

## Walker Cup vs Essex @ Writtle Bowls Club – Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2021

Hertfordshire arrived at Writtle BC in total optimism for their forthcoming clash with the cream of Essex in the Walker Cup. The home club were fantastic hosts and looked after the players and, just as importantly, the spectators which I am pleased to say outnumbered the Essex contingent by 2 -1 so an enormous thank you to Writtle for making us feel welcome and to Hertfordshire supporters who came from far and wide.

In what ended up as a very close game and gave the Essex onlookers a hint of worry towards the end, Hertfordshire ladies lost 43-39 but this bare figure is not the whole story. Anyone who blames a green for their loss is most definitely barking up the wrong tree, especially as I believe there were no Writtle girls playing, but it was certainly challenging! Whilst the pace seemed fine, woods were occasionally looking down at the grass below and some lines were baffling both sides.

Essex, as we found in the Johns in 2019, are very fast starters and Rachel's rink found themselves down 10-2 down after 4 ends, 14-5 down at after 8 and 22-7 down after 13. None of this was down to poor play by Herts but magnificent and adaptive play by their opponents with their lead finding lines to the jack that were unique and their skip pulling off some amazing shots. To the whole team's credit, they kept their heads and, playing cool and intelligently, began the fightback. From that point on, Essex won only 2 ends (both singles) with Herts winning the last 5 ends and ending up losing 24-19 against a very good team. This was Janet and Ann's first taste of playing the Walker Cup and both would have benefited from this experience. Hayley, our new ex-Yorkshire lass showed without any shadow of a doubt, that this is her level and is a real asset to Herts and Rachel is Rachel – an England international, cool, calm and unfazed and if any selector was in the bushes with their notepad, she did nothing to give any doubts that she deserves this status.

Alison's rink comprised of three of the most successful four in the 2019 Johns run with Mavis slotting in at 2. Again, Essex were quick off the blocks with an 13-1 lead at 7 ends meaning, across the rinks, with a third of the game gone, Herts were 17 shots behind over the two rinks. Not sure what triggered the comeback – I credit the Tangfastics – but this rink decided enough was enough and kicked in the turbo to fightback to 8-13 after 10, take the lead on 14 ends by one and win their game with a two on the last to triumph 20-19. Pure guts and bloody-mindedness! Debutant Jo wasn't as consistent as she would have liked but her infectious enthusiasm was a definite benefit to the rink and leading was especially hard on an unpredictable rink. Mavis was magnificent and showed the enormous benefit of a good 2 – a position looked down on by many but worth their weight in gold in a rink. Jess clearly wasn't at ease on the rink but again, her cheerfulness, skill and adaptive powers were at the forefront of why the rink were ultimately successful. Alison is one of the best skips Herts have and pulled off amazing shot after amazing shot. This rink was the most airborne one and to pull off a win after an horrendous start was something that should inspire everyone who watched.

Jo Hollister was presented with her fully deserved County badge by Herts Ladies President Betty Ottaway-Stewart at the completion of the match.

Every cloud as they say, and this gives the Amy Rose side a boost as the next knockout round clashed with the Amy Rose so they have a definite chance of progressing. Please give them your support when they play in Southend on 11<sup>th</sup> July – see website for details.

I am immensely proud of the girls even though we lost to an ultimately better side and if we can bring this into the Johns squad, even a little bit, we have a real chance of causing an upset or two. Roll on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> July.

Alan Spicer – Team Manager