

## *OFGS Halford Hewitt Campaign 2018*

Once again Hewitt week generates a blend of mixed emotion and results for our OFGS. Entering the biggest amateur team tournament in world golf always raises ones pulse, taking over the Captaincy on behalf of our Hewitt skipper James Stammers, sadly taken ill days before the event, made it doubly so. Losing one of our most valued and experienced performers was a low blow, but the team rallied during practice, with several keen youngsters bolstering the side, our mood naturally lifted by their enthusiasm.

Drawing Rugby in Round One at Royal Cinque Ports presented the chance to meet out revenge for a narrow 3-2 defeat two years prior. A 180\* wind switch from the first two days presented the course in a very different fashion, sadly it didn't assist us with the result. Outclassed in practically all aspects, Rugby were incredibly humble in their 5-0 victory. On discovering all of their players are members at some of the top ranked links courses dotted around our British coastline, it is no wonder they are so adept at playing this style of golf. Securing the hole regularly from 40 yards, deft chip and runs and long range putting are skills seldom used in parkland golf and herein lay the difference. We have talented golfers, quality ball strikers, hardened match players, but we just don't seem to get it done at RCP. The last five years have seen us drawn at the same venue versus Tonbridge, Charterhouse, Rugby, Haileybury, Rugby; all perennially good sides, often progressing deep into the tournament, on many an occasion going on to lift the Cup, which believe me really takes some doing. Hopefully next year the golfing Gods will permit us less formidable foe in Round One, or even a change of venue, we're long overdue a favourable break.

We moved on to Prince's .....

OFGS rejuvenated after an entertaining evening out in Deal, Aldenham in Round One of The Prince's Plate didn't put up as much of a fight as I anticipated. Great leadership at the front by Tom Copnell and Charlie Wilcox, dishing out a 7&5 drubbing set the tone for the day. Will Dunn and yours truly backed this up with a 4&3 victory as third pair, which gave our debutant Billy Holmes and Harper Adams student Charlie Duke the chance to secure their first point, a gentlemanly half was offered, as is the custom in the Hewitt. Being Dormie three holes up with three to play, one can consider this a moral victory.

A quick turnaround at lunch, we faced Blundell's in Round Two. Involved in a drawn out tussle to the bitter end against Liverpool, delaying their arrival at the tee, our extended rest it would seem provided us with an advantage. Same pairs, same order, we were riding high from our mornings exploits and went on to win 21/2 - 1/2, a little flattering as they certainly ran us close. Charlie Wilcox and Tom Copnell, never ahead in the game, battled hard to take Blundell's down the last All Square. Tom, finding the 18<sup>th</sup> green with his approach, set up an outside chance to make birdie. One must never underestimate the big hitting Surrey man in Charlie Wilcox who magnificently drained the 35' putt to close out the match, much to the chagrin of their opponents, Felsted 1up. Will Dunn demonstrated his class in the back pair, putting along the 16th tee box, down a severe slope, cosying the ball up to 2' really stuck the dagger in at the right time. Another pleasing victory, allowing our youngsters to take a well deserved half point for the second time that day.

Day 3, the sun shone but our golf didn't. Up against a very experienced side in Edinburgh Academicals, the links conditions favoured their golfing ability. With a change in personnel, I partnered Tom Copnell in the first group and to be frank it was my poorest showing all week, not a good start. OFGS stalwarts Dave Robson & Stuart Mott were called into action at very late notice, I can only thank them both for their continued support, not quite managing to turn over their old adversaries, I know they enjoyed their game, 21/2 - 1/2 to Edinburgh Akeys .... But wait.... there is some good news .... we made the quarter finals, which is not to be sniffed at, and the newly formed partnership in Billy and Dukey were undefeated in the Plate. Taking yet another half point in their third game, this was an excellent first outing together that bodes well for the future. I look forward to seeing how this duo progress in our next two team tournaments, The Grafton Morrish and The Thorndon Cup.

Acknowledgement to our Halford Hewitt team - John Hilliard & Will Dunn, Tom Copnell & Charlie Duke, Rob Perkins & Charlie Wilcox, Tim Hedin & Billy Holmes, Phil Graham & Henry Hichens.

My special thanks to Ross Abbott, who was very supportive throughout, and to Dave Robson and our President Stuart Mott who buoyed the players along both on and off the field of play. Last but not least, our Old Felstedian golfers of years past who always make the journey to watch us play. The camaraderie throughout the generations, accompanied by the exceptionally high standard of golf, are key elements to the success of the week. The Halford Hewitt is unique in this respect, to my mind it's the best fixture in our golfing calendar and I shall endeavour to see that it remains the blue riband event for Felsted sport.

Philip Graham  
OFGS Captain