

## **County Finals 2021 – Captain's Report**

Team Surrey arrived at Denham Golf Club excited and raring to go. After a busy summer of strokeplay golf for most of the team, it was a welcome return to team matchplay, this time in our new Surrey jumpers! Canice Screene and Sarah Mardani who were part of the winning team in June, were sadly unavailable as they had returned to college in the States. Instead, we welcomed Lottie Woad, Ellie Monk and Maty Santilli (travelling reserve). After the official practice round, the buggy was decorated in customary pink and we headed to the team hotel. Before supper, we settled down to watch a video montage of good luck messages from former Surrey players and officials which included Dame Laura, Inci Mehmet and Annabel Dimmock! Prep all done, we were set!

### **Day 1**

On the first morning Surrey played Hertfordshire and we started with 2 new foursomes combinations – Alex & Hyun-Ji and Nicola & Ellie – both of which seemed to work and we won both matches. Lottie soon followed with a win in the top singles to secure the match point. Abbi was 4 down at one point but fought back, birdieing the final hole to just miss out 1d. Olivia also birdied the 18<sup>th</sup> to clinch a half point – all these points add up!

So we headed to lunch in a quietly confident mood but we knew that Yorkshire, who had also won in the morning, were going to be very tough competitors. This time Ellie & Nicola led the way, followed by Abbi & Olivia and then Lottie, Ellen and Hyun-Ji in the singles. The matches were close in the early stages but we had 3 convincing wins in the end by Ellie & Nicola (4&3), Lottie (5&4) and Ellen (4&3) to secure the magic 3 points. The R&A had also announced that Ellen had been selected for the Junior Vagliano team so there was double reason to celebrate! We ended day 1 as the only unbeaten team but there was still lots of golf to be played. Back at the hotel, Hyun-Ji and Alex shared the green jacket for their collective 'shots of the day' in getting a birdie 2 to close out their match in the morning.

At this point I must say how thrilled the players were to see so many pink supporters lining the fairways. None of us had ever seen so many pinkies in one day before and it really did spur us on!

### **Day 2**

On day 2 we faced Buckinghamshire in the morning followed by Lincolnshire in the afternoon. Some players got up a little earlier to do some extra lag putting practice with John (the greens at Denham are very big, very undulating and very quick!) and it seemed to do the trick. Buckinghamshire have a young squad like Surrey and were playing on home turf so it was always going to be a tight match. The morning matches were all very close and the most nerve-racking of the 5 sessions for our officials and those watching. Abbi & Ellen, a tried and tested partnership from June, led us off followed by Olivia & Hyun-Ji and then Ellie, Alex and Lottie in the singles. Ellen and Abbi were 1d on 17<sup>th</sup> tee but won the 17<sup>th</sup> with a gimmie birdie and dug in deep to secure a crucial half point. Olivia and Hyun-Ji held their nerve to win on 17 after their opponents had holed out from 50yds on the 15<sup>th</sup>! Ellie, playing in her first singles match for Surrey, played superb golf to come back from 2d against a junior England international to win on the 17<sup>th</sup>. Lottie also played well to secure a convincing win at the back of the order to give an overall winning scoreline of 3.5-1.5.

After a very quick turnaround, we were back out to play Lincolnshire, a friendly and experienced team. The order was Ellie & Nicola followed by Olivia & Hyun-Ji in the foursomes and then Lottie, Alex and Ellen in the singles. Once again we started well winning both foursomes matches, Olivia and Hyunji by a 9&7 margin (no sign of tired legs there!) and Lottie also secured her 4<sup>th</sup> singles victory to

confirm the match point. Alex was all square as she stood on the 17<sup>th</sup> tee and, with all eyes on her, stepped up and played the next 2 holes brilliantly to secure a 2 up victory and therefore another point for Surrey. A 4-1 result was our best of the week so far and put us in a strong position for the final day of play.

The calculators were out on Saturday evening trying to work out what we needed to do on Sunday in the title decider against Somerset. Somerset had lost their opening match of the week, so we were ahead on points and technically only needed 1 point out of the possible 5 to secure the trophy. Nonetheless, we wanted to finish on a high, every point still mattered and so it was an early night again (even if there was a wedding in the hotel!) Ellen was awarded shot of the day for her approach to the 17<sup>th</sup> hole in the morning.

### **Day 3**

Day 3 arrived and there was a sense of calm around the team. Everyone knew their role and the plan, we just had to deliver! We decided to go with 2 foursomes pairings who had been unbeaten all week – Nicola & Ellie followed by Olivia & Hyun-Ji. In the singles, Ellen led us out followed by Lottie, with Abbi in the anchor match. All of the matches were close on the front nine with the exception of the 2<sup>nd</sup> match where Surrey were steaming ahead. Olivia and Hyun-Ji combined superbly to win 5&4 and secure the winning point – a fitting end as this was to be Olivia's last amateur event before she starts her PGA training at Wentworth. Thank you Olivia for all your commitment to Surrey over the years – we will certainly miss you. Meanwhile, the first foursomes match was still going eventually resulting in a halved match. So we had 1.5 pts, but we wanted to win the match outright. Ellen and Lottie were both having tight tussles against fellow England players and in the end, both managed to hold on for 1up victories. This meant Surrey had won 3.5-1.5 and it was time to celebrate! Surrey had done it! We were crowned National Champions for the first time in 24 years!

I really can't put into words how amazing it felt to be part of this team. All of the players were so proud to be wearing the pink shirt which made my job as Captain very easy indeed. Our success really wouldn't have been possible without the support of so many people and there are many people to thank:

- Our fabulous team of officials; County Captain Sue, President Val, Vice-Captain Katrina and John Noble our coach.
- All of our caddies and supporters who made the journey to Denham and sent us good luck messages. There were so many of you it's impossible to mention you all but it was especially nice to have support from the members of the Stovold and Seniors team who also had winning seasons.
- Denham GC and England Golf for putting on such a great event. We were made to feel incredibly welcome by all the members and volunteers.
- Finally, a massive thank you and well done to my super squad of teenagers. They were all brilliant on and off the course but I must give a special mention to 14-year old Maty Santilli, our travelling reserve. Maty caddied in each of the 5 sessions with a 100% winning record!

Next year County Week will be hosted by Surrey at Burhill from 27-29<sup>th</sup> June 2022. Please do pop the date in your diaries – it would be great to see lots of pink support once again!

Nicola Taylor

1<sup>st</sup> Team Captain 2021

England Golf press release: [Women's County Finals: Super Surrey make it a clean sweep and take title - England Golf](#)

Golfnews24 press release: [England Golf: Women's County Finals – GolfNews24](#)

**Surrey Team – National Champions 2021**

Nicola Taylor (Walton Heath)

Olivia Horsford (Wimbledon Park)

Hyun-Ji Kim (Royal Wimbledon)

Ellie Monk (Sunningdale)

Alex Phelps (Woking)

Abbi Rowlands (Foxhills)

Matilde Santilli (Foxhills)

Lottie Woad (Farnham)

Ellen Yates (West Hill)

