



newsletter

CHAMPIONS!



The Bedfordshire team at Compton with the Division 2 trophy. From left: Tom Anderson, Howard Bottomley, Rod Ashwell, Jon Watson, John Wheeler, Terry Mahoney and George Collin.

The Bedfordshire Inter Counties team, who just missed out on promotion in 1998, made no mistake this year by finishing as Champions of Division 2 with eight wins from ten matches. It was a close-run thing - had they not won their last match against the Channel Islands they would have finished fourth instead of first, as the three teams below them on seven wins had all won more games.

Division 1			Division 2		
	Matches	Games		Matches	Games
Surrey	8	22	Beds	8	18
Middx	8	21	Suffolk	7	21
Gloucs	7	21	Northants	7	18
Essex	7	18	Berks	7	18
Cheshire	6	17	Ch Islands	6	20
Avon	5	18	N'umberlnd	6	17
Dorset	4	14	Warwicks	5	15
Yorks	3	10	Glamorgan	3	13
Sussex	3	9	Kent	3	11
Notts	2	8	Dublin	3	10
Lancs	2	7	Herts	0	4

For those unfamiliar with the format, a match consists of three games of doubles played to advanced rules with 3 or 3¼ hour time limits, so at least two of the pairs have to win to take the match. The order of the pairings is done by combined handicap, so a pairing of a 1 and a 2 would play above a pairing of a -1 and a 4½. As a team can be drawn from up to nine players and the pairings are only revealed to the opposing captain just before the start of the game there is considerable scope for variation depending on the likely pairings of the opposition. The Inter Counties is the biggest tournament

in the world with over 120 players taking part and is held at the Southwick and Compton (Eastbourne) clubs.

The following report comes courtesy of "Podgers", otherwise known as Jon Watson. The Editor has added explanatory notes in brackets where necessary.

Bombshell number one came on Saturday when John Wheeler retired as captain, and by common consensus Howard was appointed and duly sent off to the Captain's meeting. After this excitement we got off to a good start beating Northumberland on the cabbage patch (*the top two lawns at Southwick which are not quite up to the standard of the other nine*). Tom and George caused mental meltdown in their opponents, winning on time, and Jon and Howard just managed to peg out after time. Round two and disaster as we fold to Glamorgan. The top game is lost to Ian Burridge's hitting in, and the middle game to some overly complex tactics in the endgame. The last match on Saturday against Berkshire is worse, with the top game lost after Jon misses from four yards with the game there for the taking. A wedding reception and disco in the hotel does nothing for our alertness the next morning, but we manage a 2-1 win against Dublin's modest opposition (*the definition of a county can be flexible*). The next match is against Hertfordshire and results in our only 3-0 win. Jon and Howard keep Nigel Gray on hoop 1 and cruise to a comprehensive win. We have a bye in the last round on Sunday so it's off to the hotel pool for an invigorating team swim, though Terry never did turn up in a black leather thong (*No, I don't see the significance of this either!*) We consider the next days' matches and it looks tough. More than four wins could be very tricky.

Good news on Monday morning. Dennis Shaw (*an experienced Counties player*) has dropped himself from the Kent team. Thus unfrustrated, J&H cruise to another easy win backed up by the team. (*In this match Jon played a take off from hoop 2 which finished behind the ball in corner 4. The lawns at Southwick were medium pace at best and could have done with closer mowing, and Barlow GT balls were used. In Tom and Rod's game Rod hit in, time was called and he made a hoop to give a four point lead, leaving his balls in corners 1 and 4. A passer-by apparently heard on of their opponents say to the other: "I've lost the will to live."*) Over lunch a daring plot is hatched and the top two teams stacked for the match against Suffolk (*"Stacked" is a technical term meaning the top two teams are the best possible.*) Howard drops Tom and then plays like him after Jon gets to 4-back early. Richard Kimmerling gets round, but "Fingers" Eardley only makes a roquet after three hours and six minutes! Rod and John have a fine win over Steve Comish and Celia Steward and we are home 2-1. George and Terry have a massive game, with George cheering himself up by going to the peg on the fourth turn and controlling the tactics in the inevitable three ball ending. The game was only lost by three points, but it

was a hoot and George lost his black mood of the morning.

