

# THE JOHN COOK REPORT

## **We saw, we came, but we failed to conquer...**

While reading the sports pages of the Sunday Independent I noticed an advert publicising the Blackthorn British Skittles Championships. Being a skittles “fanatic” I thought was a great idea, I’ll get a team together from Bath to win this, and that’s how Bath City’s skittles adventure was born.

I was pleasantly surprised how keen the majority of the people I canvassed were to join me in my quest for glory, and once the team was in place my entry form was in the post, winging its way to The Shoot Out Club.

In the group stages we drew teams from Cirencester and Swindon, the former being losing semi finalists in the inaugural competition last year. Organising the group matches was not difficult and our first match was played in Bath against the team from Swindon. It turned out to be a crushing victory and aspirations remained high. However, the next match in Cirencester brought us down to earth with a bump – we lost. We then travelled to Swindon, confident after our home victory, but again lost on the road. With Cirencester and Swindon sharing victories on their home patch, the final game, home to Cirencester, was to put it mildly, a crunch match. We needed to win by 19 pins to top the group and in a very close match, eventually came on top by 29 pins. This secured a home draw in the final knockout stage against a team from Peasedown. The game was never in doubt and Bath successfully qualified for the finals.

September 24<sup>th</sup> could not come quick enough and with the introduction of pairs and singles to be played on the Friday night, the whole team decided to make a weekend of it. We arrived about 5pm on the Friday and after dumping our luggage in our more than adequate chalets could not wait to see the alleys that Rachel and Brian had told us so much about. It was not long before all our players had a spare in practice and about 7:30pm the singles competition got underway. Unfortunately, only one of our eight players reached the semi final stage, but greater success was achieved in the pairs competition, with two of our four pairs actually contesting the final.

Bearing in mind our team competition was starting at 10:15 the following morning, we decided not to drink too much and go to bed at a reasonable hour. However, things did not quite go to plan as we finally retired at about 2:30 in the morning.

To my surprise, everybody was up early and at breakfast by 8:30. At 10:15 we were all ready to start our quest for championship glory against a team from Worcester. The game ebbed and flowed with neither team able to take a significant advantage and by the time the last two players from each side were due to throw, Bath had a lead of 1 pin. However, the Worcester anchor scored 9 and our anchor 7, giving the opposition victory by the narrowest of margins.

All the team were extremely disappointed and I thought it would be difficult to enjoy the rest of the day. This proved no problem as the atmosphere generated by the event and the playing of the plate competition for 1<sup>st</sup> round losers meant everyone still had a

great time. When all the finals had been completed, the presentations began. Within 20 minutes all the alleys had been removed and the table set for a very professional presentation. Entertainment, including a comedy duo and the Shoot Out staff, was followed by a disco until 3am when the Karaoke began.

I would say to all skittlers out there “give it a go you will have a knockout time”. We will certainly be entering a team next year and wish anyone who joins us, all the best. See you in Weston.

*John Cook – Press officer of the year 2004, 2005*