubted: indeed the phrase has such a pleasant comforting ring about it that it could well become an integral part of speechmaking folklore.

'No losers here today', however, took on a whole new meaning at the ICI banquet given at Aldwark Manor in December, when the five finalists gathered for the supreme honour of being heralded ICI Premier Greenkeeper of the Year learned that after a selection process which began months earlier with a written paper, followed later with an assessment of their golf course and finished in December with a searching panel interview, a gap of less than a handful of points separated all five contestants. What was even more staggering was that not a single point separated first from second!

The final choice, a hugely popular one, went to a young man who has performed miracles at the exciting new Wisley Golf Club in Surrey. It was the view of the judges that David Whitaker had demonstrated in convincing style the skills necessary in managing a golf course, albeit a brand spanking new one, to near perfection. To be in the shoes of a selection panel chaired by Neil Thomas and comprising Jack McMillan, John Crawford and ICI's Richard Minton, was one this writer did not envy, but it was to their credit that David was chosen and indicative of their wisdom that runner-up Laurence Pithie would later go on record by writing 'I'm sure that their decision in choosing David Whitaker was the right one after taking all aspects into consideration. He has done a marvellous job at Wisley and I wish him every success in the future.' There is, as mere humans are all too well aware, nothing quite like praise from one's peer group, and Laurence's views were heartily endorsed by the other finalists, third placed Richard Barker, Arne van Amerongen and Tim McCreadie.

Returning to the banquet, the congratulatory speech given by the Marketing Manager of ICI Professional Products, Roger Mossop, gave rise to massive optimism for the future of today's professional course managers when he opined that they had much of which to be proud. His comments were music to their ears, as was the splendid news that ICI Professional Products will again be sponsoring the event in a new and even more exciting format for 1992.

For the winner himself the taking of the title ICI Premier Greenkeeper, along with a trip to New Orleans to visit the GCSAA Conference and Trade fair, came at the end of a whirlwind period which began peacefully enough at the Baildon Golf Course in Bradford. It was here that David Whitaker had demonstrated in convincing style the skills necessary in managing a golf course, albeit a brand spanking new one, to near perfection. He has done a marvellous job at Wisley and I wish him every success in the future. There is, as mere humans are all too well aware, nothing quite like praise from one's peer group, and Laurence's views were heartily endorsed by the other finalists, third placed Richard Barker, Arne van Amerongen and Tim McCreadie.

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