



Toro Student of the Year 2005 Preview

GI gets up close and personal with the eight Finalists competing for the 2005 Award.

While thousands of fortunate families escape Britain for sunnier shores to rest, relax and top up that fading sun bed tan, for the members of BIGGA there is no such relief, as June through to September remains the busiest time of the golfing year. Inspired by The Open and the US PGA Championship, playing demand from cultured golfer to wannabe Woods increases spectacularly over the summer period, putting high pressure on greenkeepers' time. These months also witness numerous high profile Section, Regional and National BIGGA events and 25 student greenkeepers took time out of their hectic schedules to attend the Regional Finals of the Toro Student of the Year Award 2005.

BIGGA's Education and Training Manager, Ken Richardson, racked up the miles once again as he travelled the country to whittle down the 25 Regional Finalist to eight National Contenders. During his quest, Ken was joined by Iain McLeod, Andy Campbell, Jeff Mills and Gavin Robson, from the BIGGA Board of Management, and Trevor Chard and Jeff Anguige, from Toro. Combined, these men made the difficult decisions of which eight will be coming to BIGGA HOUSE on September 26 for the Grand Final.

The first day of the judging was held on July 4, which coincided with the planned G8 protest in Edinburgh. Despite the events of the day, all ran efficiently and all five nominees managed to get to their interviews. As a result, representing Scotland at BIGGA HQ will be Darren Leith and Tommy McFadden.



Darren, 27, is single and works at Haga Golf Park in Oslo, Norway, as an Assistant under the guidance of Head Greenkeeper Stefan Toft. Darren is now in his second season at the Club, previously having worked on the Duke's Course and The Old Course, at St Andrews, and Garmouth and Kingston Golf Club.

The Garmouth lad holds a NC and HNC qualification in Accounting, but after deciding this particular career path was not for him entered Elmwood

College in 2003 to achieve his NC in Greenkeeping. Darren returned to the College in 2004 to complete a HNC in Golf Course Management, while also winning the Best Practical Greenkeeping Student of the Year Award at the institute. He will back once again in October to tackle a HND in Golf Course Management.

"I am very keen to learn and very keen to pass on any information to others. I am at the beginning of a long learning curve and am confident I will achieve my goals and intend to end up improving greenkeeping in a less developed country," said Darren.

Tommy McFadden is also from the Elmwood stable. Employed as an Assistant on the New Course at St Andrews, the 22 year old is studying Amenity Horticulture at HND level. He started his greenkeeping career at Ballycastle Golf Club under the watchful eye of Head man Godfrey Clarke, father of Ryder Cup player Darren.

In his short career Tommy has made his mark, being honoured with a R&A Bursary Award to help with his studies. The sport's Governing Body handed out just six of these Awards, with four of the recipients working under the title of Head Greenkeeper or Course Manager. Tommy has just experienced working on his first Open Championship, where Tiger Woods again reigned supreme.

"There's not many people who count themselves lucky to be getting up at 4.30am to go out to work, but then again there is not many people who get the opportunity to work at the Home of Golf and on an Open Championship," remarked the youngster.

Moving down to the North Region, where the interviews were held at Manchester Airport. Five candidates were in competition here and it was Emmet Reilly and David Newton who rose above the rest to qualify for the Final.



21 year old Emmet is an Assistant at The K Club, Ireland, and has been working there since April 2005, in preparation for the 2006 Ryder Cup. The third Finalist to be taught at Elmwood College, Emmet has just completed a NHC in Golf Course Management. He also has the NCVA Level 3 in Greenkeeping and both the NPTC and Chainsaw Certificates under his belt. Despite finishing his course, it is no means the last time Emmet will enter the classroom.

"Looking to the future, I think education is a fundamental part of greenkeeping in order to be associated with the best. Demands from the golfer are higher than in previous times, as they expect golf courses to be in pristine condition all year round. Higher education becomes paramount in this," stated Emmet, who plans to return to college to take on a HND and possibly a Degree in Sportsturf Management in the future.





David Newton, 47, is the oldest of the 2005 set of Finalists. Married for 16 years, he is First Assistant at Arrowe Park Golf Club, Birkenhead. Having only discovered the profession some 12 years ago, David has gained his PA1 and PA6 along with his NVQ Level 2 at Reaseheath College, and is now studying for his NVQ Level 3. Said David: "As a mature student I found it a pleasure to study with enthusiastic staff and students and to swap new ideas with like minded individuals. I

found the whole experience very gratifying."

As well as golf, David enjoys cycling and fishing and is keen to progress his career up to Head Greenkeeper status. His dream is to work on a links course.