Buoyed up by this shock win we face local enemies Northants (now without the recently deceased John Anstey) with renewed vigour. Jon is soon round and after a while Howard gets to the peg. After a good break from Lionel Tibble Jon gets to peg but is unlucky with a hill after rover and can only peg one out. Lionel hits from 28 yards but Howard soon hits to win +3. John and Rod lose to Brian Hallam and Peter Stansfield but Tom and George bring us home. Jubilant at dinner, we sink some wine in celebration and resolve to beat Warwickshire the next morning.

Off to Compton, and it's fast . . . scary fast! *(As well as a faster surface, Compton were using Eclipse balls. A measure of the speed can be given by the example of a hoop approach made by Jon. Doing a backward take-off a foot away from hoop one and making the gentlest of contacts, the ball finished four feet way from the hoop. He ran it!)* Jon and Howard lose by two on time, but the others win with John Wheeler showing his touch and experience in a sweaty ending after time to win +1. *(This involved considerable discussion before the turn, which required John to make 1-back and then dig both opponent balls out of baulk).* We are stunned to discover that we are in the lead. Our last match is against the Channel Islands. Jon and Howard are soon down but the opponents are unable to make progress with the second ball. We grind them down until a rash shot gives Howard a break which he eagerly accepts. They lift the wrong ball *(the forward ball)* to give Jon a break to the peg, then miss to let Howard get to the peg, but he misses a short one after rover. We soon regain control and Howard pegs out to level the match at 1-1 as John and Rod had gone down to the mother and son pairing of Matthew and Sarah Burrow. George and Tom are miles ahead on time and when the last shot is missed we are champions. John accepts the shield on our behalf and we return to the hotel still stunned. Phone calls home are to the sound of the raucous singing of "We are the champions."

John Wheeler's detailed chart of the teams results is included with this newsletter.

Other match results

Friendly vs Oxford University (home)

2 May

Won 5-1

Wrest Park	H'cap	Oxford	H'cap	WP score
Eric Audsley	1½	Guy Bradbury	14	+8(T)
Peter Berry	10	Neil Morton	16	
John Bevington	3½	Rupert Parson	12	+1(T)
Paul Sharrock	8	Robert Bates	(19)16	
Eric Audsley	1½	Rupert Parson	12	-13
John Bevington	3½	Guy Bradbury	14	+7
Paul Sharrock	8	Neil Morton	16	+8
Peter Berry	10	Robert Bates	(19)18	+5

Oxford's traditional early season visit was as enjoyable as ever and made memorable by Marianne's three-star catering for lunch and tea, to which the hungry students did full justice.

Inter Club vs Bowdon (away)

9 May

Lost 1-6

Wrest Park	H'cap	Bowdon	H'cap	WP score
Jon Watson	-½	Colin Irwin	-1½	+6OTP
Howard Bottomley	+½	James Hawkins	-½	
Terry Mahoney	3½	Peter Taylor	-½	-23
John Bevington	3½	Brian Storey	-½	-6
Jon Watson	-½	Colin Irwin	-1½	-19
Howard Bottomley	+½	James Hawkins	-½	-3
Terry Mahoney	3½	Brian Storey	-½	-6
John Bevington	3½	Peter Taylor	-½	-25

We could only send out our C team for what was always going to be a hard struggle against last year's champions, but Jon eventually came home to win the doubles after Howard had been tripled out by Colin Irwin. Peter Taylor won both his games quite easily, but both John and Terry kept Brian Storey busy for some time. Howard entertained the crowd and nearly pulled out a win at the end.

