



Hertfordshire Bowls

Walker Cup 2022

Walker Cup vs Huntingdonshire Regional Final at Sandy Conservative BC Sunday 17th July at 10.00hrs

It is never easy to accept defeat when it is this close. An extra end, holding shot from the first wood delivered until wood 14 is bowled, gliding in off their own short woods to hold by a few inches. On a rink that both skips agreed very early in the game that it was very difficult to 'play shots on', Rachel's last wood could not promote our wood for victory.

It is also easy to think back to 'what if' incidences, like what if the Umpire, who didn't have the best of days, actually measured Herts TWO woods against the Hunts one instead of only one then picking up the jack! That didn't lose us the game as both teams played the game with an eye on the combined score so the passage of play would have been different. NB Hunts went on the lose in the afternoon to Norfolk 37-36 so you have got to believe that the Herts girls would have been at least as good.

Arrived at 8:30am to the promise of 34 degree day and an Extreme Weather Warning. The green was being cut and ironed and only Rhianna and Clara had arrived from any of the four Counties. As expected with the high quality of players on show, only one big score (4) in the match across both rinks was recorded.

Jess's rink started in their usual strong fashion, winning the first 4 ends to lead 5-0. Hayley's rink won the first end but lost the next 3 to be 2-4 down. Herts 7-4 up after 4 ends, all serene, no drama, keep it up. Jess's rink then dropped that 4 but immediately steadied the ship to lead 11-6 after 10 ends. The next 6 ends on Hayley's rink were shared although Hunts just outscored Herts to lead 12-8. So at 10 ends, the score reflected just how close the game was going to be with Herts scrapping it 19-18.

Hayley's rink started to speed up and by the time they finished, Jess's rink were playing their 20th end. With Hayley's rink losing 4 of the next 6 ends, but Jess's rink continuing to show brilliance and invention, their next 5 ends maintained the status quo being 15-9 up after 15, meaning Herts were clinging on to a 27-26 lead. You had to be there to feel the spectator tension, but our 8 girls were showing no signs of pressure and continued to bowl the rink as best as it allowed.

The last few ends of Hayley's rink showed exactly why they are among the cream of Hertfordshire, knowing that every shot counted and winning 4 of the last 5 ends to go down by one 18-19. They now how to wait, aware that they were playing the extra end, if needed, with Hunts winning the toss for jack. Jess's rink had unluckily lost their last 4 ends so playing the 20th end at 15-15 meant that Herts were losing for the first time in the match. But what an end this was. Jack in the ditch meant Herts were holding 2 with a wall in front. Both skips tried their very best to draw but our one in the ditch and very near the edge could not be beat and we went into the last end one up

overall with Hunts having last wood. After the first three players had bowled, Hunts had one wood touching and probably held 2, so pressure was intense for Alison. Her first wood was nothing short of brilliant and whilst it was only second, it was resting on the shot bowl. The crowd erupted, or was that just me? Hunts skip came with a bit more weight, as they had one just behind, but missed. Alison tried a little dink shot to push on her wood to take the shot wood out but only just failed. Game all square, Hunts to play their last wood but after intense discussion with all 7 players, the skip decided to not play and go to the extra end.

The extra end was documented very well by Andy Weir on Facebook. Hunts gave the jack away – which we were happy with as the first one on generally won the end. Devon plonked a toucher on, jack high about a foot away. Another was added, but 2 feet short during the course of the first 3 player's woods. Four woods to go, Herts holding match. Rachel attempted to go through the smallest of gaps on the better hand, got through but just ran on. Chloe Brett then played her best wood of the whole match, played the unreliable swinger, glided off two of her team's short woods and came to a stop 10 inches from the jack. Very good weight though! Hunts holding. Controlled weight onto our front woods was the team's elected shot, but the rink beat her and Hunts had won.

And so ends another Herts competitive season and the promise is so apparent for the future. The squad for this Walker campaign was perfect, teamwork, a natural desire for everyone to perform and no strife! They were absolutely brilliant in this game and fell short by the smallest of margins. Another day and this could have been a comfortable win. I want to thank all the girls who have supported me in this male experiment – I still think I am the only one but Suffolk did have an Assistant Manager who was male. We would have had a great chance in the afternoon, and we were one away from Leamington in 2019 so not a total failure.

Great support from the Herts Balmy Army and the game would not be half as enjoyable without you. Thank you.

Thank you to our hosts, Sandy Con Bowling Club, and all who made the day (morning) as comfortable as allowable given the weather.

Alan Spicer
Johns/Walker Team Manager

Rhianna Russell
Mavis Hendry
Jess Weir
Alison Hall

Devon Cooper
Jennie Redford
Hayley Robinson
Rachel Tremlett

WON 17-16

LOST 18-19

Additional Walker Squad : Joanne Hollister, Betty Stewart