



# Toro Student of the Year 2006 Preview

We've whittled them down to eight - time to get up close and personal with this year's finalists.

Summer. A time to relax, visit the beach, top up your tan. Well, not if your chosen profession is greenkeeping, June through to September remains the busiest time of the golfing year. The pressure is piled onto BIGGA members, as wannabe Woods and enthusiastic Els, come out of hibernation. As well as The Open and the US PGA Championship, summer months see numerous high profile Section, Regional and National BIGGA events. Well earned "time outs" were taken by 35 student greenkeepers, as they attended the Regional Finals of the Toro Student of the Year Award 2006.

Travelling the width and breadth of the country, was BIGGA's Education and Training Manager, Ken Richardson, in search of this year's eight National Contenders. Joined by Iain McLeod, Warren Bevan, Lee Strutt MG and Gavin Robson, from the BIGGA Board of Management, as well as Trevor Chard, John Pike and Peter Mansfield from Toro, Ken and the rest of the judges, through much discussion and many difficult decisions, decided on the final eight to come to BIGGA HOUSE on September 17 and 18 for the Grand Final.



**Name:** Mike Emptage  
**Age:** 25  
**Address:** Ramsgate, Kent  
**Golf Club:** St Augustines

Mike has been Assistant Greenkeeper at St Augustines GC, Ramsgate, for two years, where Gary Kennington is Course Manager.

A keen golfer and water sports enthusiast, Mike is also an auxiliary coastguard in Margate. Prior to his current position, Mike worked for the local council for three years, mowing grass. Currently studying for his NVQ Level 2 at Hadlow College, Mike said: "I wish to gain my NVQ qualifications and greenkeeping knowledge, to eventually become a Head Greenkeeper."



**Name:** Barrie Lewis  
**Age:** 17  
**Address:** Bridgend, West Lothian  
**Golf Club:** Ratho Park

Barrie is Assistant Greenkeeper at Ratho Park GC, Mid Lothian, Edinburgh, working under the watchful eye of Head Greenkeeper, Tom Murray. Prior to this Barrie worked at Bridgend and District GC, West Lothian for 10 months and previously Uphall GC, also for 10 months.

Studying for an NVQ Level 2 at Oatridge College, Barrie's hobbies include football and keeping fit. A keen golfer, his greatest achievements have been reaching the Scotland under 15s squad and winning four Junior Championships at Bridgend and District GC.

"My aspiration in life is to become a professional golfer, however, if this doesn't happen I want to build a successful career for myself as a Greenkeeper, perhaps even travelling the world in the process by working in huge golfing countries such as, America, Australia and South Africa," said Barrie.



**Name:** Abigail Crosswood  
**Age:** 18  
**Address:** Newquay, Cornwall  
**Golf Club:** Newquay

Abigail has worked as Assistant Greenkeeper at Newquay GC, Cornwall for the last two years, under the supervision of Course Manager, Chris Pearson.

Having completed her NVQ Level 2 at Duchy College Training Agency, Abigail has been accepted at Myerscough College to study a foundation degree in Sports Turf Science, online. Abigail, who was part of the BIGGA Open Support Team at Hoylake this year, said: "Following a foundations degree I want to get my honours degree, then I hope to become a Head Greenkeeper and to go into the management of a golf course. I am also very interested in the design aspect and at some point would like to incorporate this into my future."





**Name:** Graham Brumpton  
**Age:** 32  
**Address:** Ipswich, Suffolk  
**Golf Club:** Ipswich (Purdis Heath)

Graham is Assistant Greenkeeper at Ipswich GC, Purdis Heath, Suffolk - a position he has held for 15 and a half years, working under the watchful eye of Course Manager, Norman Fenwick.

Having studied at Otley College, Graham has just completed his NVQ Level 3. Graham's hobbies are football, gardening, surfing the net and reading.

"One thing I can guarantee is that whatever happens in my career, I will most definitely keep progressing as far as I possibly can with my training, whether it's a nationally recognised college certificate, attending seminars, or speaking to people that have been in the greenkeeping trade and have learnt through their own experiences because, at the end of the day, you can never stop learning," said Graham.



**Name:** James Billington  
**Age:** 23  
**Address:** Northwich, Cheshire  
**Golf Club:** Portal Premier Golf and Country Club

James has been Assistant Greenkeeper at Portal Premier Golf and Country Club, Tarporley, Cheshire, for three years, working under Course Manager, Justin Lee's supervision.

Currently studying for NVQ Level 3 at Reaseheath College, James is keen on many outdoor activities, including angling and has recently begun to play some casual golf with friends at the club.

"After studying Environmental Management, I attained employment as a trainee at a municipal course. After one year I felt the urge to progress to a private members course and did so with an assistants position at Portal Premier," said James.



**Name:** Steven Paul Stroomer  
**Age:** 37  
**Address:** Stevenage, Herts  
**Golf Club:** Brocket Hall

Steven has been Course Manager at Brocket Hall GC, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, for the past 10 months. Steven was promoted to CM of the Palmerston course after two years at the club, completing NVQ Level 2 in Amenity Horticulture and currently studying at Oaklands College for his NVQ Level 3 in Sports Turf.

Club Captain of Datchworth Cricket Club, Steven is heavily involved in the maintenance of the cricket ground and clubhouse facilities.

"I hope to complete NVQ Level 3 ahead of schedule and plan to move to the position of Course Manager of a club of my own in the next five years," said Steven.



**Name:** Kenneth Gilroy  
**Age:** 25  
**Address:** Shiskine, Isle of Arran  
**Golf Club:** Shiskine Golf and Tennis Club

Kenneth has been First Assistant at Shiskine Golf and Tennis Club, Blackwaterfoot, Isle of Arran, for the past three months, working under the watchful eye of Head Greenkeeper Stewart Fotheringham.

Currently studying NVQ Level 3 with Gosta Training Ltd, Kenneth enjoys football, golf, rugby, music and reading.

"To be recognised for the work you do is very satisfying, so when the college nominated me for Toro Student of the Year, I was ecstatic. The tag 'Toro Student of the Year' speaks for itself...greenkeeping to me is the same as playing golf - the more you practice, spend time at and commit yourself to it, the more you get back and the greater the awards," said Kenneth.

You've heard from all eight National Contenders but who will excel in the Grand Final and win Toro Student of the Year 2006?

Entailing a further interview and the completion of a survey of Aldwark Manor GC, (evaluating nine of the holes), home of BIGGA HQ - there will be tough competition at the September final.

The amazing prize 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 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.

The two runners-up will be invited to attend the Continue to Learn programme during Harrogate Week 2007. All the finalists will receive a voucher for free entry to the Continue to Learn seminars being held at Harrogate Week 2007.



**Name:** Stephen Eager  
**Age:** 28  
**Address:** Newtownabbey, Glengormley  
**Golf Club:** Fortwilliam

Stephen has been Greenkeeper at Fortwilliam GC, Belfast, for the past year, where Michael O'Neill is Course Manager.

Currently studying for NVQ Level 2 at Greenmount College, Stephen enjoys playing golf and fishing and won Golfer of the Year in 2005.