Beds/Herts League vs Colworth (away)

9 May

Won 4-0

Wrest Park	H'cap	Colworth	H'cap	WP score
Paul Sharrock	8	Norman Davren	2	+1(T)
Peter Newman	(18)16	Steve Jones	9	
David Parsons	11	Norman Davren	2	+24
Peter Newman	(18)16	Trevor Wilkins	9	
David Parsons	11	Trevor Wilkins	9	+4(T)
Paul Sharrock	8	Steve Jones	9	+1(T)

Mary Rose vs Colworth (home)

15 May

Won 4-3

Wrest Park	H'cap	Colworth	H'cap	WP score
Rod Ashwell	2	Norman Davren	2	+10
George Collin	3	Tom Anderson	2½	
Terry Mahoney	3½	Judy Anderson	6	+14
John Bevington	4	Arthur Weightman	3	-17
Rod Ashwell	2	Norman Davren	2	+24
George Collin	3	Tom Anderson	2½	-22
Terry Mahoney	3½	Arthur Weightman	3	-26
John Bevington	4	Judy Anderson	6	+12

Somehow (!) we imagined that the doubles would be a protracted game, and so it proved when Wrest Park finally pegged out after five hours and four minutes. The revelation was Arthur, who gave a demonstration of precision and accuracy in his two wins.

Beds/Herts League vs St Albans (away)

29 May

Lost 0-4

Wrest Park	H'cap	St Albans	H'cap	WP score
John Bevington	3½	Richard Smith	10	-6(T)
Peter Berry	9	Dick Barnard	14	
Tim Brewer	10	Chris Frost	12	-21
John Bevington	3½	Chris Frost	12	-10
Tim Brewer	10	Dick Barnard	14	
Peter Berry	9	Richard Smith	10	-10(T)

John managed all-round breaks in both doubles games but failed to peel Chris through rover and peg him out,

which lost us our best opportunity to win the game. Chris and Richard's play belied their handicaps.

Longman Cup vs Ealing (home)

5 June

Won 3-2

Wrest Park	H'cap	Ealing	H'cap	WP score
John Bevington	3½	David Earle	9	+3(T)
Peter Smith	12	Tony Tizard	11	
Peter Berry	9	Colin McKenzie	10	-17
David Parsons	11	Quiller Barrett	10	
John Bevington	3½	David Earle	9	-7(T)
Peter Berry	9	Colin McKenzie	10	
David Parsons	11	Tony Tizard	11	+11
Peter Smith	12	Quiller Barrett	10	+18

The visit of Ealing marked a welcome return for former club member Colin McKenzie, and Quiller Barrett (manager of the club competitions and the All England Handicap) was able to remind us that Wrest Park had not yet entered the All England, a problem quickly resolved by Peter Smith's putting through a call to Eric on his mobile. In the morning doubles John went round to penult on the fourth turn. This cushion was enough for a narrow win and the teams went into lunch with the honours even. Peter Smith had to change his mallet after losing one of the end faces early in his game against Quiller. He picked Jon Watson's old mallet from the selection in the hut, and, unflustered by the fact that it had a considerably longer head than his old one, put his two bisques to good use with a convincing win. David Parsons also had a good win against Tony. The wins in the singles were crucial as Colin repeated his form of the morning with a good break played in pouring rain. John managed a response with a three-ball break to 2-back but we were always behind. David should have won cleanly but in his last turn elected to peg out John and himself instead of the fairly simple option of picking up and pegging out his partner.

In the picture at Hunstanton

CROQUET ACTION ALL RON



Hunstanton Croquet Club hosted its Robert Pritchard weekend with competitors playing for the Lord Fermoy Cup. Winner was Ian Bond, of Surbiton CC, and runner-up was Jon Watson, of Wrest Park CC, Bedfordshire. Our picture shows Hunstanton CC member Ron Gosden in action, watched by Rod Ashwell. Picture: ROY WILLIAMSON (99/05/11)

This cutting was taken from the Lynn News of Friday May 7. This advanced tournament has become a regular fixture for a number of club members and is deservedly popular for its relaxed management style and excellent catering and beer.

