

**Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2022**

### **Team Handicap Semi Final Result**

Alford 'A' beat Woolston 'A' by 35 points

Brian Babington (25) 49-100 (-11) Phil Bate (36 Break)  
Louis Babington (20) 63-32 (5) Scott Horobin  
David Dodd (33) 84-79 (15) Mark Leatham  
Mike Babington (24) 86-49 (-6) Mark Wilkinson  
Jamie Hynes (28) 62-69 (-11) Gary Lunn  
Joe Gibbons (41) 74-54 (8) Louis Davies

Alford A' 418 – 383 Woolston 'A'

The first semi-final in the 2021/22 team handicap competition took place last evening between Alford 'A' and Woolston 'A'. With both teams going well in their respective divisions this year, an exciting evening of snooker was in store.

Woolston 'A' won the toss and nominated Alford 'A' captain Louis Babington to nominate first electing to play his Dad Brian who was paired against Phil Bate. It was Brian who got off to the better start taking a couple of the early reds with colours as the cluster of reds stayed tight in the opening exchanges. It was a good as it would get for Brian however as Phil responded excellently putting Brian in some difficult safety shots and then taking control of the frame with breaks of 21 and 36 helping him take the frame by 51 points.

Across the room was a peculiar scenario where both captains from either side who actually compete in the same three man team went head to head. Woolston 'A' captain Scott Horobin, who was playing in his second semi-final in as many nights, elected to play himself and Louis chose to play himself against Scott. The frame started scrappy as many of the reds found their way up the table towards the blue spot and bulk line making standard safety shots hard to play. Louis seemed to adapt better to the way the table played and towards the end of the frame struck the cue ball really well to score some strong points late on to win by 31 points and keep the match tight in the early stages.

Woolston 'A' 20 points up after 2 frames.

David Dodd against Mark Leatham was up next and it didn't take long for the balls to spread open with both players playing in a positive frame of mind. Mark struggled to make the most of his chances in the opening stages allowing David to open a strong lead in the frame but he came to life in the middle of the frame putting together a couple of nice little breaks to take a slender lead onto the colours. The early colours went to Mark but crucially David got the big colours towards the end of the frame to take the frame by 5 points.

With the match getting closer the third and fourth frames were key to the outcome of the match as adjacent table saw another Babington, this time Mike, take on Mark Wilkinson. Wilko seemed to be struggling for confidence which is a shame as he is a great player on his day and it was Mike who came out on top playing some solid snooker throughout the frame making it difficult for Wilko to catch. Mike took the frame by 37 points and gave Alford 'A' a lead with the final two frames remaining.

Alford 'A' 22 points up after 4 frames.

With the handicap scores included, Woolston 'A' suddenly had a 94 point turnaround to pull back as the frames began. It was to be a tall order for Woolston 'A' as Alford 'A' had saved the two players with the best records for their team in the league this season in Joe Gibbons and Jamie Hynes. Woolston 'A' were still in with a chance though as they had two high standard players themselves going on last in Gary Lunn and Louis Davies.

On one table Gary took on Jamie Hynes and Jamie did well early on to keep Gary's chances to a limit. We all aware of Gary's scoring capabilities and the way he can take a frame away from a player in a matter of moments so credit to Jamie to halt Gary's progress. Gary then created a couple of openings but missed a couple of shots you'd never expect him to miss including a black with 3 or 4 reds in potting positions. This allowed Jamie to maintain a lead going onto the colours but Gary did finish with a break of 22 to win the frame by 7 points meaning the aggregate score was down to 15 points (not including the final frame).

This meant it came down to Joe and Louis to decide which team would progress to the final. Joe was looking to put the disappointment of the individual semi-final to the back of his mind whilst Louis was hoping to make it back to back team handicap finals as he was involved with Eagle in last season's event. Louis scored well early on but importantly Joe managed to keep his score ticking over and he led his frame by 15 points as the frame headed into the final couple of reds and colours. Joe must have felt a case of felt déjà vu as he was unfortunate to go in off when potting a red (similar to what happened in his individual semi-final the night before).

As we stated on the yellow Joe was 8 points clear in his frame, and with the 15 point aggregate score in the match Alford 'A' led by 23 points in match meaning he only needed two of the colours to leave Louis needing snookers. Joe took both the yellow and green to force Louis into trying to get the snookers. Louis potted the brown as there was no obvious safety shot but his attempt on the blue left Joe with a long potting opportunity and he snapped up the chance to take the blue and pink to win the match.

Congratulations to Alford 'A' who go onto the final scheduled for Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> April. They await the winners of the Alford 'D' v Deaf Social 'A' match later this month so a chance of an all Alford final could be on the cards but I am sure Deaf Social 'A' will be doing all they can to ensure this doesn't happen.

As for Woolston 'A', they have done excellently to get this far in the team handicap as it is tough to chase every round with low handicaps. They do however have a mouth-watering semi-final though to look forward to next Tuesday against another Alford team, this time in the form of Alford B in the team championship which should be a great match and they will be looking to one further in that competition than this one.

Many thanks

Pat Wisedale