



STUDENT OF THE YEAR 2008 PREVIEW

FEATURE

Now in its 20th year, this competition, organised in conjunction with Toro, has grown and grown in popularity with the appeal of being named 'Toro Student of the Year' high on many BIGGA members agendas. Melissa Jones takes a look at this year's lucky finalists...

Travelling the width and breadth of the country this spring was Sami Collins, Head of Learning & Development at BIGGA HQ, in search of this year's eight national contenders. Joined by BIGGA members Ian McLeod, Tony Smith and Les Howkins MG, as well as George McDonald, Trevor Chard and

John Pike from Toro, Sami and the rest of the judges, after many interviews, much discussion and copious cups of coffee, decided on the eight finalists to come to BIGGA HOUSE on Monday, September 15 for the grand final.

"The calibre of the candidates selected to go forward for the National Final is extremely high. Selecting the eight finalists was quite a task, but I am confident that they will make this, the 20th Anniversary of the Award, one of the most competitive and exciting finals to date." said Sami.

Let's take a look at the national contenders...

Name: James Canham
Age: 22
Club: Golf Club Gstaad, Switzerland



James is a blast from the past (as far this competition goes), 2004 saw him claim runner-up position at the age of 18, while working as an Assistant Greenkeeper at Weston Park GC.

Not satisfied with taking the silver medal, James, now 22, is back in the running for pole position.

"After two years at Weston Park I was offered the chance of a lifetime, to leave the UK to work as a greenkeeper at Gstaad Golf Club, a Swiss alpine course. I knew very little about Switzerland or the Alps but I had enough confidence in my ability to take the step into the unknown. I spent my first season at Gstaad GC as an Assistant learning their greenkeeping methods and local culture. I was able to make an impact on the course during this time and was promoted to Deputy Head the following season," said James.

Name: Paul Carella
Age: 20
Club: Bothwell Castle GC, Uddingston



Paul, who is currently working towards his NVQ Level 3, has worked at Bothwell Castle for four years now, taking on the role of Assistant Greenkeeper.

"As far back as I can remember all I have wanted to be is a greenkeeper," said Paul.

"Prior to working at Bothwell Castle GC, I studied at Elmwood College in Cupar, Fife, where I achieved my SVQ2, PA1 and PA6 certificates."

Paul has continued his studies while in his current post by attending GOSTA Training, where he has achieved three more certificates in SVQ3, PA2 and Introduction to Golf Course Design.

"I aspire to do the best I can in all aspects of my life and I eventually want to become a Course Manager of a Championship golf course," expressed Paul.

Name: George Pendrich
Age: 46
Club: Scotsraig GC, Taypoe



George recently returned to education full time in order to complete his HND in Golf Course Management.

With his full time education complete, he now spends much of his time on two Open qualifying courses, working at Scotsraig and playing at Downfield, where he has just been appointed Course Manager.

George, who won the Toro award for Best HN Golf Course Management Student at Elmwood College in 2005, was fortunate enough to be part of the BIGGA Open Support Team last year, helping out at Carnoustie.

Name: Mathew Wormald
Age: 24
Club: The Luffenham Heath GC, Lincolnshire



"I have had an interest in golf from an early age and discovered greenkeeping after spending a year in London working as an Estate Agent - I haven't looked back since.

"In my short time in greenkeeping I have attended The Belfry as a volunteer for the British Masters and I have also attended various seminars on aspects of greenkeeping," said Mathew, an Assistant Greenkeeper at The Luffenham Heath Golf Club.

Currently completing his NVQ Level 2, Mathew's ambition is to become Head Greenkeeper of a Championship course.

Name: David Jowes
Age: 43
Club: Tadmarton Heath GC, Wigginton



After spending 20 years in the motorsport industry as a welder fabricator, working for various race teams and running a workshop with 26 staff under his control, David made the brave decision to take a leap into greenkeeping.

"Becoming a greenkeeper was something that always interested me through playing golf, but was not financially viable till later in life. After making enquiries regarding a career in greenkeeping I obtained PA1 and PA6 at Morton Morrell College at my own expense, this was completed during my spare time to gain experience prior to applying for employment," said David.

David, who currently works as an Assistant Greenkeeper at Tadmarton Heath GC, was effectively headhunted by his now boss, Head Greenkeeper, Brian Owen.

"During my short time as a greenkeeper I feel I have gained considerable knowledge within this field of work. With my enthusiasm and determination I know I will go on to expand my knowledge of both theoretical and practical aspects of greenkeeping thus achieving my life long ambitions," said David.

Name: Graeme Roberts
Age: 20
Club: Hankley Common GC, Farnham



"I have been fortunate to live on golf courses all my life, and with my father being a Course Manager, I was always exposed to the world of greenkeeping. As a teenager, during school holidays I would work on the course. At first it was just basic jobs like divotting and raking bunkers, I then progressed to some of the cutting practices and other jobs," said Graeme, who currently works as an Assistant Greenkeeper at Hankley.

Graeme recently completed his NVQ Level 2 Sports Turf qualification at Merrist Wood and was accepted onto the Ohio Programme for trainee greenkeepers at the Pinehurst Resort in North Carolina.

"In all aspects of course maintenance I like to think I show great pride in the job I do, ensuring it is done to the highest standard and to the best of my ability, benefiting the golfers playing the course and allowing all the potential the course has to show," expressed Graeme, who joined the support team for the BMW Championship at Wentworth last year.

Name: Barrie Lewis
Age: 20
Club: Ratho Park GC, Edinburgh



Barrie is another student that's gone back to the future. In 2006, at the age of 18, Barrie made it to the grand final of Toro Student of the Year at BIGGA HQ, but sadly went away empty handed when Mike Emptage claimed the title - could this be his year for victory?

Barrie, who is currently studying for his N/SVQ Level 3, won Lantra Land Based Learner of the Year in 2006 and also achieved Student of the Year status for Level 2 Greenkeeping at Oatridge College.

"In the future I hope to gain further qualifications such as a HNC/HND. I would also like to experience the Ohio State project in America, or something similar in Australia. Ultimately I want to become Course Manager of a prestigious golf course, either at home or abroad," said Barrie, who was part of the support team at the Scottish Open at Loch Lomond in 2006.

Name: Greg Wellings
Age: 26
Club: Stockport GC, Cheshire



Greg, who is currently working towards his NVQ Level 3 at Reaseheath College, presently takes on the role of Assistant Greenkeeper at Stockport Golf Club.

"I feel extremely honoured to be nominated by Reaseheath College for this year's Toro Student of the Year competition. My tutor afforded me all the support I needed to complete my course via distance learning. It has been very productive to gain practical experience on the golf course to go with the theory I have been studying. This is a method of development I am comfortable with and will utilise as I continue to learn," said Greg.

"I am 26 years old and I want to be a Head Greenkeeper at a world renowned golf course. I realise this is a bold ambition but I am a determined and focused individual and I want to forge a successful career in the golfing industry."

You've heard from all eight National Contenders but who will excel in the Grand Final and win Toro Student of the Year 2008?

Entailing a further interview and the completion of a survey of Aldwark Manor Golf Course (evaluating nine of the holes), the grand final is sure to provide some tough competition.

Up for grabs is an amazing prize involving 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. Also included in the trip is a visit to the Toro Headquarters in Minneapolis and to the GCSAA Golf Industry Show next February.