Handicap tournament 21-23 May

There were 26 entries (with plenty of first-time visitors) and manager Eric Audsley divided them into three American blocks. The weather was windy throughout, with heavy showers late on Friday, plenty of sun on Saturday and dull with occasional sun on Sunday, and the easy-paced lawns speeded up over the weekend. Block A was won at a canter by Nick Parish (12) from Parson's Green who won all his eight games, four of them by 19 or more, followed by Alan Edwards and George Woolhouse, each with six wins. In block B Mike Gardner (12) from St. Albans and Wrest Park's John Bevington (4) both had five wins from seven, but Mike's aggregate of +53 beat John's +43 to give him the trophy. Robert Skeen (14), Eric Audsley (1½) and Pauline Davey (10) were hard on their heels with four wins each. Block C was not decided until the last game on Sunday, when York's David Jenkinson (8) beat Peter Berry (10) to give him six out of seven, leaving Peter as runner-up with five wins ahead of Angus Bell (14) and George Collin (3) on four each. There were a number of handicap changes and Pauline Davey, after getting some advice on technique from Eric, went out and beat Mick Belcham +26 in four turns, gaining her silver award in the process.

CA Gold Coaching Course

This was held at Wrest Park on 8/9 May, and George Collin and Tom and Judy Anderson were among the attendees as Steve Comish explained openings, leaves, three-ball breaks and the mysteries of the triple peel. We are all looking forward to seeing them putting the theory into practice on the lawns.

Bedford U3A Coaching Course

We are currently running a coaching course for the Bedford branch of the University of the Third Age (a national organisation which promotes activities for retired people). It is taking place on the four Thursdays in June (3, 10, 17, 24) from 2-4pm. Eleven people attended the first session in which John Bevington acted as coach. Anyone who has the time to spare and who would like to assist is more than welcome. U3A represents an ideal target audience and we should do what we can to encourage as many as possible to become members of the club. They have already discovered that there is rather more to the game than they thought!

The stars in July

The Wrest Park July tournament used to attract a large entry of quality players. In recent years the entry has fallen off a little, but this year the probable entrants will include Chris Clarke and David Openshaw (GB Test players), Phil Cordingley and, most interestingly, Jaques Fournier, a young American who was runner-up in last year's British Open Championship. Chris is ranked number three in the world and the others are all in the top 50, so it should be well worth watching. Tell your friends and pray for fine weather.

Club competitions

These are now well under way, and it is almost as hard to find an empty lawn on Thursday evenings as it is to find our usual corner table unoccupied when repairing to the Star & Garter afterwards. Many thanks for getting on with things so promptly.

Wrest Park Garden Festival

On Monday 31 May, while the Inter Counties team were winning at Southwick, Eric Audsley, Gordon Sampson, Peter and Dorothy Smith, Mary Russell and John Bevington were in attendance at Wrest Park encouraging visitors to the Garden Festival to try their hand and watch demonstration games. We took about £25, but we could have done with the megaphone - it's not easy to commentate on your own game. One has to wonder whether it is really worth continuing to support this event.

Help wanted

I have made a provisional booking for a party from the Ampthill 41 Club to come down for a croquet evening on Tuesday 10 August. They came last year and apparently had such a nice time that they want to come again. The contact is Gary Bedford (01525 404139). I will not be available so would appreciate one or more members volunteering to look after them. They will be coming down between 6.30 and 7, are aware of the charge of £3 per head, and some if not all will be going to the pub afterwards. Please let me know if you are in a position to help.

New members

Please welcome John Martin from Wootton (01234 768294) who has returned to croquet after a 15 year absence, and Frank Sheppard, a neighbour of Eric's in Lilley (01462 768251).

John Bevington

8 June 1999