to be a winner

this Competition". The answer for 1997 is that you are too late as the Competition is reaching its final stages. However, the leaflets for the 1998 TORO Student of the Year Competition will be available on the BIGGA and TORO stands at BTME in Harrogate, in January, and copies will be sent to colleges. All nominated students, who should be from N/SVQ Level 2/National Certificate/Diploma Courses, must complete application forms, available from BIGGA. Greenkeeping tutors must complete nomination forms for each student. Nominated students must be employed or at a college or be resident in the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland. Application forms normally have to arrive at BIGGA HQ by the end of May, when the entries are sorted into Regions ready for the Regional Finals which take place during late July. The panel of judges, normally comprising a representative from TORO, usually Pete Mansfield, from Lely UK, the Vice Chairman of BIGGA and myself, travel to each BIGGA Region and to the Republic of Ireland to interview each candidate, and compare him/her against the others in that Region. This enables them to select six National Finalists. They may, also select up to two other National Finalists from those candidates who showed exceptional talent but have not been selected in a particular Region. These National Finalists reassemble in October, usually at BIGGA HQ, although the 1997 National Final will take place in Harrogate, where a further set of interviews select the TORO Student of the Year.

Many people, including Student of the Year candidates often ask "What makes a TORO Student of the Year?" There is no easy answer. The interviews are subjective; candidates can react well at Regional Finals and not so well at the National Final and the overall standard of candidate varies from year to year. I suppose an easy answer would be that the judges select the candidate who they think will gain most from winning. The standard of greenkeeping skill and knowledge is defined by the requirement for the candidate to have or be working towards N/SVQ Level 2 or National Certificate/Diploma in Greenkeeping/ Sportsturf Maintenance/Sportsturf Management but the level of skill and knowledge varies between candidates as some have got more practical experience than others, some have been given more responsibility, some have had careers in other industries etc. The judges are, therefore, looking for 'that certain something' that puts a candidate above his/her peers. All candidates should remember that the Regional and National Finals are interviews therefore, as in any other formal interview, they should ensure that they arrive on time, that they are dressed in their "interview clothes", that they are clean and well shaven and that they understand the competition rules and prizes. The composition of the Interview Panel should give an indication of the subjects that will be covered eg Pete Mansfield may well ask questions about machinery, check the candidates understanding of the Competition and attempt to discover if the candidate will be able to cope with the American Study Tour. The BIGGA Vice Chairman, Gordon Child, in 1997, may ask questions on the candidate's golf course eg the number of holes, the number of staff, the type of course, the grasses used on greens, tees and fairways, health and safety, etc. I usually ask questions on BIGGA, education and training, future studies etc. We can all ask questions on general matters such as hobbies, sports, family and other activities outside work.

Finally, we have to make some difficult decisions. All students nominated for the Competition have been selected, from a large number of college students. This not only makes them all winners, but it also makes the final selection even more difficult. The final selection depends on candidates performing well on the day of the Regional Final and then on the day of the National Final. Looking back over the years that this competition has been running, it is gratifying to note that all of the past winners not only coped well with their visits to the USA and proved to be good ambassadors for TORO, BIGGA and the greenkeeping industry but that they have also used their status to move up the greenkeeping career ladder.

If you feel that you could gain from being a winner, that you could cope with flying to the USA, finding your own way to a university, two factories and a major greenkeeping show, all in different States and live with the publicity and status of being the TORO Student of the Year then watch out for the 1998 leaflet and make sure that your college enters for next year's Competition.

LETTERS

No point

I welcome the discussion in Greenkeeper International concerning the CONGU proposal that distance points on tees shall be no less than four yards in front of the rear of the tee. It is a subject that requires airing...

"The Fortiva F-16

Tee 11 it is impossible to obtain the extra length, because the rear of the tee is either..."