

OAGS – HALFORD HEWITT COMPETITION 2019

Ampleforth's history and form in what is regarded as the "finest Amateur Golf Tournament" has over the years, been somewhat mixed. However the last few years has seen the team provide great form and consistency, albeit so narrowly falling one win short of that elusive winners' title.

Until 2016, we had made our way into the quarter-final on just two occasions (1994 and 2013), however the last few years has seen the team reach the quarter-final in 2016 and then the final in both 2017 & 2018, only to narrowly lose both these matches.

In 2019, we were therefore especially determined to go that one step further, with greater attention to detail in our preparation. The team welcomed Leo Moreno de la Cova Ybarra from Sevilla to make his debut, a long hitter with a deadly touch around the greens, the following squad of 12 were selected to represent the society:



L Gerolla (O16), GPJ Hattrell (H09), L Moreno de la Cova Ybarra (D08), SRF Hardy (D76), JWM Faulkner (E01), D Hague (J12)
HAF Jackson (T95), T Davies (H02), C Minchella (H94), M Whittaker (Captain) (J87), MP Camacho (C98), ACM Faulkner (EW05)

The short story is that we made it to the Final again, our opposition in the final being Malvern. After an epic encounter and the closest final in Hewitt history we would narrowly lose on the 23rd hole in a play-off with the match poised at 2-2.

The long story is as follows:

1st Round v Cranleigh, a very strong team for which we would need to be on top form:

Match result: Ampleforth 3½ - Cranleigh 1½

M Camacho/T Davies Won 2 up

L Gerolla/L Moreno de la Cova Ybarra lost 1 down

M Whittaker/C Minchella A/S after 18, game halved

D Hague/H Jackson Won 4&3

J & A Faulkner Won 4&3

As expected, Cranleigh were a very strong team and naturally it was a relief to have overcome quality opposition in the 1st Round, we were off and running into the tournament.

The 2nd Round opponents were to be King Edwards Birmingham. The nature of our draw this year meant that our passage through the tournament would consist of two matches on the Friday and just one match Saturday. On a cold and damp Friday the captain therefore decided to rest himself and Christian playing Simon Hardy and George Hattrell for the morning match.

Match result: Ampleforth 5 - King Edwards Birmingham 0

M Camacho/T Davies Won 5&4

D Hague/H Jackson Won 8&7

J & A Faulkner Won 5&4

S Hardy/G Hattrell Won 6&5

L Gerolla/L Moreno de la Cova Ybarra Won 2&1

A pretty comfortable victory in torrid weather conditions allowed for some brief respite back at the Hotel, before the afternoon match which was going to be a late one, teeing off at 3.15pm against King's Canterbury (whose team would consist of Chris Healy's son Mark). An enthralling encounter beckoned...

3rd Round Match result: Ampleforth 4.5 – Kings Canterbury 0.5

M Whittaker/C Minchella Won 2&1

M Camacho/T Davies Won 4&3

D Hague/H Jackson Won 7&6

J & A Faulkner A/S

L Gerolla/L Moreno de la Cova Ybarra Won 5&4

With wonderful golf throughout the team, it was rewarding to now only have to play one round on Saturday with a much deserved lie-in! We would though need to be fully rested as we now faced stiff opposition in Charterhouse, a repeat of last year's Quarter Final match.

Qtr-Final Match result: Ampleforth 3½ - Charterhouse 1½

M Camacho/T Davies Halved

L Gerolla/L Moreno de la Cova Ybarra Won 5&4

D Hague/H Jackson Won 2&1

M Whittaker/C Minchella Won 5&4

J & A Faulkner Lost 3&2

Games 2 and 4 played some majestic golf with comfortable victories, however the ever reliable pairing of David and Hugh sealed the match victory with a majestic birdie 3 on the 17th after Hugh hit the flag with a 9 iron from 120 yards leaving a "gimme" birdie tap in for David.

The team had yet again reached the Sunday with the last 4 teams remaining in the tournament ...this year though we were much better organised and had pre-booked The Bell Hotel so there was no need to rush around Kent trying to find accommodation for the evening. We were to face Loretto in the Semi-Final Sunday morning.

Semi-Final Match result: Ampleforth 3½ - Loretto 1½

D Hague/H Jackson Lost on 20th
 J & A Faulkner Won 2&1
 M Whittaker/C Minchella Halved
 M Camacho/T Davies Won 2&1
 L Gerolla/L Moreno de la Cova Ybarra Won 5&4

Another top performance by all, it was the first time our strongest pair of David and Hugh had narrowly lost a game whilst the team prevailed against quality opposition. Strength in depth indeed!!

A relaxed lunch followed in the clubhouse whilst we awaited the winners of the other semi-final between Malvern and Watsons....Malvern eventually prevailing.

The Final for the Hewitt 2019 and draw was as follows:

		Royal Cinque Ports Golf Club		FINAL
MATCH No. 1		Sunday	14 April 2019	14:30
AMPLEFORTH		v	MALVERN	
1	M Whittaker C Minchella		WW Beeson IK Timberlake	
2	HAF Jackson D Hague		AA Barrett-Greene ML Hind	
3	MP Camacho TG Davies		D Walker WLM Gifford	
4	JWM Faulkner ACM Faulkner		HRD Aldridge SD Blanchet	
5	L Gerolla LM Cova Ybarra		HJ Blanchet C Crisp	
RESULT				

We won Game 3 convincingly and we narrowly lost game 5. The other 3 matches were all 1 up playing the 18th, unfortunately all would venture into extra holes!

In game 2 the opposition went OOB on the 19th and in game 4 we made bogey to lose the 19th. Game 1 was by now heading down the 21st in the fading light and cold conditions after halving the 19th and 20th in regulation pars. The 22nd was halved in bogey after the opposition escaped from the beach wall with an exceptional 3 wood from the stone path. Christian then hit a wonderful 4 iron to the 22nd but with one hand on the trophy we sadly 3 putted and we then succumbed to a fine par on the 23rd hole....oh the torture!

And so our challenge came to an end on that 23rd hole...the longest Hewitt final in history which took 93 holes to decide.

Malvern were not only an exceptionally strong team but more importantly were true gentlemen with the match being played in a wonderful spirit. They had previously lost 8 Hewitt finals so in a bizarre way we took comfort in that, they knew exactly how we were feeling.

Whilst it was bitterly disappointing to lose in the final yet again, one must focus on the positives; we have so many of them! The Captain could not be more proud of the team, the supporters and the society which the team represents. We play collectively as a team with humility, fairness, competitiveness and total belief in each other. Our time will come that is for sure!!



Hewitt team and supporters, photograph taken in Royal Cinque Ports GC.

Oh and one for the statisticians...Over 18 holes of match-play the Hewitt team of 2019 played 30 games, won 20, halved 7, lost 3...That is formidable form in anyone's book!