

ECBA Champion of Champions

Stanley Indoor Bowls Centre, Stanley, County Durham – Saturday 2nd / Sunday 3rd June

This event sees representatives of the nine member counties play against each other in singles, pairs, triples and rinks/fours to become National Champion

The team representing us was as follows;

Singles: Craig Hearn

Pairs: Mick Cook & Pete Cook

Triples: Mike Bennett, Roy Grethe & David Danby

Fours: Sandra Gammage, Rebecca Hearn, Neil Tuckey & Ben Summerfield

Fours

Session 1

Sunderland were the first opponents of the weekend for our fours. In a tight low scoring game, our four did just enough to edge out a 6-3 and get them off to the perfect start.

Session 2

Northumberland were up next for our four. They largely controlled the game, getting in lots of blockers to frustrate their opponents and restrict their scoring opportunities. They went on to win the game 9-4.

Session 3

Suffolk would represent the first southern opposition. The game was close through the early ends but our four were able to turn the screw late on and picked up some shots over the later ends of the game and secured a good 12-2 win.

Session 4

Durham would be the last opposition of the day. On paper they looked like tough opposition, with three of their team having won national titles before. The game started off close and Durham opened up a small lead. However, a count of five for our four on the 8th end proved decisive and helped them earn an 11-6 win.

Four wins from four was the perfect start. We held a commanding three point lead overnight. Two wins from our three games on Sunday would be enough to guarantee the title.

Session 5

Essex were the first opponents on Sunday morning. They hadn't had a good Saturday picking up just a single point. They didn't show any signs of lacking in confidence though as they stayed competitive with our four throughout the game and our team had to work hard to earn their 10-5 win.

Session 6

Cambridgeshire were our fours penultimate opponents. A victory in this match would secure the title. They would be keen to do so too as defeat would mean they would be playing their closest rivals for a title shootout in the final game. As in the previous game, they were made to work hard and only had a narrow one shot lead going into the final end. They held their nerve to take three shots on the final end to win 9-5 and secure the title!

Session 7

With the title secured our team relaxed a little too much in their final game. They were dominated throughout and well beaten 15-5.

A fantastic performance by our four. Other than Ben, all three had won previous National Fours titles. That experience is invaluable and they were clam and in control for the entire weekend. They won six of their seven matches, with their only defeat coming when the title was already won, and were deserving winners. Special mention to Ben, who won his first National title (at first attempt) and to Sandra and Rebecca who retained their fours title.

The final results / table are displayed below.

		Cambs	Durham	Essex	Herts	Norfolk	N'land	Suffolk	S'land	Pl	Pts	F	A
RINKS	Cambridgeshire		13 - 3	8 - 7	5 - 9	7 - 9	14 - 6	6 - 9	8 - 8	7	7	61	51
	Durham	3 - 13		14 - 6	6 - 11	9 - 7	10 - 8	14 - 6	4 - 6	7	8	60	57
	Essex	7 - 8	6 - 14		5 - 10	4 - 11	4 - 12	5 - 12	7 - 7	7	1	38	74
	Hertfordshire	9 - 5	11 - 6	10 - 5		5 - 15	9 - 4	12 - 2	6 - 3	7	12	62	40
	Norfolk	9 - 7	7 - 9	11 - 4	15 - 5		14 - 7	9 - 7	5 - 6	7	10	70	45
	Northumberland	6 - 14	8 - 10	12 - 4	4 - 9	7 - 14		3 - 8	7 - 9	7	2	47	68
	Suffolk	9 - 6	6 - 14	12 - 5	2 - 12	7 - 9	8 - 3		4 - 7	7	6	48	56
	Sunderland	8 - 8	6 - 4	7 - 7	3 - 6	6 - 5	9 - 7	7 - 4		7	10	46	41

RINKS	Pl	Pts	F	A
1 Hertfordshire	7	12	62	40
2 Norfolk	7	10	70	45
3 Sunderland	7	10	46	41
4 Durham	7	8	60	57
5 Cambridgeshire	7	7	61	51
6 Suffolk	7	6	48	56
7 Northumberland	7	2	47	68
8 Essex	7	1	38	74

Winners: Sandra Gammage, Rebecca Hearn, Neil Tuckey & Ben Summerfield (Hertfordshire)

Triples

Session 1

Sunderland were the first opponents for our triple. In a tight game there never looked like being much to choose between the two teams. In the end the game finished in an 8-8 draw, which was probably a fair reflection of how the game went

Session 2

The second game, against Northumberland, was another tight game. Needing three or four shots on the final end to get anything out of the game the opposition skip was a little fortuitous with his final bowl when he played an unintentional blocker. That meant we were unable to remove the opponents wood in the head, picking up just the single shot but losing the game 7-5.