Next up was the Midlands' leg, where Alastair Ogilvie and James Lindsay shone through as the two candidates worthy of a visit to BIGGA HOUSE.

Alastair, who is a retained Fireman, attends The College of West Anglia, where he is taking his NVQ Level 2. Since 2002 he has been an Assistant at the Gog Magog Golf Club, under the tuition of current BIGGA National Chairman Kerran Daly. Alastair is part of a big greenkeeping family, with three of his relatives within the profession, and has big plans for his future. Short term goals include NVQ Level 3 in Amenity Horticulture in Sportsturf and finishing his spraying certificates, while in the long term an NVQ Level 4 and an MSC in Sports Surface Technology are in the pipe line.

"My NVQ Level 2 has really supported my thoughts on greenkeeping. It has given me the background to the career and I cannot wait to get stuck into the Level 3," said an excited Alastair, who was part of the BIGGA Open Support Team at St Andrews this year.

Deputy Head Greenkeeper at The Bedfordshire Golf Club, James Lindsay began his greenkeeping career at the tender age of 14, working at Ringdufferin Golf Club, Northern Ireland, during school holidays. James, now 27, is presently studying at Merrist Wood College, tackling a NVQ Level 3 in Sportsturf and he has a long history of education.



James has gained a National Certificate in Amenity Horticulture at Distinction Level, as well as a National Diploma in Turf Science at Myerscough College. After earning the latter qualification he was awarded a place on the Ohio State University Intern Programme, employed at the Southward Ho Country Club on Long Island, New York.

"On completing my Level 3 and gaining the appropriate experience, I would like to become a Course

Manager and eventually host a major event. I would also like to continue studying and improving my knowledge by enrolling on a degree course, as the greenkeeping profession is continually moving forward and becoming more professional," commented the well travelled Deputy.

The venue for the last stage of the Regional Finals was Kettering. Here Deputy Head Greenkeepers Alan Pierce and Daniel Spencer saw off stiff competition to make it into the National Final.



Alan, 24, works at Ham Manor Golf Club under Head man Jon Budd, after leaving his position of Assistant at Royal Eastbourne GC recently. A qualified Mechanic, Alan has worked as an On Call Service Technician at John Shaw Machinery, he also has NVQ Level 2 in Amenity Horticulture and NVQ Level 3 Sportsturf Management on his CV. He is in the final stages of his NVQ Level 3 in Amenity Horticulture at Plumpton College at the moment.

"My new position at Ham Manor is something I have aspired to for a long time, as the course is highly regarded in the local area. As for my future aspirations I would like to make the best of this opportunity and support my Course Manager. I would also like to do either NVQ Level 4 or a HND as the scientific side of turf care is something that interests me," stated Alan, whose hobbies are slightly on the wild side, as he enjoys motorcycling, scuba diving and playing the guitar in his limited spare time.

Daniel Spencer can be found at Oaklands Collage working towards his NVQ Level 3 after completing his NVQ Level 2, PA1, PA2 and PA6 in previous years. Daniel, 24, got into the world of greenkeeping at 15, gaining two weeks' experience at Brocket Hall Golf Club under John Wells. He is now the new Deputy Course Manager at Welwyn Garden City Golf Club, in Hertfordshire, working with Course Manager Brett Cox. He has been at the club since April 1997, starting out as a trainee and has qualified as a mechanic - a responsibility of his new role will be to train up the next mechanic at the club.



"At the age of 24 I believe that to become a Deputy Course Manager of one of the best maintained golf clubs in Hertfordshire is already quite an achievement. Within the next five years I would like to have become a Course Manager," said Daniel confidently.

So there you have the eight Toro Student of the Year 2005 Finalists. All will visit BIGGA HOUSE in a late week in September and compete for the Grand Final prize of the Toro Scholarship. This involves an eight week trip to the USA, where for six weeks the University of Massachusetts will be home, as the lucky winner completes a residential Turf Management Course. The trip also includes visits to the Toro Headquarters in Minneapolis and to the GCSAA Golf Industry Show, in New Orleans, in February 2006.

The final itself will entail a further interview and the completion of a survey of the Aldwark Manor Golf Course. This will include evaluating nine holes of the York based course, where BIGGA HQ is situated.

"The standard of entrant to the Toro Student of the Year competition improves year on year. In turn this makes the judge's job even harder, and we have all had to make tough decisions to get the eight National Finalists. All of those reaching the Regional Finals have gone through a selection process when 3000 students has been cut down to 25. All should be very proud of themselves, but unfortunately, we can pick only eight finalists," commented Ken Richardson after returning from his week long interviewing around the UK.