

O.I.B.A. – COUNTY SINGLES FINAL

The 2024-2025 O.I.B.A. men's County singles final was played on Friday 28th March at Oxford City & County. The O.I.B.A. County Singles title was contested by two excellent players, the very much inform Craig Morphet of Carterton and the excellent singles player Martin Shepherd of Chipping Norton.

This was going to be a long game and difficult to predict. The first four ends were shared between Craig and Shep both scoring one shot on each end. At end four it 2 – 2.

They were both drawing within inches of the jack. The next three ends were again shared with one shot on each end, Shep now in front 4 – 3. End 8 Shep scored a massive 2 shots despite Craig's wood being only inches behind the jack, Shep now 6 – 3 in front.

Craig won end 9 to pick up 1 shot now only two behind 6 – 4. Craig tactics came into play and he shortens the jack. Craig took the next 4 ends scoring 1 on three ends and a 2 on end thirteen. Craig had now taken the lead 9 – 6. End fourteen saw Shep master Craig's short jacks and picked up 1 shot, now only two shots behind 7 – 9.

End 15 Shep cast the jack long only to put it in the ditch giving Craig the opportunity to have it short again. Craig scored one on end 15 now 10 – 7 in front.

Another short jack from Craig and he drew three very close woods, holding three shots. Shep played a yard on wood and trailed the jack back to his wood. From three down to one up and winning the end. Score now 8 – 10 to Craig. As anticipated Shep's jack was full length and was holding two shots when Craig came in with his last wood to draw shot and wins the end, 8 – 11 to Craig. Ends 18 & 19 were shared with one shot each; score now 9 – 12 to Craig.

End 20 saw Shep put the jack in the ditch in his attempt to get it as long as possible. So Craig cast another short jack however this time Shep drew shot with a toucher. Craig's 1st two woods were within inches of the jack. Craig's 3rd wood he drew the jack off and was holding two. Shep failed to recover it however Craig drew his last wood to pick up a three now 15 – 9 in front.

Shep picked up 1 shot on the next two ends (21 & 22) and Craig picked up 1 shot on end 23. Craig still in front 16 – 11.

Shep scored two shots on end 24 to reduce the deficit to 16 – 13. Was this Shep's come back. Craig was having none of it despite Shep casting the jack long to full length on end 25. Shep was holding 1 shot with Craig's woods all behind the jack. Craig final wood of the end he fired with a direct hit on the jack and taking it straight to the ditch and picking up three shots. Craig now 19 – 13 in front.

Craig picked 1 shot on end 26 now only needing only one shot to win. End 27, as expected, Craig cast a short jack. With woods nearby the jack Craig's 3rd wood pushes his own wood onto the jack. Shep fired narrowly missing the shot wood and jack thereby giving Craig 1 shot and the title.

Craig Morphet won O.I.B.A County Singles 21 – 13. It has to be noted that this was one the best indoor singles finals to be seen in Oxfordshire for many of years. Both players were exceptional and at the top of their game. Congratulations to Craig Morphet and commiserations to Martin Shepherd.

The game was well supported with quite a few Carterton members attending which was good to see. An excellent Oxfordshire Indoor Bowling Association County Singles final.

Thanks to Oxford City & County for hosting the final, O.I.B.A. President John Hurren for marking and presenting the trophies. Also thanks to Tony Wright who umpired the final.

