

Men's Captain's End of Season Report 2022

With the season now over, I thought I would share with you some thoughts reflecting on what has in many ways a memorable season.

After two difficult covid dominated years which limited the amount of bowls we could play, in many ways 2022 heralded some sort of return to normality punctured by the occasional covid setback.

So on to the highlights of the season which kicked off with us welcoming over 20 new members to the club on Try It Day in April many of whom settled in quickly and showing great potential for the future. More of this later.

Those of us privileged to be there, will never forget the remarkable achievement of Bryan Coad and David Farley when they came within a whisker of sensationally knocking out English international Sam Tolchard and Louis Rideout in the first round of the Men's National Pairs competition in early May. The match saw sawed first one way then the other and with one end to go scores were level at 17-17. The Kings pair were in trouble after Bryan held the lead after his four shots. It needed Tolchard to fire the jack into the side ditch to rescue the situation by creating a dead end. Once again, in the fading light, Coad bowled brilliantly to take a two shot lead. Tolchard then fought back to go one up. This time Farley stepped up to retake the lead with his last shot. Yet again Tolchard removed the Brixham wood to snatch victory with the last shot of the match. What drama! A few weeks later Rideout (gold and silver) and Tolchard (silver and bronze) were winning medals at the Commonwealth game in Birmingham!

There was more drama and brinkmanship in the Leagues. With three games to go both the Ladies SDL B team and the Men's MDL team looked destined for relegation to lower divisions. Did they let their heads go down? No way! Remarkably both teams won their final 3 games to avoid the drop. The ladies by taking 28 out of a possible 30 points finished runners up to gain promotion to Division 3 while the men finished in a respectable 4th place in Division 1. On the downside the Ladies A team playing in a very competitive league were relegated to Division 2. You win some, lose some –but I will bet on them getting promoted next season.

The men's Over 55 teams also had a successful season just missing out on reaching the championship play offs between the winners of the 4 divisions by finishing 2nd in the W division and 3rd in the V division.

Our Riviera team played in the Torbay mixed triples league. They may have finished last but the spirit and enthusiasm of the squad playing against much stronger opposition was a revelation. The competition is designed for less experienced and less able players to help them to develop their skills. It was brilliant to see several new members who only started playing this season grow into the game and gain confidence. With such a large squad the team was rotated to give as many players as possible the chance to take part with extra rinks provided for those not selected to gain experience of competitive bowls alongside experienced players either against each other or in non league extra rinks against opposition fielding extra players to

play us. Highlight of the Riviera season were victories against Kings and Brixham St Mary.

July and the club tour was another memorable event. Yet again Sue and Chris Dawes did us proud as 24 members based at the Warners Hotel at Cricket St Thomas played 4 matches in 4 days against Sidmouth, Seaton, Lyme Regis and Honiton. Never a dull moment on Dawes Tours as we partied, bowled and were fined for our misdemeanours which raised £111 for the club charity. Many thanks Sue and Chris.

Congratulations to all our trophy winners and runners up on club finals day. It was particularly satisfying to see Steve Munns, Geoff Newman and Joe Cussen who had never played bowls before this season taking part with Joe and Steve winning their events.

Congratulations must also go to Bryan Coad and Joe Cussen (men's pairs) and Sue and Chris Dawes (mixed pairs) who negotiated 5 knockout rounds to reach the finals day of the Devon Unbadged Championships held at Culm Vale, Cullompton in September. Both pairs were beaten by the eventual trophy winners in the morning. No mean feat against some of the best players in Devon. They did us proud. The 21 club members who turned out to support them on the day outnumbered the rest of the spectators from the other eight teams taking part. Well done Brixham!

To round off the season, Jenny Hopkins was able to proudly present Martyn Paddon, the Chairman of Brixham Does Care with a cheque for a staggering £1,247 reflecting the hard work, support and generosity for the Captain's chosen charity during the summer.

Finally I would like to pay tribute to all those members who give up a lot of time and energy to ensure the smooth running of the club. From the club committee capably led by the 3 Daves who have to negotiate a plethora of problems and issues, to Ken Butler and Linda Oakden for the successful running of the club competitions and Richard Butlin, Janet Bolland and Chris Dawes who have the unenviable task of sorting the fixtures and running the website. The long hot dry Summer has been a nightmare for the green and grounds maintenance team led by Bill Gray. Despite the problems our green although looking a bit worn was still better than most in the Bay thanks to their hard work. Also to Jenny Farley and her grounds and gardening team. I can't remember seeing the grounds looking so bright and inviting helped by the creative decorated woods that suddenly appeared in the Spring. Let's not also forget Steve and Yvonne who took over the bar this year in only their second season. What a job they have done with the advanced booking system for drinks being a very successful innovation. To Sally Lees and her catering and tea teams for their hard work and to Mick Stephens who has worked behind the scenes to maintain and improve the clubhouse. Many thanks to David and Thelma Bunney for organising the Awards Evening at the Berry Head in November. Hopefully you will be able to be there to celebrate this season's achievements. Finally to Linda and Mo who run the weekly club night sessions. So much hard work but so much fun. Apologies to anyone I have missed.

BUT – I am going to test your consciences. We need more help. At times during the season we were short of volunteers for the tea rota, to help with the greens and the grounds or with the tidying rota in the clubhouse. What happens? The same small group of people step in at the last moment to help out. This is so unfair. If everyone was to volunteer just occasionally to spread the load things will be a lot easier and fairer. Please do help out next season. You know it makes sense.

Yes it was a memorable season which promises much for 2023. I've enjoyed my year as captain and thank everyone for their support and putting up with my nagging. I am now pleased to hand over the mantle to David Moseby and Vic Ellery for next season and wish them every success.

Barry