

AND THE WINNER IS...

2008 Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year winner, Mathew Wormald, couldn't be happier and feels as though he's finally found his path in life. Melissa Jones reports...

Mathew has always had an interest in golf but greenkeeping was the last place he expected his career to take him.

"I went to university not knowing what I wanted to do and opted for a business and marketing degree, as that offered a wide spectrum of management and I knew it would stand me in good stead for almost anything," explained Mathew, who has a handicap of 18.

After finishing university Mathew went to London to work as an Estate Agent.

"I was awful at it. I couldn't lie and didn't sell many houses," laughed Mathew. "I decided to come home. I worked at a farm for a couple of months, during this time I saw the vacancy at Luffenham Heath advertised, I applied, got the job – the rest is history."

Mathew has been at the club for two years now and feels as if he has finally found his path in life.

"It's awesome, I love it. Greenkeeping makes me burn inside. Every single aspect of turfgrass management you can think of excites me. It's just so interesting and indepth," enthused Mathew.

At the end of this month Mathew will have completed his Level 2 in Sportsturf Management at Brooksby College with the help of tutor Richard Barker – BIGGA Chairman 2002.

"It's nice that the college is now getting some publicity. To win the award coming from Brooksby is even more satisfying, I hope it makes people sit up and realise how good the college is".

Mathew couldn't be more thrilled with his achievement and his bursting enthusiasm for the industry is plain to see.

"People just don't understand how passionate I am about greenkeeping. I cried to my mum on the phone. It means that much to me that I got back to my hotel room and cried. It's been a long two and a half days and I don't think it's completely sunk in yet.

"The only person that can hold you back is yourself, if you really want it, you have to go for it. Greenkeeping is a fantastic industry to be in, you can travel the world with a career in greenkeeping if you wish.

"It's been so draining. It's an amazing experience but nervewracking. I've been awarded the prize for a reason - because people believe in me. I want to be Student of Year for a reason and for people to see me and say 'I saw him 10 years ago and he's done what he said he would.'

"Going to America will add to the depth of what I can learn. When I first started greenkeeping and found out about the award it instantly became something I wanted to work towards. I always put that little bit of extra effort in when doing



Toro Student of the Year 2008 Mathew Wormald representing Brooksby College.

my college work, it's been 18 months of hard graft to get here."

It seems that preparation was the key to Mathew's success.

"For the final interview I explored every single area of the competition. I phoned America to find out what books and areas I would be studying if I got through, and bought and read a couple of them so that I had a better understanding of what getting myself into."

Mathew also came up three weeks prior to the final at BIGGA HQ to complete his course report and phoned 2007 winner, Avon Bridges, and 1994 winner, Euan Grant for their advice on what to look out for and what to expect at interview. Mathew also took the time to read through our BIGGA website, as well as Toro's.

"I walked into the interview and for the first time in my life I wasn't nervous," he beamed.

"You know when you work so hard for something and you actually achieve it. It's just an amazing feeling. I just nailed it! It worked. When I get to go to America it's gonna be even better. I can't wait to get my teeth into it and gain a better, more scientific understanding" smiled Mathew.

"Hopefully I'll be able to bring some good ideas back from America, amalgamate them with British greenkeeping and move forward from there."

"The way technology is going, greenkeeping is going to get really exciting over the next 10-15 years, with companies like Toro pushing the boundaries

with irrigation. It's time for British greenkeeping to embrace it and move forward."

Appreciative of the support that BIGGA have given him, Mathew is also keen, after he has been in greenkeeping for a number of years and been around the world, to open peoples eyes to what BIGGA is and what we do,

"Maybe I'll be Chairman one day, with a bit of luck," he laughed.

Mathew's goal is to become a Head Greenkeeper at an Open venue. Once he has achieved that, he is keen to work on new courses and new builds, advising people on how to manager their golf course.

"I had Royal Troon in my sight but that might be a little too soon! I love Troon as a golf course and would love to work there, it would fulfil my childhood dream really."

Mathew wants to thank Avon Bridges and Euan Grant for their advice, and BIGGA and Toro for the opportunity of a lifetime.

"It's just been awesome. People that have gone away disappointed need to realise they have got through to the final and if they want something that bad they will eventually get it. I wish everyone the best of luck for the future. Just to get through to the finals is a cracking achievement for everybody."

Mathew would like to thank Luffenham Golf Club for their support throughout the competition and for their continued support while he is away in America.