

2023 Captain's Report

Good Evening everyone. 12 months ago I stood up before you slightly bemused and excited to be your new captain for the 2023 season. I am now standing up before you as a soon to be past captain. Jason's comments at the end of his speech have stuck with me throughout the year. He reflected on how much he had gained from being captain of this great society. He was absolutely right and I have enjoyed the year tremendously and made and extended a lot of great friendships. It has been a real privilege to have been the captain of the EPICS for 2023 so thank you for the opportunity.

Way back in March 22 members and 16 guests made the trip up to Woburn.

I was woken by texts from the chaps in Cannes boasting of the sunshine and warm weather they were having. As we made our way to the club for breakfast, it started to rain and then to our disbelief it started to snow. With a bit of grumbling by all, we had a bacon roll and coffee and put most of what we owned on and ventured out. I am fairly sure a couple of players bought various items of wet weather gear from the pro shop as well.

As we started off the rain and snow stopped and the day got better and better. By the end of the front 9 holes hats were off and mid way round the back 9 we were contemplating taking jackets off.

In the sunshine Woburn was everything that we had all looked forward to. The course was in brilliant condition, the greens were near perfect and we were well looked after by staff and Marshalls who made sure we all had a good day. Golf was followed by the famous Woburn carvery which was well received by all.

Well played to Oliver Tobin who won the Spring Cup with a brilliant 6 over gross for 39 points - very well played. I managed second place with 34 points and an 8 over.

I think we all agreed at least 1 marquee course a year was a good addition to the roster and it must have gotten out that EPIC were in town as Charlie Hull LPGA tour winner was seen practicing outside our room.

Next Up was the BAGS Match

After what seemed like weeks of rain, the weather was great for our annual match against the BAGS. The format, as always, was 4 ball better ball and after a lot of planning team selections were made.

Knebworth put on a warm welcome for the players and after the usual discussion over the way various handicaps were calculated, we skirted over the fact that we still have not seen the trophy Jason did such a fantastic job of winning in 2022.

Neil Blundy joined me as the 1st match out against Peter and Gavin Tuck. Gavin seemed to have two jackets with him but having decided which he was going to wear in playing for the BAGS we got down to the golf. A great match halved somehow on the last by the EPIC team.

Neil and Steve Davis were the second group off and they won their match 4 & 3 - the plan was working

David Wannerton and Darrel Lewis got a very well fought 1/2 so 3 matches down and we were still yet to lose.

Steven Barker and Matthew Jones. Anyway, let's move on.

Jason and Iain got us back on track with a 2 & 1 win and finally Flora and Chris Sutherland finished with a 4 & 2 win with a valiant effort from Peter Stock who played on his own for the BAGS.

A big thank you to all that played but also to Gavin, who I think found the trophy in his TV room and kindly presented it to the winning team at Moor Park. Fiona best of luck next year. Lets try and get 3 in a row

Next stop on our tour of the home counties was Ashridge. As a society we are very lucky to be able to play there year on year. The course always frustrates me as a lot of the holes look quite easy but the greens are usually fantastic and provide a good defense. Another feature of Ashridge is the food. We were again treated to great hospitality.

On what was a very tough day's golf, quality really prevailed with the runner up spot going to Steve Hurworth and our new vice captain Matthew Jones picking up the Finlinson Cup with a fantastic 40 points.

In June, the day started with torrential rain and it felt more like Autumn when we arrived at Moor Park for the Presidents Cup. A splendid venue with one of the most elaborate club houses I have ever been in, the day got better and better. We were fortunate to have the weather on our side and as the rain cleared we had broken sunshine and good weather for golf. Unfortunately, Raja got the better of me in the Knockout Competition. So I went home in a sulk!! But joking aside it really didn't detract from another great day. We had a private dining room which provided some great pictures for the web site blog.

Ro Harper put together a great round of golf a recorded 37 points but got pipped to the Presidents Cup by a rather chirpy, Geoff Green who I recall at the time was enjoying the early part of the Ashes Summer.

I was very proud to host Captain's day at my home course Knebworth in July. The hard work over the last 5 years by our head greenkeeper Stuart has really paid off for the club and the

course was in fantastic shape. Stuart has been very unwell this year and it was great to hear so much positive feedback on the day and course.

The club really looked after us and after golf we had a good dinner and a one off auction of an Augusta Masters Shirt which helped raise money for the British Heart Foundation.

Thank you everyone for supporting the day and well played to Ben Hurworth for coming second and Darrell Lewis for a great 38 points. I did find out later that Darrell has become somewhat of a professional golfer now he has more time on his hands.

After a well earned summer break, September was on us and it was time to go on tour. 21 of us made the trip to Portugal. It was great to see so many old faces on the trip but also a number of new tourists made up the group. While a few of us went over a day early to play Estoril in the rain, the main event started at Oitavos Dunes, a spectacular course with stunning views. There is a genuinely fantastic picture of Nick Archer picking up the money for the first time in a long time indeed. Well done Nick.

We had by all accounts an interesting day on the second day but thanks to the team spirit we had a number of close battled matches really going down the wire. I really enjoyed the game between Oli, myself, Ken and Jason. Still one of my golfing highlights of the year. Well played Fiona for a great score of 33 points and the win on the day. We finished off the day with a seafood dinner thanks to Ken's organisation

The final day took us to Penha Longa for the singles matchplay. Fiona and I had a great battle as did a number of the other matches in the end the Captains team prevailed. Well played to Neil Blundy and Robert White who came runners up in second and third respectively. Oli Tobin has the privilege of having the green jacket in his possession for 2023/24. Great golf Oli I know you have been working hard on your golf this year and to pull in all together on tour is no mean feat.

The tour, in part thanks to YGT, was challenging but despite that the trip was really enjoyable. I had some great times with a number of you and was able to take some sound advice of Mr Barker so it is certainly something I won't forget. If you haven't be able to make an EPIC tour do try as it's a great experience.

I was pleased to return to Bishop's Stortford in October. The year before we had had a taste of their great course and hospitality. Going back once the course was finished was even better despite the weather's best efforts to throw a spanner in the works. Again a really well attended day with good company. Ian Stevenson was the winner of the Autumn Cup with a solid 36 points pushed hard by James Barrett. Well done gents.

I was delighted to be able to have both my dad Peter and eldest Jonathan with me for the annual Christmas meeting at Letchworth. A shocking day weather wise but I am a big fan of

Letchworth. The course is always the best it can be and the staff and food are always brilliant and this year was no different.

Sadly as it stands the knockout is unconcluded. A great idea reintroduced by Digby which I hope stands the test of time.

Attendance this year has been brilliant. A number of events have been full and we have a good trickle of new members coming in. Ken is still spearheading his one man quest to attract younger members to the society and I sincerely hope that the society continues to grow its legacy.

It's been an absolute privilege to be your captain this year. I have really enjoyed the experience and I hope that Fiona has a brilliant year in 2024. I am sure you will also support her as well as you have me. Good luck. Also welcome to Matt Jones, a great selection for vice captain. I wish you both well.

Finally Neil. I know I have thanked you a number of times this year but your time and effort for this society is priceless. Your efforts year in and year out keeps the EPIC's ticking and we are all the beneficiaries of your hard work. I want to say a special thank you to you for your support over the last couple of years and I wish you and Chris all the very best. I hope to still come and pester you down in Frinton from time to time and Knebworth is always waiting for your visit. Thanks Neil.

Thank you all and I look forward to supporting the society in 2024 as a past captain.