Session 3

Our team would have to be on top of their game against Suffolk in the next session, who had recently won the Eastern Counties event. Despite the game being fairly close in the early ends, Suffolk just edged away and took the game 12-5.

Session 4

The final game of the day was against Durham. To maintain any faint hopes of competing on Sunday a win would be needed here. It was another close game, but unfortunately the match was lost by the narrowest of margins, 9-8.

Session 5

Essex would be the first opposition on Sunday morning. They, like our team, had also only picked up the one point. Our team played some good early ends and built up a lead which they were able to gradually build on throughout the game. They ended up securing their first win of the weekend 12-4.

Session 6

Cambridgeshire would be the penultimate opposition for our triples. They were still in the hunt for the title so a tough game would be expected. Our team stayed in the game up to the middle to late ends. They conceded a few shots over the final ends and the game was lost 12-5.

Session 7

The final game of the weekend would be against Norfolk. With the score tied at 5-5 after seven ends, a poor 8th end saw us drop three shots to trail 8-5. They could not be recovered on the final end and the match was lost 9-5.

Our triples finished the weekend with a win, a draw and five defeats. Whilst they were ultimately disappointed with that, reflecting on their results shows they were not too far away from having a considerably better weekend. They lost a number of close matches, reflected by the fact they only finished on -13 shot difference. On another weekend some of those close games could have gone in their favour and they could have finished considerably higher in the standings.

The final results and table are shown below.

		Cambs	Durham	Essex	Herts	Norfolk	N'land	Suffolk	S'land	Pl	Pts	F	A
TRIPLES	Cambridgeshire		10 - 5	10 - 5	12 - 5	14 - 3	11 - 7	8 - 10	11 - 5	7	12	76	40
	Durham	5 - 10		5 - 7	9 - 8	6 - 11	10 - 6	0 - 22	6 - 8	7	4	41	72
	Essex	5 - 10	7 - 5		4 - 12	6 - 6	4 - 7	2 - 12	9 - 11	7	3	37	63
	Hertfordshire	5 - 12	8 - 9	12 - 4		5 - 9	5 - 7	5 - 12	8 - 8	7	3	48	61
	Norfolk	3 - 14	11 - 6	6 - 6	9 - 5		8 - 4	2 - 21	5 - 11	7	7	44	67
	Northumberland	7 - 11	6 - 10	7 - 4	7 - 5	4 - 8		4 - 13	6 - 12	7	4	41	63
	Suffolk	10 - 8	22 - 0	12 - 2	12 - 5	21 - 2	13 - 4		17 - 0	7	14	107	21
	Sunderland	5 - 11	8 - 6	11 - 9	8 - 8	11 - 5	12 - 6	0 - 17		7	9	55	62

TRIPLES	Pl	Pts	F	A
<i>1</i> Suffolk	7	14	107	21
<i>2</i> Cambridgeshire	7	12	76	40
<i>3</i> Sunderland	7	9	55	62
<i>4</i> Norfolk	7	7	44	67
<i>5</i> Northumberland	7	4	41	63
<i>6</i> Durham	7	4	41	72
<i>7</i> Hertfordshire	7	3	48	61
<i>8</i> Essex	7	3	37	63

Winners: Clint Watling, Sam Runnacles & Tom Runnacles (Suffolk)

Pairs

Session 1

Our pair started their weekend against Durham. In a very solid display, they barely let their opponents get a look in. They conceded just the one shot and secured a convincing 12-1 win.

Session 2

Essex were the next opponents for our pair. After making a slow start to the game Mick and Pete eventually took the lead mid-way through the game. Unfortunately, a couple of dropped shots on the 8th end meant they went into the final end trailing 8-7. One shot down on the final end, Pete attempted to trail the jack back to pick up two shots and take the win. Unfortunately, he just missed and the game was lost 9-7.

Session 3

The recent eastern counties champions, Cambridgeshire, were the next opponents. In a tight game, we just managed to take a narrow lead into the final end which we were able to protect and come away with a 7-5 win.

Session 4

The final game of the day would be against Norfolk. They had won their first three matches. Therefore, it was vital that our pair won this game to give them a chance of competing on Sunday. The game started well, picking up four consecutive singles. Two dropped shots on ends five and six level the game at 4-4. They managed to establish a three shot lead going into the final end by winning ends seven and eight. In a bit of trouble on the final end, Pete was able to score the jack to the back of the carpet with his first wood before drawing shot with his second to take a 8-4 win.

Session 5

The first game on Sunday would be against Sunderland. A terrible start saw our pair 7-0 down after two ends, and 8-0 down after three. On a carpet that was difficult to get at the jack on when other woods were they first our pair were unable to recover from the slow start and shipped shots on the final ends to lose emphatically 18-5.

