

14 greenkeepers will discover their fate when they face their respective judges in the finals of the 1998 Toros - the Toro Excellence in Greenkeeping Award and the Toro Student of the Year Award

Let the battle commence



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The cream of the country's greenkeepers and students converge on North Yorkshire this month for the 1998 finals of the Toro Award for Excellence in Greenkeeping and the Toro Student of the Year Award.

The excitement will be heightened by the fact that it will be the first event to be staged in the new BIGGA Headquarters which will have been opened officially by HRH Duke of York only the week before.

Last year was the first that saw the two competitions join together and it made for a dramatic occasion which saw Ian McMillan, of Hankley Common GC, and Steven Nixon, of Wortley GC and Askham Bryan College, clinching the top awards.

With trips to the States, and in the case of the Excellence Award, a valuable Toro triple machine, at stake it is sure to be a tense occasion but the camaraderie which is engendered by the finalists over both competitions is

strong enough to last many a year.

In reaching the finals, the 14 who travel to BIGGA Headquarters, have done exceptionally well.

In the case of the students each is a top student at their own college and each has qualified at one of the regional finals judged by Ken Richardson, BIGGA's Education and Training Manager, a representative from Toro and Pat Murphy, Past BIGGA Chairman and Chairman of the Education Sub-Committee.

For the Excellence Award finalists they have come through a rigorous process beginning at Section level and then from a visit from a respected senior greenkeeper.

The six have also been visited by Walter Woods, BIGGA First Chairman, to take a look at their golf courses, maintenance facilities and working practices. Walter's report on these visits forms a key part of the final judging.



Excellence in Greenkeeping finalists



Name: Richard Whyman
Age: 39
Golf Club: Bude & North Cornwall Golf Club

Richard has been at Bude and North Cornwall as Head Greenkeeper for 14 years. He has been Section Administrator of the Devon and Cornwall Section since 1989 and was South West and South Wales Regional Chairman from '95 to '97. He has been married for 17 years and lists his hobbies as golf which he plays to a handicap of 9, football where he supports and watches Leeds United and enjoys most sports.



Name: Allan McDougall
Age: 40
Golf Club: Royal Mid Surrey Golf Club

Allan was born on the Isle of Bute and comes from greenkeeping stock - his father was Head Greenkeeper at Hilton Park in Glasgow and Allan worked under him for a time. He has been at Royal Mid Surrey in Richmond since '95 managing both courses. Married with two children he is a former 1 handicapper although he now plays off 10 and he plays football in what he describes as a geriatric league. He is also a keen follower of speedway and National Hunt racing.



Name: John Quinn
Age: 33
Golf Club: Elmwood College Golf Club

John has been involved in the development of the new Elmwood College course since before it opened as his remit was to oversee the planning, construction, grow-in and development of the Cupar course. He is currently studying towards a BSc with the Open University and has recently passed Stage 2 towards the Master Greenkeeper Certificate.



Name: John Coleman
Age: 27
Golf Club: Abbeydale Golf Club

John was appointed head man at the Sheffield club at the age of 22 and since then, as well as on-course work, has been responsible for the development of a new maintenance facility at the course and conceived and designed a new 4mm tine which in partnership with a major company, has seen into production. He is a former finalist in the Toro Student of the Year Award.



Name: Andy Campbell
Age: 38
Golf Club: Carden Park Hotel Golf Resort and Spa

Andy, who at BTME '98, was presented with his Master Greenkeeper blazer and plaque is responsible for the maintenance of 45 golf holes including the newly opened Nicklaus-designed course and the general maintenance of the 750 acre estate which includes four acres of formal gardens, a vineyard and a herd of red deer. He has been at Carden Park, just outside Chester, since '92, and manages a staff of 36 including six modern apprentices.



Name: Peter Wisbey
Age: 51
Golf Club: National Golf Centre, Woodhall Spa.

