



ALENCON 25 V HOOK RAVENS  
JAM LEAGUE  
11th DECEMBER 2025

Today I feel like singing a bit of Bon Jovi! Whoah, we're halfway there. Well we are in terms of the JAM League season, 7 matches played and 7 matches to go. Today was a weird day in the bowling universe. We played Alencon 25 in the Second Division match at Hook but we were the away team! That was because Alencon play their matches at Carnival Hall in Basingstoke and unfortunately the venue was mistakenly double booked. We agreed to move the fixture to Hook and to play at 1100 so we could finish before the Hawks took on Alencon AX in the First Division. For those of you that don't know, Alencon started off life as Loddon Vale SMB team but changed their name when they changed venue. They are named after the French town, just north of Le Mans and it is twinned with Basingstoke. They are Captained by James Durrant and the other team have Dave Goddard so you can imagine the competitive nature of the Alencon teams.

The other bizarre part to the game was that the Ravens were struggling to get a lady on both mats but Hannah Goddard passed a very late fitness test and we fielded a squad that would start off on level pegging. Or so we thought! As it turned out Alencon did not have a lady on both mats and the Ravens started off 5-0 up on mat 3! This is the second time we have started in that situation and sadly the second time we have lost the match! Don't worry ladies I am not looking at making this a tactic as you add way more than 5 points to the team! My thanks at this point go to Ken Hawkins for agreeing to move to reserve for the match to allow Hannah to take a spot in the squad.

The matches on both mats seemed to follow the same pattern with Alencon taking a strong lead and then Hook making great comebacks and putting the visitors, sorry the home team, under pressure. The Ravens held the overall game score for the first 5 ends thanks to the 5 point penalty for Alencon but by the 6th end the lead swapped hands and never returned back to Hook. Mat 1 saw Jon Waterman at Lead, Hannah Goddard at Second and Albert Johnson at Skip whilst Mat 3 was Brenda Grout at Lead, Stan Goddard at Second and Paul Crook at Skip. All played valiantly but Alencon played at a relentless pace and applied pressure that lesser teams might have crumbled under. You could sense the shock of the Hook team but they remained upbeat in adversity and so very nearly pulled off the comeback of the century.

The first 6 ends were close on both mats with Mat 1 even having a tied end on the 5th and Mat 3 only having one point for the side winning the end. Mat 1 then lost 4 shots on the 7th end and Mat 3 took a massive hit of 6 on the 8th end and a further 7 off the next 2 (2&5). After that both mats won more mats than they lost but the Alencon pressure meant that it was only 1s and 2s. Going into the final ends both mats could have won. Mat 3 finished their match first and need 4 to draw or 5 to win. At one point they actually held 5 and the crowd started to believe, then James Durrant with his Jupiter sized bowls spoiled the show by taking shot and Mat 3 lost 16-21. Mat 1 did exactly the same by needing 3 for a draw and 4 for a win. They also held enough shots at one point for the win but the Alencon Skip played some incredible shots that not only took shot but also forced the Hook bowls out of contention for a tally of 3 and the match ended in a 13-19 loss for Hook. The 29-40 overall score meant a 10-0 defeat and I felt that was a little harsh on the Ravens as they never stopped battling when it would have been easy to do so. I was also impressed by the constant battle to present positive language and body language. The stats might show we took a hammering but I can guarantee that Alencon will not be looking forward to the return match next year.

At this point I would like to take a lot of the responsibility for the result and none of this paragraph is meant as a slur against the ability of any player. I will put my hands up to a selection error of playing excellent players out of their preferred positions. This has happened during other matches this season due to necessity but today the opposition was too strong for this to have been a positive outcome. This does not mean any player played badly, it means the team could not benefit from their particular skills in delicate situations. The players did not shy away from their duties, they did not moan, they did not use it as an excuse. They stood proud, tried their best and on several occasions even better than they thought they could do and I was extremely proud of the way they played for the Ravens. The players in their normal positions did not bat an eyelid and they supported their teammates with positivity and support that allowed Alencon to taste a little of their own pressure medicine. Thank you to the whole squad today, you were much better than the result looks.

The season continues next week with a visit to Howard Park and hopefully a return to winning ways. Stay Warm and Go Ravens