Session 6

Northumberland were the next opponents, and were currently leading the way. Mick and Pete had to win this game to maintain hopes of taking the title. In a very tight game there was never more than a shot or two in it. They took a two shot lead into the final end which they were able to protect and took the match 8-7.

Session 7

Going into the final game against Suffolk, our pair found themselves in 3rd place. Norfolk lead the way on 10 points and 49 shots. Northumberland were in 2nd place on 8 points and 52 shots and our pair were in 3rd place on 8 points and 47 shots.

To stand any chance we needed Norfolk to lose and us to make up three shots on them. We also needed Northumberland to not win, or if they did we would need to make up six shots on them. Northumberland were playing Essex, they trailed for most of the game. They did fight back but were only able to secure a 5-5 draw so were now out of the running.

Norfolk trailed 6-3, but picked up three shots on the 8th end to level the game at 6-6 playing the final end. Meanwhile, our pair had opened up a 9-6 lead playing the final end. Mick and Pete were one down on the final end and had one wood left to play. Over on the other mat, which Mick and Pete

had stopped to watch, Sunderland (Norfolk's opponents) had one final wood to bowl. Norfolk were holding two shots and a championship lie. The Sunderland skip played a running shot that promoted a wood into the head for shot and took the game 7-6. Pete had a quick jog over to the scoring table to check the position, before deciding they had done enough and did not need to bowl his final wood, taking a 9-7 win.

Mick and Pete won five and lost two of their seven games. They took the title by the slimmest of margins of just one shot. This goes to show that every single shot in every single game matters. It looked like after the defeat on Sunday morning they had blown their chances but with some good bowls in the final two games, and results going their way they managed to edge home and win their second national title.

The final results and table are shown below

		Cambs	Durham	Essex	Herts	Norfolk	N'land	Suffolk	S'land	Pl	Pts	F	A
PAIRS	Cambridgeshire		5 - 8	9 - 4	5 - 7	6 - 7	5 - 6	8 - 6	13 - 3	7	6	51	41
	Durham	8 - 5		8 - 4	1 - 12	3 - 10	4 - 11	6 - 12	4 - 16	7	4	34	70
	Essex	4 - 9	4 - 8		9 - 7	4 - 8	5 - 5	3 - 9	6 - 8	7	3	35	54
	Hertfordshire	7 - 5	12 - 1	7 - 9		8 - 4	8 - 7	9 - 7	5 - 18	7	10	56	51
	Norfolk	7 - 6	10 - 3	8 - 4	4 - 8		10 - 5	10 - 4	6 - 7	7	10	55	37
	Northumberland	6 - 5	11 - 4	5 - 5	7 - 8	5 - 10		12 - 8	11 - 4	7	9	57	44
	Suffolk	6 - 8	12 - 6	9 - 3	7 - 9	4 - 10	8 - 12		7 - 6	7	6	53	54
	Sunderland	3 - 13	16 - 4	8 - 6	18 - 5	7 - 6	4 - 11	6 - 7		7	8	62	52

PAIRS	Pl	Pts	F	A
1 Hertfordshire	7	10	56	51
2 Norfolk	7	10	55	37
3 Northumberland	7	9	57	44
4 Sunderland	7	8	62	52
5 Suffolk	7	6	53	54
6 Cambridgeshire	7	6	51	41
7 Durham	7	4	34	70
8 Essex	7	3	35	54

Winners: Mick Cook & Pete Cook (Hertfordshire)

Singles

Session 1

Craig started his weekend off with a tough game against Durham. He got off to a fine start and managed to secure an important early win 11-5.

Session 2

Essex would be the second round opponents for Craig. In a close game, Craig was probably more in control than the score line reflected. The final score was a 9-7 win

Session 3

Cambridgeshire, the recent Eastern Counties champion, would be Craig's 3rd opponent. In a high quality game that came down to the final woods on the final end Craig did just enough to secure a vital 7-6 win.

Session 4

The Norfolk player, who had struggled so far losing all three games, would be Craig's final opponent of the day. The Norfolk player, seemed to have saved his best for this game as Craig only took a single shot lead into the final end. He was able to secure a single on that final end and took the match 9-7.

Session 5

Although he was not having the best of weekends by his standard, the Sunderland player would be a tough start for Craig first up Sunday morning. Craig came flying out of the blocks and never let his opponent settle. He went on to secure a very good 15-3 win.

Session 6

The experienced Northumberland player, who had won the singles before, would be Craig's penultimate opponent. Craig started well and built a small early lead. However, some consistent bowling from his opponent over the 2nd half of the game saw the match slip away from Craig and the game was lost 11-5.

Session 7

Despite only suffering his first defeat of the weekend in the previous session, Craig slipped from 1st to 3rd. Durham now lead the way on 10 points and 62 shots. Suffolk, who Craig would play in the final session were on 10 points and 60 shots. Craig sat in 3rd spot with 10 points and 57 shots.

