



Back row (L to R): Neil Plenderleith, Stuart Ross, Greg Knight, Jamie Duncan and Richard Oakley. Front row (L to R): Simon Lambert, Avon Bridges and Lewis Birch



# SCHOOL'S OUT!

*Once again the level of entrants for this year's Toro Student of the Year have surpassed all expectations. Melissa Toombs witnessed a fierce final at BIGGA HOUSE*

**The combination of studying and socialising doesn't always work well together! However, when living life as a studious type, you discover your strengths and weaknesses, not only as a student, but also as an individual.**

No-one, ideally, wants to still be working on their imminently due assignment at 4am, realising the course work they've been working on hasn't turned out quite as they'd expected, resigning themselves to the fact that this isn't their best work and realising that perhaps they should have managed their time a little better.

Every student needs a kick up the bum now and again, to be given encouragement and pointed in the right direction but, if you really want the qualification, it's up to you to find the time and put the effort in. Having to juggle both work and study, hard work and dedication was required by this year's Toro Student of the Year Finalists and they are a prime example of what time and effort can achieve.

Eight anxious finalists visited BIGGA HOUSE on September 17 to be quizzed and probed within an inch of their lives and given the task of completing a survey of Aldwark Manor GC (evaluating nine of the holes). On the judging panel this year were: John Pemberton, Chief Executive of BIGGA; Jeff Mills, from the BIGGA Board of Management; Peter Mansfield from Lely; and Bruce Jamieson and Andy Brown, from Toro.

After an exhausting, nail-biting wait, finalists: Neil Plenderleith, Jamie Duncan, Lewis Birch, Stuart Ross, Richard Oakley, Avon Bridges, Simon Lambert and Greg Knight, were put out of their misery as, now retired, BIGGA Education and Training Manager, Ken Richardson, announced

this year's winners for the last time in his role.

Runners-up were: Lewis Birch (23), from Abbeydale Golf Club, in Sheffield, and Simon Lambert (25), from Seaford Head Golf Club, East Sussex.

Lewis achieved PA1, PA2, NVQ Sports Turf Level 2 and the Technical Certificate in Sports Turf at Askham Bryan College in York. He is currently working towards his NVQ Sports Turf Level 3. "I enjoy working outdoors and with the great variety that a greenkeeping role brings, I felt no other position would keep me as happy," said Lewis.

Simon has worked at Seaford Head for seven year and since working as a greenkeeper, has learnt, achieved and given a great deal. "All of my training will working at the course and attending Plumpton College, has enabled me to work more confidently and efficiently in the everyday running of the golf course," said Simon.

Lewis and Simon 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 2007 was Avon Bridges (27) from Luton Hoo Park Golf Club, Bedfordshire.

Avon'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 next February.