

To all those within the Bowls Hampshire family,

I would like to start by saying what an absolute honour it has been to be the U25s manager throughout this 2024 season.

Nothing has made me prouder than to watch so many of our Hampshire young bowlers show us how lucky we are as a county, to have a continuing stream of talented players coming through.

Before I go any further there are some people I would personally like to thank,

Firstly, a lady many of you will know, Kay Stockley, she personally took it upon herself, without being asked, to help our junior section, it started by obtaining some no longer required white Hampshire attire, this was donated by various individuals, and was then distributed as required throughout our U25s.

She then managed to source funds to such an amount that this allowed the entire White Rose squad to be able to purchase the new Bowls Hampshire shirt at a substantially discounted price of just £10, this was greatly appreciated by all those involved within the Hampshire unit.

To those who contributed I would like to name and take this opportunity to thank on behalf of myself and all the boys, for their personal donations.

[Kay Stockley, Steve Stockley, Mandy Wilder, Kim Francis Ellis and Cowplain Bowling Club.](#)

I also need to thank Paul May, Louise May, Bridget May and Mark Barnes for their support and assistance throughout the entire season, helping to contribute to what has been one hell of a rollercoaster ride, I hoped wouldn't come to an end.

A separate special mention must also go out to Hampshire Immediate Past President Allan Leppard, who supported the boys continuously through the season, attending all the fixtures the U25s were involved in both home and away, he did not need to do this as his role in office did not require him to, it was just something he wanted to do, for that I am extremely grateful.

It has turned out to be an incredible season, starting from the first U25s awareness day way back at the beginning of May, through to the friendlies against Basingstoke Town, Banister Park and beyond.

The White Rose squad did the whole of the county proud through every stage of this prestigious tournament, starting by defeating Middlesex in the opening game at Banister Park which then gave them qualification to the regional finals at Horsham B.C.

They were successful in beating Sussex in the morning, which then booked their place to face Kent in the final. Hampshire were not to be denied a place at the National Finals beating Kent in what was an epic contest and will be remembered by everyone that attended, as one of the greatest Hampshire come backs and matches ever seen.

Destiny looked to be our friend in this competition, so when heading to Royal Leamington Spa, confidence was rightly high.

Hampshire stood proud on the green that morning and with some quality bowling saw their way to victory in the semi-final against a good Northamptonshire side.

So to the final where the lads faced the home team of Warwickshire, this was to be a closely contested match in a game that looked as though it could go either way, alas due to some phenomenal head changing bowls by the Warwickshire skips our boys just could not get their noses in front, and although battling to the very last bowl, it ended in defeat by just 7 shots.

To all the boys that played, reserves that travelled, and all our supporters throughout the campaign, a massive heartfelt thank you from me personally.

But this was not to be the final chapter in our story .....

To conclude the U25s season we would head to Egham B.C. to compete in the Jnr Home Counties League final where we once again faced our old foe Bowls Kent.

This would again turn out to be a game of high quality, and just as much tension as the previous encounter, the game was a nip tuck affair, in what was a keenly fought and very tight contest.

With the heartache of what happened in the National Final still weighing heavy in their minds, it would have been understandable if these boys thought it was going to be just a nearly year.

“But these lads don’t give up”

With two rinks already finished, the scores across all three rinks saw Hampshire stand with a slender 2 shot lead.

As a manager it seemed like it took forever for the bowls to be played on that last end, but, as the final bowl came to rest

and the dust had settled, Hampshire held shot and were once again victorious, thus retaining a well-earned Jnr Home Counties title.

If you ever come across a young lad called Luke “2 Yards” May he might mention his last bowl in this game and will be more than happy to retell story of that final end as many times as you are willing to hear it.

There is an amazing amount of young talent throughout this county, not only from those already representing Hampshire, but in many of the young bowlers waiting in the wings for their chance to shine, if this talent can be harnessed correctly, Hampshire can and will remain to be a force to reckoned with.

I have a strong belief that those that are ultimately selected to future represent Bowls Hampshire Junior Squads, are more than capable of winning multiple National Titles.

Thank you to everyone one last time from the entire team,

Regards,  
Leo May

Bowls Hampshire Team Manager 2024.