

MJ Captains report – 2025-2026

As my year as Captain comes to an end, I would like to take the opportunity to look back on what has been a thoroughly enjoyable and memorable season for our society.

Over the course of the year, we were fortunate to play a wide range of excellent courses, each offering its own challenges and character. From long-standing favourites to a few new additions to the calendar, a good time was had by all. I would like to thank all the clubs who hosted us and made us feel so welcome.

Participation throughout the year was very encouraging, with strong turnouts across most events. It was great to see both long-standing members and newer faces regularly taking part, and the atmosphere on our golf days remained friendly, competitive, and inclusive — exactly what our society is about. Neil will talk more about the membership numbers in his report, but it has been a very positive year for new joiners.

The standard of golf was generally high, and congratulations go to all prize and competition winners during the year. Just as importantly, the spirit in which the golf was played was excellent, with good sportsmanship and plenty of laughter both on and off the course.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to those who helped make the year run smoothly — from organising fixtures and liaising with courses, to managing scoring and administration on the day. The support I have received from the committee and members alike has made my role as Captain both easier and more enjoyable, and I am very grateful for that. I would specifically like to thank our secretary Neil Meixner for being Neil, my vice-captain Chris Sunderland for his help with the tour, and Matt Caldecourt for his tireless efforts in cajoling us all to be more engaged in events. Thank you.

So...to the events...

We started the year with a new event, instigated by Martyn Howie, with EPiC taking on the Faculty of Building Golf Society at one of our favourite courses, Sandy Lodge. It was a well contested event with six groupings competing in pairs. After taking a 3-1 lead, the FBGS came back in the final two groups to half the match at 3-3. Worth noting that the 3 FBGS winning pairs comprised EPiC members!

- Group 1 – Gavin Tuck/Digby Hebbard lost 3&2 to Peter Caneparo/Jonathan Cross
- Group 2 – Matt Jones/Darrell Lewis won 2&1 against James Hanson/Mark Tomlinson
- Group 3 – Chris Sunderland/Will Evans won 2&1 against Chris Atkins/Sean Reilly
- Group 4 – Chris Anderson/Matt Caldecourt won 2&up against Rob Hobson/Ben Withall
- Group 5 – Ken Adams/Geoff Green lost 2 down to Guy Shorrocks/Will Farkins
- Group 6 – Iain Stevenson/Robin Miller lost 3&2 to Martyn Howie/Nick Curran

From Sandy Lodge we moved down the road to Moor Park for the first EPiC competition of the year, the Spring Cup. Always a beautiful venue, we played the High Course on a cold but sunny day. The winner with a very creditable 38 points was Mitesh Patel. Laying down an early marker in the player of the year race.

April saw us return to our chosen venue, Sandy Lodge, for the annual BAGS match. Always a fiercely competitive event, the pressure was on to maintain our three-year winning streak under the leadership of Rob, then Jason and Fiona.

First out were myself and Darrell Lewis, playing against their captain's pairing. This one was tight, with myself and Darrell (mostly me) failing to produce our usual standard of play. Darrell finished strongly to leave us all square going onto the quirky par 3 18th. Four very average tee shots culminated in me sinking a 20-footer to win the hole and the match – possibly the finest moment in my golfing career!

Chris Anderson and Matt Caldecourt then followed up with a tight 2&1 winning performance, and Rob Seeley and Joel Evans also won 3&2 to give us a 3-0 lead in the clubhouse. Next up was the wily ex-captains pairing of Jason Wood and Iain Stevenson, previously unbeaten in this fixture, and surely a dead cert? They did not disappoint, smashing their opposition pair to give us an unassailable 4-0 lead and retaining the trophy. My hopes of a clean sweep were not to be as our final two pairings narrowly lost to leave the final score at 4-2 to us. 4 in a row and a 'must win' box ticked for my captaincy. Thanks guys!

In May we returned to the pristine and immensely popular Ashridge Golf Club for the Finlinson Cup. Another beauty of a day, the venue and the golf didn't disappoint. The course and hospitality were as always excellent. New member Keith Wilson came out winner on countback with a strong 40 pts from Josh Roughan.

June saw us return to Harleyford Golf Club for the second year for the Presidents Cup. The day brightened up as play progressed, but conditions were tricky and scoring was difficult. James Barrett rose above the competition to take the trophy with 38 points, narrowly beating Guy Shorrocks.

