



Regional Finalists: back row, left to right: Graham Brumpton, Stephen Eager, Kenneth Gilroy, Steven Stroomer and Barrie Lewis. Front row, left to right: James Billington, Mike Emptage and Abigail Crosswood



# They Think It's All Over... It Is Now!

The competition for this year's Toro Student of the Year has been fierce, as the level of entrants continually improves. Melissa Toombs witnessed a tense final at BIGGA HOUSE.

Being a student is fun. No, not because you're expected to drink copious amounts of alcohol and stay up till the early hours of the morning - although that is a lot of fun! - but because you're continually learning and having to push yourself to achieve the qualification you've longed for that, in time, will form the basis of your career.

No-one, ideally, wants to still be working on their computer at 3am, realising the essay they're writing isn't turning out quite as they'd expected, and having to resign themselves to the fact that this isn't their best assignment. 'I just didn't have time,' springs to mind as the most widely used excuse when a student is confronted with their 'less than best' work. Everyone needs a kick up the bum now and again, to be given encouragement and pointed in the right direction but, each student is responsible for their own work and time management. If you really want the qualification, you find the time and put the effort in. This year's Toro Student of the Year Regional Finalists, are a prime example of what dedication and hard work can achieve.

Eight anxious finalists visited BIGGA HOUSE on September 17 and 18, were quizzed and probed by our four judges, BIGGA Chief Executive, John Pemberton, Iain McLeod, Chairman of BIGGA's Education Committee; and Peter Mansfield and Bruce Jamieson, representing Toro, and were given the task of completing a survey of Aldwark Manor GC (evaluating nine of the holes).

After a gruelling wait, finalists: Mike Emptage, Barrie Lewis, Abigail Crosswood, Graham Brumpton, James Billington, Steven Stroomer, Stephen Eager and Kenneth Gilroy, were put out of their misery as Education and Training Manager, Ken Richardson, announced the winners.

Runners-up were Abigail Crosswood (18), from Newquay, Cornwall, and James Billington (23), from Northwich, Cheshire.

Abigail works as an Assistant Greenkeeper at Newquay GC, has completed her NVQ Level 2 at Duchy College Training Agency and has been accepted to study a foundation degree in Sports Turf Science, online. Abi was also part of the BIGGA Open Support Team at Hoylake this year.

James is Assistant Greenkeeper at Portal Premier Golf and Country Club, Tarporley, Cheshire, and has just finished his NVQ Level 3 at Reaseheath College. James and Abigail both win a trip to Harrogate Week 2007, where they will be invited to attend the Continue to Learn seminars and workshops as well as the evening banquet.

Overall winner and Toro Student of the Year for 2006 was Mike Emptage (25), from Ramsgate, Kent.

Mike, who entered the competition while working at St Augustine's GC, Ramsgate, Kent, has just finished his NVQ Level 2 at Hadlow College. Mike's amazing prize involves an eight-week trip to the USA, where, for six weeks, the University of Massachusetts will be home, as he completes a residential turf management study course. The trip also includes visits to the Toro Headquarters in Minneapolis, the Toro Irrigation Division and to the GCSAA Golf Industry Show in Anaheim, in February 2007.