

It could be YOU!

Success in the Miracle Professional Premier Greenkeeper of the Year competition carries much prestige and the face of the 1996 winner could be the one which eyes you up the shaving mirror every morning.

One of the biggest boosts any greenkeeper could have to his career must be to win the Miracle Professional Premier Greenkeeper of the Year Award – even reaching the final bring its rewards and smartens up the CV.

The competition, which this year sets out to identify the seventh champion greenkeeper, has a record to make Opportunity Knocks, New Faces or Stars in their Eyes envious when it comes to identifying talent.

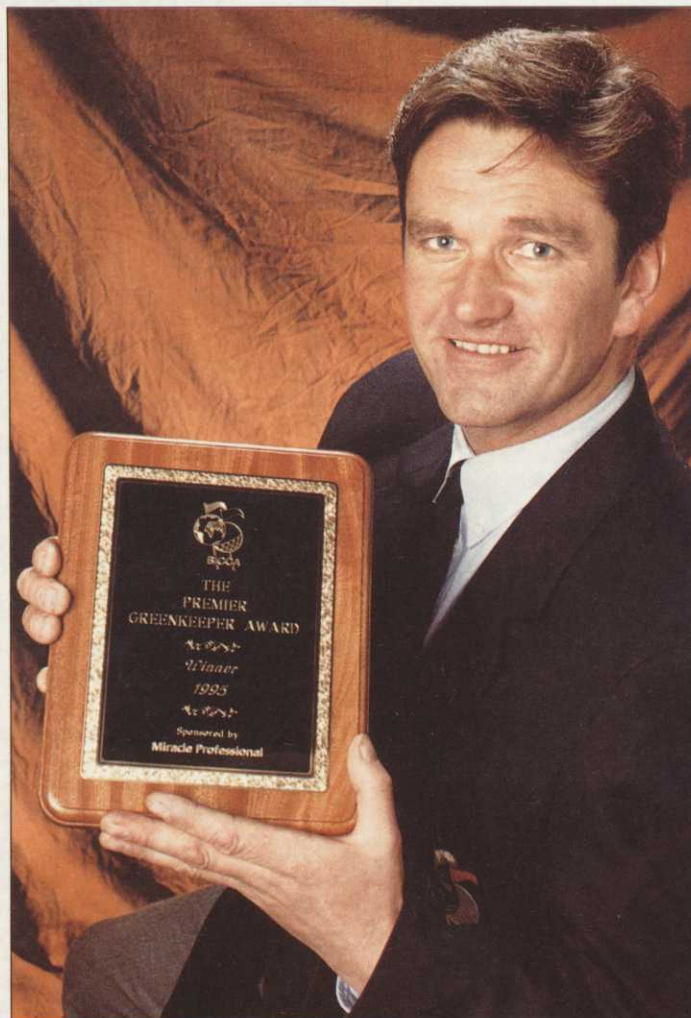
Anthony Davies, David Whitaker and Gordon Irvine are each also Master Greenkeepers while the other winners, Ian Harrison, David Walden and holder Mike Goodhind are all Champions of the highest possible calibre and a credit to the industry.

"I have thoroughly enjoyed working on the competition," said Richard Minton, of Miracle Professional and the man who has spent many hours and days travelling to golf courses and judging the eventual winner.

Last year's gruelling schedule gives a flavour of the effort and commitment Richard and Pat Murphy, a member of BIGGA's Board of Management, put into assisting the eventual identification of the winner.

"I met Pat at Heathrow at 8 am and we drove an hour and a half to Brockenhurst Manor GC. After the course visit we drove to Chesfield Downs GC and completed the second visit. We stayed over night in Enfield and the next morning visited Dyrham Park GC. After lunch we drove to Shipley, Pat's home as he had to be home for the evening.

"The next morning we were up at 5am to fly from Leeds to Glasgow, picked up a hire car and drove to Troon. After the course visit we drove back to the airport and flew to Manchester – getting into the hotel about 7.30. The next morning it was up early again to visit the final course the



Current titleholder Mike Goodhind

Tytherington Club in Macclesfield. Ironically it was the final course which produced the winner," said Richard.

"In all we had driven over 1,000 miles, taken two flights in the space of three days and visited five golf course – each excellent in their own, different way."

Once the course visits have been completed the second phase of the final takes place at Aldwark Manor where each contender is interviewed by a panel including Richard and Pat as well as Roger Mossop, Business Manager of Miracle Professional and Neil Thomas, Executive Director of BIGGA.

"Around 70% of the total mark is weighted to the golf course, the sheds, record keeping and how the budget is handled etc as it is

important that the Miracle Professional Premier Greenkeeper of the Year's course reflects the standards we are seeking. People will visit the course expecting to meet the highest possible standards.

"However, the interview stage is also important but we try to ask open ended questions so the

finalists can say as much or as little as they want." Anyone can nominate a candidate for the title, from assistants to

Chairmen of Green. You can even nominate yourself! Once the entries are in each region selects three representatives before holding a regional final during which the golf course will be visited by an established BIGGA greenkeeper and a previous finalist, who select each region's national finalist.

Miracle Professional PREMIER GREENKEEPER OF THE YEAR

"In most years two or three of the finalists have stood out as potential winners but last year the winner could have been any one of the five finalists. That shows the general improvement in standards since we launched the award," he explained.

There is often a wide variety and type of golf courses represented in the final and Richard uses a simple thought process to judge the finalists.

"Mentally I put each of the guys into the others' job and imagine how they would cope. That way you can say 'well he has a £100,000 plus a year budget but could he cope with a budget of less than £20,000 a year' and conversely 'could the guy who does a great job on a small budget cope with the pressure of having £100,000 plus year budget to handle'."

Also greenkeepers shouldn't think that the course should be presented to Captain's Day standard for the course visit.

"I go with well respected greenkeepers who know that disease can strike at any time. For example what we might mark down for is if nothing was being done about it or there was no chemical to rectify the situation in the sheds," said Richard.

"We certainly wouldn't want someone to hold back his hollow tining until after our visit, because that would be very wrong."

Another misnomer is that Miracle Professional customers would receive preferential treatment throughout the competition.

"I have visited 25 finalists and in that time been surprised to see so many different manufacturers' fertiliser in the sheds. Seeing more of our product during our visits would certainly be gratifying," he added.

"It is also refreshing to see how much the finalists enjoy the event. Although they all want to win they are genuinely pleased for a colleague if they don't lift the big prize. It's all very friendly and after the dinner we usually all go Ten Pin Bowling. It's great fun."

Next month we will look back at how winning the Miracle Professional Premier Greenkeeper of the Year Award has affected the career of previous winners.