The game against the experienced Suffolk player, who won the first ever National singles would likely be a close one. Therefore, as Craig was 5 shots behind the Durham player, his best chance of winning would be if Cambridgeshire could beat Durham. That is exactly what happened, as the Durham player fell to a 9-3 loss.

That now meant that Craig did not have to worry about shots, he just had to win the game to take the title. As expected, it was a very close game. The score was 3-3 after seven ends. The Suffolk player in attempting to trial the jack on the 8th end saw it stop on the end of the carpet for a split second, before dropping off the end. That gave Craig a 5-3 advantage playing the final end.

Craig found himself two shots down with himself and his opponent both having one wood to bowl. Craig would need to at least take second shot with this bowl or his opponent would have the title. It looked like the easiest shot would be to play in to the two shots that were holding. However, Craig

showed his class by playing a nerves backhand draw to take shot. With the final bowl, in attempting to rest that bowl out, the Suffolk player went too wide and missed the head handing Craig the title.

Craig won six of his seven matches and was the deserved winner. This was Craig's 3rd singles title, the first player to achieve that feat. He now has 9 national titles in total and remains the most decorated player in our sport.

The final results and table are shown below

		Cambs	Durham	Essex	Herts	Norfolk	N'land	Suffolk	S'land	Pl	Pts	F	A
SINGLES	Cambridgeshire		9 - 3	8 - 10	6 - 7	10 - 5	8 - 5	7 - 10	5 - 5	7	7	53	45
	Durham	3 - 9		11 - 6	5 - 11	13 - 2	10 - 5	11 - 2	12 - 2	7	10	65	37
	Essex	10 - 8	6 - 11		7 - 9	15 - 1	5 - 10	5 - 9	4 - 11	7	4	52	59
	Hertfordshire	7 - 6	11 - 5	9 - 7		10 - 7	5 - 11	6 - 3	15 - 3	7	12	63	42
	Norfolk	5 - 10	2 - 13	1 - 15	7 - 10		4 - 11	0 - 17	2 - 15	7	0	21	91
	Northumberland	5 - 8	5 - 10	10 - 5	11 - 5	11 - 4		4 - 11	10 - 3	7	8	56	46
	Suffolk	10 - 7	2 - 11	9 - 5	3 - 6	17 - 0	11 - 4		11 - 2	7	10	63	35
	Sunderland	5 - 5	2 - 12	11 - 4	3 - 15	15 - 2	3 - 10	2 - 11		7	5	41	59

SINGLES	Pl	Pts	F	A
1 Hertfordshire	7	12	63	42
2 Durham	7	10	65	37
3 Suffolk	7	10	63	35
4 Northumberland	7	8	56	46
5 Cambridgeshire	7	7	53	45
6 Sunderland	7	5	41	59
7 Essex	7	4	52	59
8 Norfolk	7	0	21	91

Winner: Craig Hearn (Hertfordshire)

Team

With two sessions completed we were leading the way on 11 points, Suffolk were just one behind and one point further back on 9 were Cambridgeshire and Norfolk. The third session saw us stretch our legs, moving on to 17 points and were now 3 ahead of both Suffolk and Northumberland, although there were only three points separating 2nd from 7th place.

Saturday finished with us still leading the way having moved on to 23 points, but Suffolk were now on their own in second, only 1 point behind, with a gap having opened up to the next best teams, Cambridgeshire and Sunderland who were on 17 points. We extended our lead over Suffolk to 3 points first thing on Sunday with Cambridgeshire now in a clear third spot, a further 4 points back.

With one session to go Hertfordshire maintained their 1 point lead over Suffolk with the title now bound to go to one of them. It so happened that the pairs and singles played Suffolk in their final game with a chance of securing the team title with two games to play. That is exactly what happened, with both teams winning.

Defeat for the triples and fours in the final session meant that the margin of victory finished at one point but our first ever National county title had been secured!!

TEAM	Pl	Pts	F	A
1 Hertfordshire	28	37	229	194
2 Suffolk	28	36	271	166
3 Cambridgeshire	28	32	241	177
4 Sunderland	28	32	204	214
5 Norfolk	28	27	190	240
6 Durham	28	26	200	236
7 Northumberland	28	23	201	221
8 Essex	28	11	162	250

Winners: Hertfordshire

An amazing weekend. Our first ever National County team title to go with three individual disciplines. The only other time a county had won three of the individual titles was Cambridgeshire in 2001. We have, as a county, won 17 individual titles, which is 3 more than the next best county. The fact that we are now regularly winning multiple titles shows the strength in depth we have as a county and it seems whoever represents us each year has a realistic chance of bringing home the trophy.