

All England AC club qualifier 1st May 2021 @ CP – Report by Graham Good

There were 4 entrants for this years club qualifier. Richard Leach (16), Jack Good (16), Ken Jones (5) and Roger Schofield (2 ½). There is no doubt that this is an unusual range of handicaps for this competition. The club has 2 recent winners, Graham Good (2014) and Phil Nuttall (2017) they were 12 & 16 when they won the National title and research shows the overall winner has usually had a handicap of low to mid teens.

More unusual was the fact that when Richard & Jack played in the Area's 2 years ago they both played off 24 as neither had played a full lawn 26pt match. That neither have played full lawn 26pt games since was simply down to the pandemic.

Hoops were set @ 1/8th as per Tournament Regs, though hoop 4 on Lawn 2 refused to be tighter than ¼" (but see later). The lawns are currently slowish, evenly paced and would probably benefit from more footfall.

First round Jack played Roger on Lawn 2. Jack went 2nd and took 2 bisques to go to peg. His leave was simple – a ball in each corner. Roger missed, Jack then took 6 ½ bisques to peg out. Meanwhile Richard played Ken. With 11 bisques Richard was always favourite but he had the odd wobble, which cost bisques to recover. His last bisque went with a couple of hoops still to run but he held his nerve and completed the peg out for a +11 win.

The second round saw Jack play Ken. This time Jack used 6 bisques 1st turn but a similar leave saw Ken hit in. With the break nicely set up, Ken broke down after hoop 1. Jack required his remaining bisques to peg out, a situation that was becoming familiar to Ken. Richard against Roger on Lawn 2 – simply read Richard v's Ken (above) but substitute+9!

After the morning hail/snow/rain the sun came out and the lawns dried distinctly unevenly. Conditions were challenging, made more so as hoops appeared to tighten as the day wore on. Richard v's Jack (Lawn 2) saw each player with 6 bisques. Richard got in first but used 3 bisques and really didn't make sufficient progress, whereas Jack required 4 but got to peg. Richard then used his remaining bisques but again didn't put a significant break together. Jack made some progress but broke down at 6. With both players now bisque-less and neither getting anywhere Jack gave up trying to set up a 4 ball break and simply did the other hoops 1 at a time, to finish in 2hrs 23mins. On Lawn 1 Ken v's Roger ebbed and flowed, with each player getting in but inexplicably getting out again. As time was running out frenetic scurrying around by Ken saw him leave Roger (who was just ahead) with a difficult shot in the timed turn. Roger missed but having got 1 of the required hoops, Ken broke down to leave Roger +3t.

So Jack qualifies for the areas (to be held at Bury in August).