

2012/2013 end of season match secretaries report.

The Treble, the Great Escape and Giant Slaying

A gruelling season started with every game away from home until December you then add in a ton of injuries a new sports hall floor that provided no grip and come December the season was looking very bleak indeed.

However the Hurst's never say die attitude defied all odds, they dug in to survive Basingstoke Division 1 caused a massive upset by beating BH Pegasus A and won THREE trophies including the Blackford cup along the way!!!

Trophy 1 - The Blackford Cup:

Usually these end of season reports consist of mentions of outstanding individual performances, desperate escapes and close but disappointing results. (See men's div 3 report further down) The Hurst's Blackford cup win however was quite simply a totally complete Squad dominance over every team they faced.

Dave Ord captaining the Blackford Cup team led the squad of 12 players expertly giving everyone in the squad a game along the way. Such was Mr Ord's faith in his group of players that he often played near enough every player against each team over both legs.

The results were outstanding and on the way to the trophy Hurst booted out of the competition: **Newbury** (by 18 points,) **Downlands** (by 70 points,) **Aldermaston** (by a fantastic hard fought 18 points) and then **Bucklebury** in the final (by 78 points.)

Armed with a band of traveling rowdy supporters, Hurst feared no club and performed with the whole squad of players time and time again.

Special mentions to Jon Spragg and Pauline Davies whose singles performances in every game set every match up with a good lead at the start.

Trophy 2- Newbury Mens Division 2:

There was one goal for this team this season – Win the league and get back to Newbury Division 1! We did it and we remained undefeated along the way. There were some tight games throughout the season (2 x 5-4 victories against St Marys and some close games to Downlands off the top of my head) but Hurst's Power and domination shone through to come out on top. Mark Payne and Stephen Lambe remained undefeated the whole season, admirably backed up the new pairings of Jon Spragg & Ben Leyburn + Dave Ord & Kevin Simpson who have made a very effective 3rd pair in always picking up points for the team.

Trophy 3- Newbury Mixed Division 3:

Hurst slipped completely under the radar with this one. All the talk on the NDBA was about Witchurch and Downlands dominating the division. Hurst powerfully went about their business comfortably winning their games to impressive margins, but no one saw we had games in hand over the leaders. Hurst kept winning overtaking Witchurch at the end of the season by beating them 7-2 and 8-1. Other than a slip up 6-3 loss against Downlands away from home (Where Jon Spragg was not playing) and 5-4 loss against Bucklebury (with only 2 pairs and no Jan McDonald/Jon Spragg) Hurst Won all their games. Mark Payne & Pauline Davies remained undefeated the entire season. The Strong team of Mark & Pauline, Jon Spragg + Jan McDonald, Nigel Appleton + Katie Appleton won a lot of the matches to a 9-0 score line.

The Great Escape – Basingstoke Men's Division 1

Broken, Beaten and scarred summed up the first half of Hurst's season in the top flight Basingstoke league. 5 consecutive matches on the road against some strong quality opposition, the team

dropping to injuries like flies combined to not leave a pretty picture at the half way stage of the season. Relegation looked a certainty. **Bring on the great escape!**

How it was done:

- Send motivational emails explaining the mathematics of survival
- Get everyone recovered for injury and field the full team each game
- Thrash BH Pegasus B twice and Beechdown at home
- Chip valuable points of the other teams
- Pray the other teams beat Beechdown

The above was achieved; Jon Spragg and Nigel Appleton found some form and a way of winning that dramatically turned their fortunes round. Dave Ord fixed his elbow and partnered Kevin Simpson to some valuable points. Mark Payne and Steve Lambe fought hard and argued (with each other) to pick up points on a regular basis.

The escape was cemented when we took 8 points off Pegasus B, 3 off Waverley and 9 off Beechdown in 3 back to back home games.

Then in the last match of the season against BH Pegasus A (a team that Hurst has Never beaten and rarely registered a point against) the full strength Hurst team turned up and played a blinder to Beat last season's league Champions. Leading from the front Mark Payne and Steve Lambe won all 3 of their games with aggressive power (Mark) and dominating net play (Steve) under pressure.

Admirably backed up by a point each from Jon Spragg/Nigel Appleton and Dave Ord/Kevin Simpson Hurst won the match 5-4. This victory was not only a giant slaying but gave Hurst 40 points which are a more than respectable tally for survival.

Great fighting spirit was shown and 2 teams in Division 1 next year is a great achievement for the club.

Newbury Men's Division 3:

The Men's B team found this year a lot tougher than expected. The start of the season was tough with lots of away fixtures and many new faces in the team. It was made tougher by coming up against a strong Andover Sports Team (a Basingstoke Div 1 team) and a Newbury team with some 1st team players in the side. At the half way stage despite some close games none had gone the way of Hurst.

The second half of the season saw a return of the Hurst Fighting spirit. A 6-3 away victory against Aldermaston, 8-1 victory against Greenacre and some close 5-4 losses were enough to put Hurst out of the relegation zone on legs difference. It all came down to the last game of the season for the B team against Shaw C. Both tied on 4 points the scenario was simple Win and survive, loose and be relegated. Up stepped Kevin Edwards and youngster Andy Elliot to win all 3 of their games and put the tie firmly in Hurst's Favour. All wasn't all plain sailing on the night though as after 6 games the score was 3-3. Hurst finished strongly winning the last 3 rubbers and the match 6-3.

All in all I think this has been Hurst's Best ever season, not only because of the results but because every club member has played a part in it.

From experience we know that 2 teams in Division 1 is going to be very tough next year. If you're reading this from another club and want to play in the 2 best divisions in the area give the Hurst a try, we are always looking to strengthen our squads.