



Opportunity knocks



The Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Award is one of the highlights of BIGGA's calendar. Meet the 2010 finalists

The challenge of identifying the Champion Student Greenkeeper of the Year gets under way later this month with the final of the Award taking place.

Eight highly talented and motivated greenkeepers will descend on BIGGA HOUSE for the 22nd Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year final.

Each year the standard of the finalist rises and to reach the final attaches a beacon to a CV drawing its attention to potential employers.

Last year Rhys Norville, from Newport Golf Club, in South Wales, was the man who made that final push to claim the title, but such is the standard of finalist now it could have been any one of the eight.

"Winning the award has been a unique experience which has enabled me to learn lots, meet some fantastic people and has helped me to understand more about the industry," said Rhys.

"Every stage of the trip to America was more than I ever expected and I have to thank Toro and Lely for putting on such a fantastic trip. This award has helped me to realise that you can achieve whatever you set your mind to," he added.

This year the finalists will arrive at Aldwark Manor in Sunday, September 12, when they will meet up with the judges and get to know each other before they start what could be one of the most significant events of their careers.

Dinner with fellow finalists and the judges should tee up

Monday just nicely for the candidates, when they will be set a project for the day and interviewed by a panel comprising Peter Mansfield, of Lely; Chris Sealey, Chairman of the BIGGA Learning and Development Sub Committee; Bruce Jamieson, of Toro, and Sami Collins, BIGGA's Head of Learning and Development.

The winner will win an eight week trip to the United States beginning next January, which includes a six week study course at the University of Massachusetts and a trip to the GCSAA's Golf Industry Show, in Orlando, Florida, and Toro's Californian HQ.

The runners-up will receive an expenses paid trip to the Continue to Learn Education programme in January.



MAIN ABOVE:
Toro's Californian HQ

INSET ABOVE:
Last year's winner, Rhys Norville sits proudly with his trophy



Andrew Stanger, Horsforth Golf Club & Askham Bryan College

Andrew, 24, began as an apprentice at Calverley Golf Club and was Student of the Year at Askham Bryan College before being placed at Liberty National

Golf Club, New York, as part of the Ohio State Program. From there he worked at Augusta National on the "Hole Care" Team initially on holes 8 and 9 and later on 11 and 12 on Amen Corner for the 2009 Masters.

A keen keep fitter, he returned to join Horsforth, filling in as Head Greenkeeper during sick leave on a three week contract which was extended to three months, before taking over full time in June of this year.

He has just completed his NVQ Level 3 in Sports Turf Maintenance.



Robert Mills, Sunningdale Golf Club & Merrist Wood College

Robert, 23, became interested in greenkeeping at the age of 7, as his father was Deputy Head Greenkeeper at The Manor of Groves GC (now Head Groundsman for Bishop's Stortford FC), and use to take him to work on weekend mornings, where he developed a love for dew covered early morning golf courses.

He started for real at nine hole Briggens Park at the age of 17 and just a few months later took over as Head Greenkeeper for three months.

Under a new Head he attended Oaklands College and when Briggens Park closed in 2006 he moved to the 18 hole Whitehills, before arriving at Mill Ride, following time spent as a seasonal worker at The Buckinghamshire. He has since made the move to Sunningdale working alongside a previous Toro winner, Murray Long.

A keen cricketer, he is also an animal lover with two dogs and two cats, and is currently studying at Merrist Wood College.



Craig Boath, Carnoustie Golf Links and Elmwood College

Craig, 30, is Deputy Head Greenkeeper at Carnoustie Links. Having spent 15 years at the famous Open venue – initially during his October school holidays and again the following Easter before he started as a youth trainee in June '96.

He has worked on two Open Championships; 10 Dunhill Links Championships; one Scottish Open; a British Senior Open and numerous other amateur events.

He has set up the Greenkeepers' Blog for Carnoustie which can be found on the BIGGA Central Section Website as well as the Facebook page for Carnoustie Golf Links. He is a keen golfer, playing off 7 and enjoys football.



Gavin Moore, Launceston Golf Club & Duchy College

Gavin, 29, has been a golf lover since the age of 10 and was Junior Captain and Club Handicap Champion of Holsworthy GC. He started work at a nursery and achieved Level 2 in Amenity Horticulture before moving into greenkeeping at his old club, Hosworthy.

After five years he moved to Launceston where he still works. An active BIGGA member he is a regular at Devon and Cornwall Sections meetings and played in the BIGGA National Championship last year.

He is a keen football fan and recently became a father.



Sebastian Cavilla, The Manor House Hotel and Golf Club & Cannington College

Sebastian, 25, spent two years as a gardener and one as a Racecourse Groundsman before finding, "his true vocation".

He has worked at The Manor House since 2007 and in

that time has been studying for a Foundation Degree and increasing his knowledge base while working on environmental clearance work on the golf course. His ambition is to become a Course Manager.



Tom Hayward, Frome Golf Club & Bridgewater College

Tom, 19, has a great love of the outdoors and considered a career in Countryside Management but having been a golfer since the age of eight, and having asked his local club if it had any summer work he was bitten by the greenkeeping bug immediately.

He has just completed his NVQ Level 2 at Bridgewater College and is actively considering Level 3 and possibly a degree. He has completed his Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award and has just taken up mountain biking.

He also plays guitar and designs websites.



Sean Borrett, Ellesborough Golf Club & Myerscough College

Sean, 29, arrived at a greenkeeping career having first gained a Honours Degree in Business and Finance from Oxford Brookes University and a job within the finance department of McCormick's (UK) PLC. A part time job raking bunkers at Ellesborough

sparked the desire for a change of path.

He has completed his NVQ Level 2 at Myerscough via distance learning and has ambitions to become a Head Greenkeeper on a links course and to add a degree and the Master Greenkeeper Certificate to his CV.

Initially he did have ambitions to become a professional golfer and still plays Category 1 golf. He has also played squash to junior county standard and has rowed for Great Britain at junior level.



Stephen Thompson, Bearsted Golf Club & Hadlow College

Stephen, 36, started out as an agricultural engineer and became interested in greenkeeping while working on equipment as Weald of Kent Golf Club was being constructed, and became friendly with those working on the course.

Following redundancy he worked on Langley Park Driving Range in Maidstone for seven years and moved to advance his career to Bearsted as an Assistant in 1999 and he is currently in the process of completing his Level 3 at Hadlow College.

Engaged, with a child on the way, Stephen is a keen walker and cyclist.