



# TORO STUDENT OF THE YEAR 2007 PREVIEW

*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 32 student greenkeepers, as they attended the Regional Finals of the Toro Student of the Year Award 2007.**

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 Archie Dunn, Tony Smith, Jeff Mills and Gavin Robson, from the BIGGA Board of Management, as well as Trevor Chard, John Pike, George McDonald and Robert Jackson 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 for the Grand Final.

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 Course. The trip also includes visits to the Toro Headquarters in Minneapolis and to the GCSAA Golf Industry Show in New Orleans, in February 2008.

"This competition goes from strength to strength. The candidates are better prepared, they cope well with interviews and have a good idea what to expect in the US. It gets more and more difficult to select the final eight candidates and I do not envy the task of this year's judges," said Ken Richardson, BIGGA's Education and Training Manager.



**Name: Neil Plenderleith**  
**Age: 27**  
**Club: Oatridge, West Lothian**

Neil has recently completed his National Certificate Greenkeeping and Sports Turf Management at Oatridge College. He has worked at Oatridge Golf Club during the past academic year, helping the greenkeepers with various tasks. His summer has been spent at Gleneagles doing seasonal work.

"I'm grateful to Gleneagles as well as the staff at Oatridge for the chance of a starting position with such a prestigious club. I hope to take my education to at least HCN level once I have more practical experience in the industry," said Neil.



**Name: Jamie Duncan**  
**Age: 23**  
**Club: Brodick, Isle of Arran**

Jamie spent most of his childhood on Brodick golf course having been a very keen golfer since the age of about four. Before becoming a greenkeeper, Jamie spent three years at the Club doing seasonal work.

"When I was 19 I travelled the world for a year visiting Thailand, Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and America. Seeing so many amazing places has given me the ambition to see more and hopefully through my greenkeeping qualifications I will be able to work at some of these destinations," said Jamie.



**Name: Lewis Birch**  
**Age: 23**  
**Club: Abbeydale, Sheffield**

Lewis' career at Abbeydale started out as a summer job but he knew he wanted to take greenkeeping further, "I enjoy working outdoors and with the great variety of the role, I felt no other position would keep me as happy," said Lewis.

Lewis has achieved PA1, PA2, NVQ sports turf level 2 and the Technical Certificate in Sports Turf at Askham Bryan College in York. "I'm currently working towards my NVQ Sports Turf Level 3," said Lewis.



**Name: Stuart Ross**  
**Age: 33**  
**Club: Cradoc, Powys**

Stuart joined Cradoc in 2005 having previously been employed as a production planner in the steel fabrication industry. "I feel that I've finally found a career that excites me and fuels my imagination – I have found my niche," said Stuart. Stuart is always looking to learn new skills and has undertaken a manual handling course, first aid at work course and various mini digger courses.

"My hopes for the future are to continue learning about greenkeeping, progressing on to NVQ Level 3 next year and eventually become a Course Manager in my own right," said Stuart.



**Name: Richard Oakley**  
**Age: 19**  
**Club: Erlestoke, Wiltshire**

Richard has just completed his first year of NVQ Level 2 Sports Turf at Bridgewater College and has also attended a first aid and manual handling course.

Richard has been working at Erlestoke as an Assistant Greenkeeper for just over a year.



**Name: Avon Bridges**  
**Age: 26**  
**Club: Luton Hoo Park, Bedfordshire**

Avon started greenkeeping at Finchley at the age of 17. "Over the nine years that I've worked at Finchley, I've always been encouraged to learn and been given every opportunity to take on new skills. I've trained new staff members within our team of six. My efforts were rewarded in 2003 when I was given the position of Deputy Head Greenkeeper," said Avon.

"In future years I aim to continue to develop the golf course at Luton Hoo and will make it one of the south east's best course in 5-10 years time."



**Name: Simon Lambert**  
**Age: 25**  
**Club: Seaford Head, East Sussex**

Simon has worked at Seaford Head for seven years, "Since working as a greenkeeper I have learnt, achieved and given a great deal. All my training while 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.

"In the future I hope to develop my present skills, studying for my advanced apprenticeship NVQ Level 3 in Amenity Horticulture at Plumpton College."



**Name: Greg Knight**  
**Age: 22**  
**Club: Abridge, Essex**

Greg started his greenkeeping career at the age of 16, doing seasonal work at Theydon Bois, and has been at Abridge for nearly three years now.

"I am currently studying for my NVQ Level 3 at Writtle College under the guidance of my tutor, Nigel Beckford, and my Head Greenkeeper, Geoff Smith," said Greg.

"After my NVQ 3 I would like to furthermore my 'thirst' for education by continuing to study for a degree."