



# It's Barry!

In the typical tradition of show-business, an Oscar winner always feigns surprise when his or her name is announced as 'the winner'. We know it's all an act when they step on the stage and that secretly they have come well prepared – with a speech rehearsed and a long list of people to thank...*'without whom I would not be here today'*.

The sponsors of the Toro/PGA European Tour Student Greenkeeper of the Year have their own devilish method of staging a 'cliff-hanger', with a span of some eight hours covering interviews from first to last – in themselves somewhat daunting experiences and not for the faint-hearted. Still on tenterhooks and still sizing up the opposition, the thirteen candidates then are kept dangling until the witching hour, when cocktails are served at 7pm followed by a dinner of some magnitude. Sometimes one senses that candidate appetites are less than hearty – after all, in every student's mind there lurks the wish, the possibility even, *that tonight I will be proclaimed 'the winner'*. Such a thought can turn a healthy man-sized appetite to one the size of a canary!

Come the final crunch, results are dramatically announced in reverse order and – unlike those hardened Oscar nominees – the winner is always genuinely taken by surprise. So it was with Barry Neville, representing Oaklands College, who having learned that Tony Gooch (Cannington) and Paul Brannan (Langside) were to share the second place PGA European Tour prize, was literally dumbstruck on hearing of the singular honour bestowed upon him – The 1992/93 Toro/PGA European Tour Student Greenkeeper of the Year!

In truth, we expected him to say more on receiving his coveted award, but as Barry told me later, when I quizzed him on his first reaction, he was candid enough to



Prize guys: from left, André Woodings, Paul Brannan and Tony Gooch

admit that he didn't think he would win and his reaction was one of total shock! From this the reader may deduce that Barry is a most modest person, quiet and unassuming, though his modesty hides a clever brain and a very positive attitude.

Barry has been a greenkeeper for six years, taking to it like a duck to water after deciding at the age of 18 that his two 'A' levels and 8 'O' levels would be better directed toward a practical career, this following a brief flirtation with full time college life and training in manufacturing engineering. His head full of theory, he took the plunge and asked his then part-time boss, the owner of Whitehill Golf Centre, Keith Smith, for whom he had worked on the course during vacation and week-ends, for a full time job. Whitehill boasts an 18 hole layout and a 25 bay driving range, it is busy, the membership is full and it is positively thriving. Barry saw that his future lay in becoming fully qualified and he completed Phases I & II in Greenkeeping and Sportsturf Management, with plans to take Phase IV in Business Management in the coming year.

Of his future, Barry remain modest and will stay loyal to Whitehill, certainly in the immediate future, though long term one can certainly see him progressing,

perhaps to headship and eventually, who knows, to management of a championship layout – certainly he has the talent.

The year of '93 will see Barry reaping the full benefit of his glittering prize: six weeks at the Winter School for Turf Grass Managers at the University of Massachusetts, a further spell at the Toro Irrigation and Technical Design Complex at Riverside, California, and practical tours of top class golf and country clubs in the USA – ten weeks in all. If he was dumbfounded by his win, he will most certainly be further awed at the magnitude of this unique opportunity. We shall look forward with interest to his report and observations appearing in the pages of Greenkeeper International.

Student greenkeepers are further blessed by the inclusion of two equally stunning prizes, awarded by the PGA European Tour. The two winners, Tony Gooch and Paul Brannan, will gain huge benefit from joining the Tour, working and gaining valuable experience as members of the regular support team that visit and advise at PGA European Tour events. For Tony, who manages single-handed the nine hole Torrington course in Devon, and for Paul, who is an apprentice with Glasgow District Council; working



Sponsors Graham Dale, left, MD of Lely UK, Toro machinery distributors; and Mark Gunter, technical sales manager, Toro Irrigation Europe and Middle East

at Linn Park Golf Club, the experience will be an eye-opener to end all eye-openers, with visits to Portugal for a conference in January, to Gleneagles for the Bell's Scottish Open; and to mainland Europe for one of the premier PGA European Tour events – all these to put the icing on their particular cake. Both are keen golfers and both will find the opportunity to work at the sharp end – where players of international repute will be battling for supremacy – an exhilarating experience that will greatly enhance their careers.

For the first time ever the sponsors made an additional award, to André Woodings (Reaseheath), an all expenses paid trip to the BIGGA Turf Management Exhibition at Harrogate in January. It was the panel's opinion that André had achieved quite remarkable results at his golf club – Rothley Park.

Though there were but three winners, the thinking behind this unique award system is that education counts – we can look now at the career progress of previous winners and see just how important the winning has been in furthering their professional status; and we can give three rousing cheers for our generous sponsors, the foresighted trio: Toro Irrigation Limited, Lely UK Limited and the PGA European Tour.