



HOOK RAVENS v HOWARD PARK
JAM LEAGUE
9TH OCTOBER 2025

Imagine a ship sailing on the stormiest seas with waves over 30 feet high. Today, short mat bowls sailed on the good ship Raven in that storm. At the peak of the waves the ride was exhilarating but the drop to the troughs was like the scariest rollercoaster and then some!

The first day of the JAM Short Mat League is always full of anticipation for what the season ahead will hold. The excitement of the last season was still fresh in the squad's mind and they relished the challenge. This was a new season under new management and with the recent club trip to Spain still ringing in the ears it was a tough decision for Chris Vickers to put a side out rather than postpone but it was the decision he made. 3 players that went to Spain were named in the squad and they had to adjust back to the short mat after 4 tough matches on the outside mats of Torremolinos.

Howard Park arrived early and the anticipation of victory was clear in their swagger. A jovial start to the visit with laughter and good natured conversations about the match ahead made the start feel good. Scorecards completed and swapped for rinks, 1 and 3 were chosen, and then Howard park scored the first win of the day by winning the toss for mat, and then they duly gave it to the Ravens.

Lining up for Hook on mat 1 were Dave Wilson at Lead, Brenda Grout at Two and Albert Johnson as Skip. Mat 3 were Steve Potts playing out of position at Lead, Martyn Kee at Two and Liz Wilson was Skip.

The match started in a trough of the JAM stormy sea with Howard Park winning the first end on both mats by two shots. Rink 1 continued to sink but Rink 3 had a great win and the tide was turning. With the Spain players quickly getting back into the feel of short mat and the other 3 players increasing their confidence the Ravens climbed to the crest of the wave and by the end of 7th end had a combined lead of an incredible 13 points.

Then the mats discovered certain numbers that they liked so much that they were stuck on them for 4 or 5 ends. Mat 1 reminded me of Graham Taylor not liking Orange when Brenda was heard saying how she did not like being stuck on 13! Rink 3 were stuck on 11 but nobody, not even Howard Park realised that the 11-5 lead they had built up was soaked up in just 3 ends and they found themselves 11-14 down! Frustration was starting to set in but both skips showed the belief needed to succeed in short mat and at times it seemed like pure wizardry as the climb to the top of the wave again started.

5 ends later and it seemed like the Ravens were on top of the wave with wind in their sails as Mat 1 led 16-13 and Mat 3 led 20-14 after 15 ends but all that play bowls know you can never celebrate too soon. Both sets of Hook players showed nerves of steel and put thought of victory on the back burner as Howard Park were always nipping at their heels. Mat 1 were always slightly ahead of Mat 3 in terms of time of match play and it was a relief to all to see them reach the finish line with the speed of Sir Steve Redgrave after taking 6 off the final end, a 23-14 victory. Mat 3 had met the wrath of the Howard Park Lead playing patiently but then she was backed up by her second and the skip joined in just when Hook had hoped they were down and out. The joy of Mat 1 taking 6 was soon lost as Howard Park took 6 on the final end to win Mat 3 20-25. Thankfully the hard work of the 6 magnificent Ravens meant an overall Hook win 43-39 and 6 points claimed.

Meanwhile Chris Vickers was found looking to see if the club had a defibrillator anywhere such was the high and low journey he had been watching his squad battle and never give up. The battle over and both sides stopped to take their breath. Howard Park, naturally deflated after such a great fight and close comeback, were gracious in defeat. The Ravens aware of how close their precious victory came to disappearing at times were shell shocked but pleased with the win. As is tradition in bowls players were seen reviewing their shots during the match that did not quite go how they wanted it to and saying what if but instead they should have been reviewing the shots they got right. There was a few occasions that bowls appeared to breathe in and squeeze through gaps that were not there. The talk between skips, seconds and leads remained supportive and positive even when the belief might not have been there. This, ladies and gentlemen was teamwork at its greatest. We might not have won both mats but the hard work was there to get the points to achieve the overall victory. If the season is going to be like this all the way through then come on down and watch the entertainment but make sure you get permission from your doctor first!

Well done Ravens and thank you for your play and determination.

Go Ravens!