Peter was appointed Courses Manager at the National Golf Centre in 1996 and has overseen the on-going maintenance programme on the world-famous Hotchkin course as well as the successful growing in of the new Bracken course opened earlier this year. Peter worked initially at North Foreland in Kent before moving to Portugal where he worked on San Lorenzo, Penina and Pinheiros Altos finally becoming Technical Director of the original Quinta do Lago courses.

Student Greenkeeper of the Year finalists



Name: Nicholas Webber
Age: 35
College: Greenmount
Golf Club: Portstewart GC

Nicholas is a former professional golfer whose feats include playing all four rounds in the European Open at Sunningdale and winning the Regional Qualifying Round at Camberley Heath for the 1984 Open at St Andrews. He twice just failed to win his Tour card and so reapplied for his amateur status. He was a successful car salesman before deciding to move into greenkeeping and is currently studying for his Level 2 as well as doing a Distance Learning package for an HNC from Elmwood. He has qualified to represent Northern Ireland in the Hayter International Cup in Atlanta later this month and his handicap is currently 5.



Name: Steven Myres
Age: 34
College: Elmwood
Golf Club: Glenisla Golf Course

Steven combines his role as greenkeeper at Glenisla with that of Head of Ski Patrol in the area which is one of Scotland's most popular ski resorts. The course was built by the Glenshee Chairlift Company in 1994 to offer a summer sport and Steven, who has been employed by the company for 12 years, was involved in its construction. He is a 9 handicap golfer and is also a keen squash player and curler as well as a skier.



Name: Gary Gruber
Age: 19
College: Elmwood
Golf Club: Royal Dornoch Golf Club

Gary has just completed his SVQ Level II and is soon to start his HNC. He is a 4 handicap golfer and a former Junior County Champion and Club Champion at Strathpeffer Spa GC. His love of golf inspired him towards a career in greenkeeping and he has been at Royal Dornoch for two and a half years. He would like to move to an inland course at some stage to add to his greenkeeping knowledge.



Name: Paul Shelley
Age: 29
College: Oaklands
Golf Club: Chesfield Downs Golf Club

Paul arrived in greenkeeping following a career change - he had previously worked in the food retail industry. He enrolled in a National Certificate in Greenkeeping and Sports Turf Management course and then did voluntary work at Chesfield Downs to gain practical experience. A 7 handicap golfer and member of Stevenage GC, Paul's other interests include football, skiing and travelling.



Name: Sally Doherty
Age: 24
College: Warwickshire College
Golf Club: The Belfry

Sally is First Assistant on the the world famous Brabazon Course which is currently being prepared to host the 2001 Ryder Cup. She has nearly completed her NVQ Level 2. Her interests include yoga and reading while she has just started to have golf lessons. She is also studying sign language.



Name: Richard Aitken
Age: 49
College: Myerscough
Golf Club: Royal Lytham St Annes Golf Club

Richard has been an assistant at the famous Open venue for 12 years, working under Jimmy MacDonald, and made the decision to through himself into education late in life. He is currently studying for his NVQ Level III. He has a handicap of 12 and is also a keen photographer.



Name: Mark Allen
Age: 24
College: Warwickshire College
Golf Club: Marriott Forest of Arden - now Fulford Heath

Mark arrived at greenkeeping from the world of crown green bowling (he was part of the '97 British Team Championship winning team) when he took on the role of greenkeeper at a green in the Midlands on a part-time basis - and is still there. Having initially begun studying for a degree in psychology he changed course to turf management and joined the Forest of Arden. He has since worked on some of the top European Tour events held at the course.



Name: Geoff Mills
Age: 41
College: Cannington College
Golf Club: Woodbury Park G&CC

Geoff has been the head man at the Nigel Mansell-owned Woodbury Park for eight years and is responsible for the 27 holes as well as the extensive estate lands. He has completed his NVQ Level 3 and is looking forward to moving on to Level 4. He was awarded the Best Student prize at Cannington College. His interests include golf where he has been a 6 handicapper - currently 13 - horses, dog training and rugby - he is an ex-Captain of Exmouth Rugby Club. He is also a former National Board of Manager Member of BIGGA