

Hertfordshire v Essex 18th January 2026

Hertfordshire continued the New Year with a home match against Essex, at Applecroft School. The teams selected for Hertfordshire were:

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

The Essex team on the day was:

Essex 1 - Terry Marsh/Diane Orrin/Wendy Gillman/Andrew 'Ginge' Searle

Essex 2 - Trevor Kidd/Michelle Lord/Sue Parrish/Don Poulter

Essex 3 - Marilyn Bennet/Ashley Perkins/Lin Hill/Peter Orrin

Essex 4 - Ian Reeves/Jim McLintock/Paul Perkins/Colin Lord

Essex 5 - Val Kidd/Maxine Poulter/Rob Myall/Darren Wrenn

Essex 6 - Martin Bennet/Graham Evans/Greg King/Mervyn Bushe

(sorry that was blatantly copied from the Essex report)

First up were Herts 1/3/5 against the Searle/Orrin/Wrenn rinks. It was clear from very early on that Essex had come to win, with some excellent front end bowlers. They'd had an exceptional start to the season with 57 points on the board from a possible 72.

All three Herts rinks played well in this session, with H1 and H3 both winning fairly comfortably in the end, 11-5 and 11-3 respectively. H5 v E5 was a much closer affair, but Matt's rink held on for an 8-7 win. Herts had broken the back of the match early, taking 6 points from 6.

Next up were Herts 2/4/6 who would face the Poulter/Lord/Bushe rinks. Herts 2 were struggling early against Don, but got lucky with a running shot on the 6th end to square the game and didn't look back, coming home 13-6. H4 were in a close battle with Colin's team, which always looked like going the distance, and it didn't disappoint at 5-5 after 8 ends. Essex played a strong last end, forcing H4 to run at the head, and unfortunately the jack was caught too clean and left the carpet, resulting in a 5-7 defeat. H6 were also in a tight contest against Mervyn's rink, but held their nerve to cling on 9-8. So from a session that could have been any score, Herts took 4 points and were leading the match 10-2 overall.

The third session saw H1 up against E3, and they turned in a fine display to keep Essex at bay, coming through 12-4. H3 could not get to grips with dodgy mat 1, and suffered a nightmare start, 0-7 down after 2 ends. Any attempts to build heads were thwarted by an impressive E5 rink, and the damage could not be undone, with a 2-13 defeat ensuing. H5 were once again in a battle, this time against the Searle rink, but with the help of some fine

recovery woods from Amy, they were able to eke out a 10-7 win. Herts had extended the overall match lead to 14-4 at the halfway stage.

Essex were on the back foot going into session 4, but responded well. H2 were comprehensively outplayed by E4, and although they stayed in the game, were unable to better the Essex wood on the last end, and were deservedly beaten 4-7. H4 were faring much better. With some excellent lead and 2 bowls they controlled the game and went into the final end 8-4 up. They didn't play the end well, but Essex had too many short woods to give themselves a good chance, and H4 clung on 8-7. The big contest was on the quick middle mat. H6 were struggling early against Don's rink and were 2-5 down mid game. But they battled hard, and in an important turnaround for the momentum of the day, won the game 8-7, and making the overall score 18-6 to Herts.

The fifth session saw H1/3/5 play their third and final games. H1 struggled throughout against a confident E5, who found the pace of the mat early, and the game went away quickly, with the final damage a 5-16 loss. Better news for H3, who were in a tight battle which ended up a last end shootout. They only ended up with one wood in the head, but it was so well positioned they only needed to block one side of the mat, which they managed, and crawled over the line 7-6. H5 were once again in a tough game, this time against the Orrin rink. They kept it tight for a while but Essex played a superb 8th end to go 8-3 up. There was briefly a chance for Matt's rink to pick up a count, but the Essex captain removed the jack from the carpet to condemn H5 to a 5-8 defeat. It was Essex who took the session 4-2 and reduced the Herts lead to 20-10 with one session remaining.

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, H4 but in a convincing performance against Don, easing away 14-6. H2, in their best display of the day by some distance, picked up an early 4 and were then able to manage the game, eventually winning 13-3. In the final game to finish, H6 were in a ding-dong, high scoring affair. After a poor start they clawed it back to 10-10 after 6 ends, then picked up a 3 to go 13-10 ahead. But in a final twist, E4 were determined not to let go, and played a brilliant final two ends to take the win 15-13. The final session was won 4-2 by Herts.

It was all over, final score **Hertfordshire 24-12 Essex**.

It had been a match of fine margins and Essex have to be disappointed to only come away with the 12 points. For Hertfordshire, it had been a strong start to the match but quite an inconsistent performance towards the end, the key to the result being that all five matches decided by a single shot were won by Herts.

Herts find themselves top of the league table, 1 point ahead of Essex and only 4 points ahead of Suffolk, with Cambridgeshire only a further 4 points adrift. Herts will need a close match between Essex and Suffolk, combined with an away win at Cambs, to be favourites, but this league season has all the hallmarks of going down to the last session, perhaps even the last end. As it's been well documented that the current commentary team are not up to scratch, we've booked Martin Tyler to do some commentary on March 15th.

2025/2026 SEASON

		Pl	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1	Hertfordshire	3	3	0	0	446	398	70
2	Essex	3	2	0	1	514	378	69
3	Suffolk	3	2	0	1	482	360	66
4	Cambridgeshire	3	1	0	2	473	393	62
5	Norfolk	3	1	0	2	403	457	45
6	Bedfordshire	3	0	0	3	281	613	12

	Beds	Cambs	Essex	Herts	Norf	Suff
Bedfordshire			4-32		15 Feb	6-30
Cambridgeshire	34-2		15 Mar	15 Feb		
Essex					25-11	15 Feb
Hertfordshire	15 Mar		24-12			21-15
Norfolk		23-13		11-25		
Suffolk		21-15			15 Mar	

Hertfordshire now look forward to the away Eastern Counties league fixture against Cambs at Littleport on Sunday 15th February.