Summer brought with it the annual tour. Captain's choice for the venue saw much deliberation over suitable destinations. Fiona set the bar high with Marrakesh in 2024 so I was considering Turkey, Spain, Portugal and Ireland, but ended up opting for....Kent!

Our three days saw us play 3 very different courses, each with their own challenges.

Day one was the under-rated North Foreland, which proved to be a lovely course, challenging and in superb condition. The winner on the day was Martyn Howie taking a nearest the pin and scoring 40 points. In the team event the captain's team took an early 3.5 to 2.5 lead over the vice-captain's team. The evening was spent at the excellent Bell Hotel and a nice restaurant around the corner.

Following an interesting fire alarm interrupted night, day two took us to Princes for some true links golf. Even though my golf was dreadful, I loved this course and look forward to returning to play it properly. The winner on the day was Neil Blundy with 33 points – an indication of how challenging the course was. In the team event Team Cap won the day 5.5 to 0.5 points taking a big lead.

After another evening of exuberance and excess we checked out on day 3 and made our way to the final course of the tour, Walmer and Kingsdown Golf Club. The day started in bright sunshine but with the warning of thunderstorms to come. We managed to tee off early – with me taking on Chris – captain vs vice-captain. Chris was playing some of the best golf I've ever seen him play, and as the weather deteriorated so did my golf and my spirits. By the time the warning sirens sounded on the 9th I think I was 8 down. What followed was both memorable, and slightly terrifying, as we sheepishly crept off the course surrounded by booming thunderclaps, torrential rain and what seemed to be remarkably close lightning bolts. Although I have no doubt I would have pulled the match against

Chris back if we had played 18, I did the honourable thing and conceded the match to him. Fighting hard in the groups behind were the contenders for the Tour Green Jacket.

Winner on the day was Nick Archer, based on the scores for the holes everyone completed. A popular winner! Inspired by Chris his team performed well on day 3 taking the point 6.5 and 4.5. Whilst a valiant attempt, the day two deficit was too great, so the team event went to Cap.

In the tour overall standings, three men stood out, producing a high standard and good scoring over the three days.

In third place was Iain Stevenson with 79pts, runner up was Garry Fairbairn on 80 pts and the winner with 82 pts was Martyn Howie – victor and green jacket recipient for the year. Well done to all of you.

Following the excitement of Kent, we were back to Sandy Lodge in August for the Autumn Cup. An impressive performance from Steve Hurworth saw him take the victory with 38 pts from Garry Fairbairn on 37 pts.

The final point scoring event came at Beaconsfield Golf Club for Captain's Day – a course that was previously an EPiC regular but which we haven't played for many years. On the basis of what we experienced I'm not sure why it fell out of favour – it was a superb course and facilities, enjoyed by all. In keeping with the previous year's trend, the incoming Captain won the Captain's Day. I was delighted to present the trophy to Chris Sunderland, winning with an exceptionally good 43 points. Chris's golf has shown significant improvement in 2025 and I am sure he will continue this progress in his year as Captain. Runner up on the day with what would normally have been a winning score was Adam Phillips with 41 pts.

The last points event of the year completed, we turned to the final player of the year standings. The winner with a points total of 112 points was Josh Roughan. Well played Josh, consistently there or thereabouts. In second place on 107 points was Garry Fairbairn, from Chris Sunderland on 105 and Mitesh Patel on 102.

Throughout the year, we also played for the knockout matchplay trophy. The final was played at Brocket Hall between Josh Roughan and Jason Wood, with Josh coming out the winner to complete a unique Player of the Year and Matchplay champion double.

In December the society returned to Letchworth Golf Club for the annual Recessionary Rose Bowl event with friends and family. After 28 years as a member of the society, the victor was Nick Archer taking his first EPiC trophy ever with 36 pts. A very popular winner and a great end to the golfing season. Well done Nick.

So here we are back at the AGM, a year later, a year wiser and passing the baton over to Chris. He will be a great Captain. Personally, it has been a privilege to serve as Captain of the society. I have thoroughly enjoyed the role (if not the golf) and the opportunity to represent such a great group of people. Thank you all for your support, friendship, and cooperation throughout the year.

Finally, I wish Chris every success for the coming season and look forward to continuing to enjoy the golf and the company as a member. Here's to another year of great courses, good golf, and even better camaraderie. Thank you all.