

ECCBA Team Bowl 5th October 2025

Hertfordshire travelled to Littleport on 5th October 2025 for the ECCBA Team Bowl. The teams selected were:

	H1	H2	H3	H4
Singles	N Tuckey	J Smalley	P Cook	P Harris
Pairs	L Edmead	Mick Cook	R Hart	A Missing
	C Hearn	S Missing	S McNeil	M Thurley
Triples	C Drury	D Smith	J Harris	E Thurley
	Maz Cook	G Young	D Watkins	J Hilson
	J Warren	J Ellis	A Cobbold	R Hearn

First up were Norfolk. The singles made a steady start, scoring 5 points, but the pairs struggled to get much going; in what proved to be the worst session of the day, only the Ron/Stuart pair picked up a win. So with 7 points from a possible 16, the day had not started well. However the triples stepped up with 3 wins and a draw, meaning the overall score against Norfolk was a solid 14-10 win.

The next opponents were Bedfordshire. The singles and triples swept all four games, with the pairs managing 3 wins out of four. This meant an impressive 22-2 win overall, taking Hertfordshire up to 36 points out of 48 and back in the running.

Then came Essex, and it was like running into a brick wall. The singles racked up 5 points with the solitary defeat coming by a close measure. The pairs were split 4-4, and the triples were in deep trouble with H3 and H4 defeated. The Carole/Maz/James triple managed to salvage a point. The day was looking decidedly average.

Then it happened. The Dave/Gary/Jason triple were 4-7 down going in to the last end. With his first wood, Ellis delivered a controlled takeout of the Essex shot wood from the end of the carpet to lay 3, then calmly drew in a fourth shot. When the Essex skip missed, the 8-7 win was secured and Hertfordshire somehow managed a 12-12 draw against Essex overall, despite being outscored by 11 shots. Hertfordshire were now on 48 points from 72, still in the contest, just 4 points behind the leaders Suffolk. With Cambridgeshire and Suffolk still to come, better performances were required but the title was mathematically well within reach.

The fourth opponents of the day were Cambridgeshire, who having had a strong start to the day had lost heavily to Suffolk, 7-17. The singles went well for Hertfordshire, 3 wins out of 4 were gained. With the Amy/Matt pair securing a comfortable 9-2 win, the remaining three pairs matches were tightly contested. The Cambridge skip played an excellent firing shot to hit a split and run through to edge out Ron and Stuart 4-6. Importantly for us, the Lisa/Craig and Mick/Simon pairs held on to the points with hard fought 6-4 and 8-5 wins. So could the triples finish the job? Of course they could. Despite a narrow 5-6 defeat for H3, the other three triples got their wins, and it was another 6 point mini session to complete an 18-6 rout. As Suffolk had beaten Norfolk by a narrow 13-11 margin, Hertfordshire were now in the overall lead of the competition, albeit only by 1 point.

And here we were. Suffolk in front of us, the requirement from the match a 12-12 draw. Pressure, but Hertfordshire had some momentum from the previous session. It was a decent singles mini session, with 5 points gained, stretching the lead to 3 points. The pairs mini session would be absolutely vital, as Suffolk had loaded their triples line-up with 4 county skips. All four games, as expected, were high quality affairs which could have gone either way. Hertfordshire kept their heads and got over the line in three of the four matches, with 7-4, 8-3 and 6-3 wins for Lisa/Craig, Mick/Simon and Ron/Stuart. Amy and Matt were 3-8 down after 6, but with last wood Matt had an outside chance of getting the draw needed to win the competition. Sadly the Suffolk wood did not want to depart the head and it was not to be. But an excellent mini session had brought 6 points and Hertfordshire now led Suffolk by 7 points. With just 8 points left to play for, Hertfordshire needed a solitary point from the triples to win the title.

And so crunch time arrived. Our triples faced up against Suffolk, serial winners, with three of their triples teams having gone through the day with a 100% win record. Just one point required, but this was the utmost pressure. I know one thing, and that's I'm glad I was watching and not playing.

The opening ends were tense, with singles being scored across the board. Then came the break Herts were looking for. Emma/Jo/Bec scored a four on the second end to go 5-0 up after 2. Suffolk would not give up, clawing back a single, then another. On the fifth end, Suffolk lay 3 as the skips came to bowl. But Bec was not having any of it, forcing her way into the head with two running forehands, to get the shot and take a 6-2 lead into end 6 with just a few minutes remaining on the clock.

Meanwhile, the other 3 games were all tight. We had stayed in all four games and given ourselves multiple chances to secure the title.

Ultimately all eyes were on mat 2. Jacqui, Dan and Andy went into the final end 4-5 down, their game being slightly ahead of the others, this was the chance to seal it. Suffolk controlled the end, with shot wood 3 inches short. Opting not to block but attempting to draw a closer shot wood, the Suffolk skip missed narrow, leaving Andy the chance. The forehand draw was open but had to be precise.

The wood started on line and this was all about weight. Too light and it would get wrecked on the Suffolk shot wood, too heavy and it would sail past the head.

But no mistake from Cobbold. Nailed the jack and the title was Hertfordshire's with a 5-5 draw. The best part.....strolled down and shook hands with the opposition like it was a Tuesday night roll up. Hertfordshire had just won their first ever Eastern Counties team title ever, in over 30 years of competition. With the pressure finally off, the other games concluded swiftly and in the end it was a mammoth session with 2 wins and 2 draws completing a 17-7 victory over Suffolk, to win the title by 11 points.

It's difficult to find words for this. The last two and a half hours of the day when we played Cambridgeshire and Suffolk was arguably the best level of consistent bowls we have ever produced. The two debutants Carole and Dan, called up at short notice, fitted in seamlessly. The triples scored 30 points out of 40 which is a phenomenal return. Jack had an impressive day in singles with a 100% record. A special mention to the pair of Mick and Simon, who after two 1 shot defeats and a drubbing, never gave up and produced 2 wins in the last 2 sessions when it mattered.

Hertfordshire now look forward to a competitive weekend at the National Championships at Potters from 24th to 27th October.