

## Norfolk v Hertfordshire 4<sup>th</sup> January 2026

On a wintry morning, Hertfordshire started the New Year with an away match against Norfolk, at Wortwell Community Centre. The teams selected were:

H1	H2	H3	H4	H5	H6
D Smith	R Hart	D Danby	Maz Cook	J Warren	J Harris
R Drury	G Young	S Palmer	C Drury	A Cobbold	J Hilson
J Smalley	S McNeil	L Edmead	S Missing	A Missing	T Ellis
C Hearn	N Tuckey	J Ellis	P Cook	M Thurley	R Hearn

First up were Herts 1/3/5 against the Norfolk odd numbered rinks. All three rinks were having to work, with H1 and H5 both winning by the same scoreline, 10-7. Unsurprisingly the Ellis/S Frost match-up was a tight tactical affair, with H3 eventually crawling over the line 7-6. Herts had stamped some early authority on the match taking 6 points from 6.

Next up were Herts 2/4/6 who would face the Chris/Arthur/M Frost rinks. Herts 2 were struggling early, but improved mid game and going into the last end 2 up, played a sensible end of bowls to hang on to a single and come home 7-4. H4 were in a close battle with Arthur's team, which being a triple and Phylis having 3 woods would always be a tough opponent. 5-6 down on the last, Pete managed to take out the Norfolk shot and stay for 1. With Arthur narrowly missing his reply, the game was drawn 6-6. H6 had a nightmare first end, dropping a 6, and although they scored more shots than Norfolk over the remaining 8 ends, the damage had been done and the game was lost 7-9. So an even 3-3 session, and Herts were still leading the match 9-3 overall.

The third session started tight in all three games, but all three Herts rinks were able to take control with some excellent bowls played. H1 ran away with it, and although Norfolk played a superb last end to score a 4, it was never a threat to the result and H1 came through 13-9. H3 played some accurate bowls and Lisa dominated the Norfolk 3, enabling Jason to keep Norfolk in check with some blocking woods, and run away with it comfortably, 12-4. H5 were always in a contest against S Frost, but controlled the game well to win 9-5. In a convincing session of bowls, Herts had extended the overall lead to 15-3.

Norfolk were on the back foot going into session 4, but responded well. H6 were pummelled by Arthur's triple 2-14, and with the N6 lead barely missing, H2 were unable to get into their game and despite late chances, were deservedly beaten 5-10. H4 were the saving grace from the session, with the biggest scoreline of the day, a comfortable 19-1 win over Chris's rink. So the overall score was 17-7 with 2 sessions remaining.

The fifth session saw H1/3/5 play their third and final games. H1 struggled throughout, on a carpet where it was tricky to retrieve losing counts. They were never really out of it and battled on until the end, but S Frost was able to manage the lead and the game was lost 4-9. Better news for H3, who put in a controlled, well managed performance to ease away to an 10-5 win and complete an excellent six point maximum for the day. H5 were involved in an edgy, low scoring affair. The key moment game when Matt, going for a takeout on the Norfolk wood for a count of 4, caught some of the jack, which could have gone anywhere, but stayed on the carpet for two shots to Herts. An element of fortune, but this took the contest by the scruff of the neck, and H5 held on for the win 7-3, to complete a well deserved 6 point haul for the day. This was a decent session for Herts who took the spoils 4-2 and extended their match lead to 21-9.

The last session arrived, and there was still plenty to play for with Essex and Cambs well clear in the league table, and Suffolk lurking. In the first game to finish, H6 could not get anything going against Chris's rink, falling away to a 4-11 defeat. H4, in what always looked like a game that would go to the wire, went into the final end 8-6 up. Once the jack was moved back it became difficult for M Frost to access, and Herts were able to limit the damage to a single a creep over the line 8-7. In the last game to finish, H2 had a poor start to trail 0-5 after 3, but found some form to reel off five straight ends and go 7-5 up entering the ninth. With some trouble brewing, Stuart was able to nail the jack with his second wood, a shot which Arthur was unable to better, and the win was sealed 8-5.

It was all over, final score **Norfolk 11-25 Hertfordshire**.

Arguably a flattering score against some well set up, gritty Norfolk rinks, it was a hard fought win with several close matches going our way, and enough to get back in contention for the league. H3 and H5 had excellent days with maximum 6 point hauls, and H4 secured an unbeaten 5 points. Most importantly, the games were played in excellent spirit, with opposition woods well applauded, and with sub zero temperatures outside it was definitely a good day to be playing carpet bowls.

Herts find themselves third in the league table, 3 points adrift of second placed Cambs and 10 points ahead of Suffolk. With leaders Essex still to play Cambs, Herts and Suffolk, there is every chance that the league will go down to the last day with 4 counties still in the hunt.

#### 2025/2026 SEASON

		Pl	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1	<b>Essex</b>	2	2	0	0	379	220	<b>57</b>
2	<b>Cambridgeshire</b>	2	1	0	1	347	233	<b>49</b>
3	<b>Hertfordshire</b>	2	2	0	0	288	263	<b>46</b>
4	<b>Suffolk</b>	2	1	0	1	293	259	<b>36</b>
5	<b>Norfolk</b>	2	0	0	2	243	331	<b>22</b>
6	<b>Bedfordshire</b>	2	0	0	2	180	424	<b>6</b>

	Bed	Cambs	Essex	Herts	Norf	Suff
<b>Bedfordshire</b>			4-32		15 Feb	18 Jan
<b>Cambridgeshire</b>	34-2		15 Mar	15 Feb		
<b>Essex</b>					25-11	15 Feb
<b>Hertfordshire</b>	15 Mar		18 Jan			21-15
<b>Norfolk</b>		18 Jan		11-25		
<b>Suffolk</b>		21-15			15 Mar	

Hertfordshire now look forward to a vital Eastern Counties league fixture against Essex at Applecroft School on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> January.