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## Education Update

BY KEN RICHARDSON

I had hoped to have been able to give full details of the Finalists for this year's TORO Student of the Year Competition in this article. Unfortunately, this edition of *Greenkeeper International* went to press before we had chance to complete the judging. However, the judges, Peter Mansfield, from TORO (Lely), Gordon Child, Vice Chairman of BIGGA and myself, thought that it would be useful to describe the process of selecting the National Finalists and to give some idea of what we, the judges look for.

The organisation of each year's competition begins as soon as the previous year's National Final has taken place, when representatives from TORO, Lely UK and BIGGA meet to discuss the current year's competition, to discuss any changes that are needed and fix the dates of Regional and National Finals of the next year's competition. The next step is the production of the Competition Leaflet, which contains the Competition Rules, a list of prizes, and the dates when entries have to be submitted. The prizes for this year's competition were slightly different to previous years as the

# How

two runners-up now win a trip to the GCSAA show and conference, which will be held in Anaheim, California, in February 1998. The Winner, who becomes the TORO Student of the Year wins the TORO Scholarship, which includes; a six week turf management study course at the University of Massachusetts, visits to the TORO Company Headquarters in Minneapolis, the TORO Irrigation Division in Riverside California and, if time permits, a visit to the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America Conference and Show where he/she will join the two runners-up and his/her tutor. There is also the additional benefit of being named the TORO Student of the Year which is a major achievement to put on anyone's CV. I remember reading that if Margaret Thatcher were ever to look for another job then all she need write on her CV under achievements was Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. TORO Student of the Year is not quite in that league but in the Greenkeeping Industry it would certainly open many doors.

By this time any student reading this article must be asking "How do I enter

## Hard work, but enjoyable

On July 27 I made my way to Edinburgh by train where I was joined by Peter Mansfield, the ever smiling General Manager of Toro Products, and BIGGA Education Officer Ken Richardson. Our mission was to interview all Toro Student of the Year nominations and pick the regional winners to go forward to the final at Aldwark in October.

We spent all day Monday at the Royal Terrace Hotel meeting the Scottish entrants, leaving late afternoon for the next day's interviews in Bradford. The journey was to prove a forerunner for the week ahead. Those of you who have been in Ken's company for long will know that he is an ex RAF man with many stories to tell, and as we sped through the scenic countryside of Scotland and Northern England, there seemed to be a never ending list of old RAF depots or places Ken had visited. Talking about them only served to refuel his tank and with the aid of a Maurice Chevalier lozenger to sooth the working parts, he was able to complete the trip with his voice intact.

Down to the serious job of judging. The standard varied in all four venues but all had their highs. After Bradford, where we met the Northern nominees, we travelled south to Hemel Hempstead for the South

East, then on to Cheltenham for a long day with the South West followed by the Midlands.

For the students to win nominations is an achievement in itself, but to reach the final and maybe to go on to win this prestigious award must give their career prospects a big lift. So it was disappointing to see some dressed more appropriate to a day digging ditches than an interview which could play a major part in their chosen career. I may be old fashioned but first impressions and presentation go a long way.

The four days were hard and tiring but very interesting with still one to go in Dublin. I am sure all the winners will make a very good close final at Aldwark. I must on behalf of all students of greenkeeping and BIGGA, thank Toro for their generous support to this competition. The winner will have the wonderful opportunity of receiving the Toro scholarship to the USA, where he or she will go to Massachusetts University for six weeks and visit the Toro factories and the GCSAA Conference at Anaheim, California. The two runners-up will win a visit to the Conference and Show in Anaheim. For the ones who don't make it, the whole experience will I am sure enhance their greenkeeping career.

Gordon Child

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# 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 has were not selected in a particular region. These National Finalist 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 you 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 not less than four yards in front of the rear of the tee. It is a subject that requires airing.

My own club Wetherby, is bounded by a river with a disused railway embankment running through the centre of the course. If this proposal is implemented it will create serious cost problems if we attempt to conform and if we fail it will lead to a reduction in the SSS.

Similar to many clubs without any desire to produce a "Championship" course" the Committee has already maximised the available land to produce a par 71 course of 6,235 yards with a SSS of 70. It is a good test of golf where position is more important than length off the tee.

A survey of the tees has revealed that currently only two will conform to the four yard ruling, on five holes major tee reconstruction will be required and on the other

11 it is impossible to obtain the extra length, because the rear of the tee is either backing on to the river, a flood bank, ditches or neighbouring properties. At best the measured course will be reduced by 44 yards with the result that the standard scratch has to be revised to 69, despite the fact that at considerable expense, a further 28 yards is added to the playing length.

We hold just one members' 36 hole Championship event a year, of whom perhaps ten could be said to be in contention. There may be a professional event as well, but they play their events against par not the SSS, so what is the point of adding two extra yards on 18 tees for the average club? Although one can appreciate the logic of CONGU in respect of Championship courses who stage county and national tournaments, this ruling will do no more than increase handicaps for average club golfers as well as adding extra costs for tee construction, sign alterations and re-printing score cards and yardage charts.

**John Lelean, Chairman, Development Committee, Wetherby GC**

### Courtesy call

For many years now, BIGGA has campaigned relentlessly to increase the profile and professional standing of Greenkeeping and its Association.

However, after recently applying for numerous Head Greenkeeper vacancies advertised in *Greenkeeper International*, and the unprofessional lack of response or even the common courtesy of acknowledgement, I wonder if the message has ever gotten through.

Having discussed this issue with my colleagues, I was amazed to hear of similar cases and now believe that this is a frequently occurring problem and one which should be addressed.

I understand that BIGGA cannot be held responsible for such unprofessional behaviour, but believe that BIGGA, when accepting advertisements from golf clubs, should stress the importance of proper protocol and the need for basic courtesy.

**Name and address supplied**

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Cairndhu Golf Club, set in rolling hills on the coast of Northern Ireland has had its problems with thatch, poa and waterlogging. Now though, it's mainly wear and tear and the odd disease that head greenkeeper Vincent Magill has to worry about.

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"We hollow-tined, top-dressed and seeded three greens with a bent and creeping red fescue Fortiva mixture," he says.

"The Fortiva started to strike a lot quicker than any other seed I have used - particularly around the edges of the greens where wear was worst. After two weeks you could clearly see the newly established grasses.

"It also helped obtain a good take, particularly of the bents, where Anthracnose had completely wiped out patches of meadow-grass.

"I'm now going to start to use it on our tees as a divot mix, where I would expect even better results," he says.

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