To be the BEST

In casting my thoughts back over the past three years of writing about ICI Professional Products - the individual personalities who essentially are the company - and of their association with BIGGA, it occurs to me that a huge debt of gratitude remains outstanding to this most supportive of BIGGA's sponsors. It's the sort of debt that cannot easily, if ever, be repaid, though in truth the team at ICI Professional Products would, I fancy, never look on their commitment in such calculating fashion.

I'm prepared to bet that they gain their greatest satisfaction in seeing the fruits of their fabulous promotions: the National Golf Tournament, involvement in education programmes, and this, the incredible ICI Premier Greenkeeper of the Year award, as reward enough when witnessing the great fillip they have given to previous winning greenkeepers, for to win this coveted award is almost assuredly a huge step forward career-wise, whilst for finalists also it is a decided 'feather in the cap.' Winning has changed several careers for the better, and without again naming names, their successes actually reflect success for BIGGA also, for the kudos gained on every thinking greenkeeper, giving them enormous pride in their profession.

There can be only one winner in December, a proud fellow who will strut forward to receive the ultimate accolade from ICI Professional Products - and the admiration of his peers. That stated, give a silent cheer or three for ICI Professional Products, including Roger Mossop, Dave Siddle, touring 'pro,' Richard Minton, and all the guys who call on you year round. They, above all, have your greenkeeping interests at heart.

DAVID WHITE

TERRY HUNTLEY

Terry Huntley, course manager at Ashford Manor Golf Club in Middlesex, is well versed in the preparation of arena's for top sporting occasions, having worked on turfgrass surfaces that for an extremely Tournament Players Championships, a Ladies British Open Championship, and no less than six PGA Tour School events.

In order to appreciate Terry's greenkeeping pedigree, I must begin by speaking of young Terry's first blossoming as a trainee in 1973. This was at Furwell, Bill Cox's old stamping ground, where Terry spent a grassy indulgence to the year's end, the chance to join the newly opened Foxhills Country Club as an assistant greenkeeper.

Laughlan has 31 year old Laughlan as the third generation of a family well versed in the art of turfgrass management. Laughlan's grandfather was of the old breed, a greenkeeper cum professional in Scotland, where they've always known a 'thing or two' about 'gowf' and about pronouncing the line of razor keen putting surfaces.

Laughlan's father also has always been a greenkeeper, without question one of the West's finest, and to this day he master-minds the majestic linksland of Burnham and Berrow. It may be written with some certainty that Laughlan himself was practically weaned on Dunlop 65's, his first real toy, no doubt cut out of cardboard.

Laughlan is 31, married to Diane, and is the head greenkeeper at Dawlish Warren, Devon, a post he's held for nearly five years. Previously at Hartshorne Country Club as an assistant course manager, earlier still as an assistant to Laughlan senior at Burnham and Berrow for seven years, Graham is 42 years old, married to Helen, and has two teenage offspring (his son Paul is also a budding greenkeeper, having recently taken an apprenticeship at Winterfield). Furthermore, he's a native of East Lothian - and there is no finer pedigreed greenkeeper.

GORDON IRVINE MGC

Gordon Irvine, 27, is the youngest yet to achieve MGC status, and the third Scot to be so honoured. Though still the youngster, Gordon has ten solid years of experience behind him, cut mainly on the links of Turnberry.

Joining Turnberry from school, his first assignment was on a Job Creation Scheme, swiftly followed by his being hired as a trainee greenkeeper, a fortunate decision for both parties.

Fortunate again, Gordon was sent to Langside College, where he studied Greenkeeping Management and won the coveted title 'Young Scottish Greenkeeper of the Year.' It is his proud claim that whilst at Langside he received training from some of the finest course managers in the country, while also working with a team of 'highly skilled greenkeepers.' Seven happy years were spent at Turnberry, preparing the course that plays host to The Open, this acknowledged as a huge bonus in his learning curve.

The time came, however, when Gordon was ready to 'put back into greenkeeping all that I had been trained and educated to achieve.' Gordon landed a job at Sutree's new Mill Ride Golf Club, where in 1989 he came as clerk of works, now its course manager. His fortune continued during construction in being teamed with the trio of Mike Kitch, architect Donald Bew and designer Jim Arthur and constructor Brian Pierson - who encouraged his input and responded favourably to his many ideas.

Opening the project well ahead of schedule, the course has deservedly received huge praise.

GRAHAM WOOD

If the reader really wants to know how fine a head greenkeeper Graham Wood really is, he need do no more than play a round on the East Links of Dunbar, a dual creation credited first to Old Tom Morris, always to Mother Nature... and, for the past 20 years, especially to Graham Wood.

Graham is 42 years old, married to Helen, and has two teenage offspring (his son Paul is also a budding greenkeeper, having recently taken an apprenticeship at Winterfield). Furthermore, he's a native of East Lothian - and there is no finer pedigreed greenkeeper.

Gordon began his career at Dunbar, serving a three year apprenticeship under the late Bill Paton, followed by four further years in charge before he made the move to nearby Monktown Hall, Musselburgh, as their head greenkeeper. Three years later the lure of Dunbar beckoned again and Graham, forever a master of his craft, landed the plum job of managing Dunbar's fabulous course.

The making of a great greenkeeper comes in many guises, and there's no disguising the fact that being an East Lothian greenkeeper counts for a great deal and Graham is justly proud in pointing to Dunbar (and, let it also be known, down also to his own considerable skills in imparting knowledge) as a breeding ground for future managers. The club encourages and is proud of their record, whilst there's many a young greenkeeper who, having cut their teeth at Dunbar, will give full credit to Graham - an Elmswood College graduate - for setting them on the right road to greenkeeping fame.

The countdown has begun to the final of the ICI Premier Greenkeeper of the Year Awards....