



HOOK RAVENS v HOWARD PARK
JAM LEAGUE
20th November 2025

We are a third of the way through the Short Mat JAM League season and your Hook Ravens have arrived at this momentous point by topping the second division. This time the honour won't be snatched away from us due to an input error that so cruelly moved us to second placater just hours at the top. Today was a great reward for the hard work and great play that the squad has shown so far. That ethos must remain for a long time yet if the squad is to get the return to the top division but for the moment we should rejoice in the limelight shining on us. The team selection continues to be the nice headache of too many players to choose from and I thank the whole squad for their patience. The squad has 25 players and so far 14 have been used with many playing out if their preferred or at least comfortable position. Whilst some players are getting more game time than others I urge all squad members to continue to put their names down for selection if they are free, especially for the cup matches.

That system of playing people out of position continued today with Paul Crook making his season debut at Number 2 rather than skip. Before play started I had looked at the table and whilst nothing should ever be taken for granted in bowls I felt confident of a win and hoped for that elusive 10-0 win that has at some time or another been so close this season. We do not have to wait any longer for that win as Farnborough Gate arrived at the cauldron that is Hook Bowling Clubhouse! Rather than the intimidation players expect at venues such as Galatasaray or Napoli, Farnborough Gate were met with polite applause and acknowledgement from the loyal crowd of 2. Steve Potts and Dave Poulter were as mesmerised with some of the play as I was but we were always quick to praise the opposition when they played well. Hook Ravens were simply unstoppable today with both mats taking a 7 or an 8 from one end and both coming very close to the perfect hotshot.

Mat 1 consisted of Dave Wilson sporting his new shoes at Lead, Paul Crook at second and Liz Wilson as Skip. They stormed into a 3-0 lead after the first end but then stuttered a little with several ends being taken by both sides by just a single shot each. The 6th end saw Hook take their 7 shots for a 12-2 lead before the nip and tuck of taking ends returned. At one point during that end the opposition number 2 was heard to say 'You've got enough already, you don't need more' but the Ravens settled for that 7! As well as Hook played they could not quite put the opposition to bed. After 10 ends the Ravens lead 14-8 and all were well aware that losing a 4, 5 or 6 would turn the game on its head. This spurred the Hook trio on and a quick run of 3 excellent ends saw the lead turn into a much more comfortable 23-8. Although the crowd knew Hook were going to win the mat they were still on edge as Farnborough Gate gave as good as they got. Hook did the same and every time the visitors took an end with a good score, the hosts replied with the same. The game eventually finished 28-15 and both sides left the mat with smiles on their faces and hearty handshakes.

By the time Mat 1 finished, the game on Mat 2 was already over as Brenda Grout at Lead, Stan Goddard at Second and Albert Johnson at Skip were drinking a well earned cup of tea after a fantastic 29-9 win. They were far more dominant throughout the match but some of the work was as a result of the Farnborough Gate Skip firing a lot in an attempt to reduce the points tally but he often actually increased it! The Hook trio were happy taking 2s, 3s and 4s on their way to a 15-5 lead after 10 ends. 3 ends later the score was an impressive 28-5 after they took an 8, a 2 and a 3. With this the game was over and almost polite as the sides exchanged the odd end by one and even had a tied end on the 17th. Farnborough gate always went for a long jack when they had won and end and they never twigged that the Hook side enjoyed that length as well!

The final score of 57-24 was a great result and the top of the league beckoned. It all depended on how Alencon 25 had got on and their 6-4 away win meant the Ravens were on top. A few weeks ago scored 60 points away at Odiham D and I had mentioned to the crowd about how impressive a score that was so our 57 was to be highly commended. Today though Odiham D handed out their own punishment by scoring 74 against Marnell. Next week sees Odiham D visit Hook for a top v second clash. Get your tickets early as I am sure this one will sell out! Come on you Ravens lets do this!