



HERE COMES THE BRIDIE!

Bridie Redican came out tops in an exciting final, as David White reports

elling regional pre-selection panel consisting of Debbie Savage, BIGGA's education officer, Huw Parry, education chairman, and a senior official from Lely (UK) Limited. Thus to have reached even the final eight this year was, I suspect, as exacting as it had been in previous years to make the final three!

And why Bridie Redican? From the moment I set eyes on the CV of this charming young lady greenkeeper, I knew she would be my 'banker', as near a 'cert' as anyone could be. Lest readers accuse me of showing favouritism, let me assure them that I had no say in the choosing process, keeping well away 'till the deed was signed and sealed.

Bridie Redican, 25, is as Irish as a Leprechaun, with a career pedigree that is tailor-made for such an occasion. If you doubt me, turn back to the wee profile which appeared in October. From a career which began at Horticultural College in County Louth, on completion of her studies Bridie took off for America, immediately falling for the 'golf game' and landing a job as a pro-shop assistant. To recognise so soon the direction in which she wanted

to go was in itself something of a miracle, and to land a job upon her return to Ireland at a Robert Trent Jones course under development, albeit as an assistant gardener rather than greenkeeper, was another feather in her cap.

Sadly the project came to a grinding halt, but not to be outdone, Bridie took off again, on this occasion to Australia, landing a job at Lake Karrynup Country Club, and as a greenkeeper proper to boot! Neil Adams, the head greenkeeper there, secured her a second job, at Burswood in Perth, and from there, having gained still more valuable experience, she returned again to the Emerald Isle.

Did I mention the luck of the Irish? Well for a while it deserted our heroine, but after six months of searching Bridie landed a plum job, at the Jack Nicklaus designed Mount Juliet no less, first as an equipment operator, now an assistant greenkeeper, working under the wonderful guidance of Aidan O'Hara, himself something of a wizard with turfgrass.

Her career continues apace, for this year she's been part of the team preparing Mount Juliet for the Carrolls Irish Open, even though

Call it the luck of the Irish, a case of kissing the Blarney Stone if you like, but to this seasoned observer at least, there was never any doubt that Bridie Redican would come out on top in the latest – and most exciting by a mile – Toro/PGA European Tour Student Greenkeeper of the Year award ceremonies.

Why exciting? Well, for the first time ever the eight (in previous years 13) finalists had been selected (from an original field of 31) not only by their respective college lecturers, but also by subjecting themselves further to a gru-

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Pictured left: Bridie with Toro Irrigation's Mark Gunter, left and Lely's Graham Dale; pictured right, the runners-up: Jonathon Oldknow and, far right, Richard Andrews



charm at the University of Massachusetts, where she'll be spending six weeks as Toro's honoured guest.

The Toro/PGA European Tour runners-up, mere males, nonetheless are worthy winners beyond doubt. Richard Andrews and Jonathon Oldknow, both 26, are living proof that it is possible to make a successful career change. Richard, for example, started in hotel management,

moved into retail sales, and though he told me he didn't wake up one morning announcing 'I want to be a golf course manager,' he did on many occasions say to himself, 'I don't want to be a retailer'. He is a grand golfer and once his decision, a radical one, had been made, he set about making it work, attending Oaklands College, gaining valuable work experience at Highgate GC, while once his first course of study was complete, also landing a job at Highgate GC under Derek Mason. Clearly, they knew a good man when they saw him!

For Jonathon also it was a case of knowing what he didn't want to do, less of knowing that greenkeeping would be the ultimate answer. He's been fortunate, having gained invaluable knowledge with Warwick Parks and Leisure of the many turfgrass situations akin to golf, yet essentially different, like bowling, tennis and cricket. Now he's an assistant greenkeeper at Coventry Hearsall, three years down the road to his next goal, that of managing a course of his own. Both Richard and Jonathon were at pains to impress upon me that they are in no hurry – both believing that there is nothing to substitute hard experience and time served, though both are sure that winning the award, two weeks with the PGA European Tour, will do their careers no harm at all. Like Bridie, they were fulsome in praise for their respective tutors.

Every finalist has it within him or her to be a star of tomorrow, with their colleges – and sponsors Toro Irrigation Limited, Lely (UK) Limited and the PGA European Tour – as mentors for a bountiful future. I take my hat off to them all.

the course itself is a mere stripling at just two years old, and she's been busying herself with intensive turfgrass studies at the Botanic Garden College, Dublin, taking Greenkeeping and Sports Turf Management. Of the future, there can be no doubt that this eminently talented young greenkeeper will become a role model for others of the fair sex who fancy their chances in a hitherto male-dominated profession – and you may be sure that she will make it to the very top of her profession, whilst wowing them all with her own brand of Irish



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