

## 2004 Boys Order of Merit Report

The Hertfordshire Boys Order of Merit with the support of county clubs has grown in success in 2004. The merit table is based on points awarded for boys finishing position in county club junior opens during the summer season. The winner of the order of merit is the boy with his 6 best-combined position points in junior opens, plus his position points in the Boys County Championship. In 2003 there were 15 opens registered with Great Hadham, Brocket Hall and Berkhamsted running events for the first time. In 2004 this increased to 16 with The Hertfordshire hosting its inaugural junior open and on a Saturday at that!

One of the reasons behind running the Order of Merit is to give clubs the opportunity of promoting their junior open to a wider audience as all events are listed in the county fixture diary listed in the Events section on the county website. It also provides the county selectors with feedback on boys' performance throughout the season and enables them to monitor boys' progress, and to identify any promising players for county coaching. Additionally, it reveals the younger up-and-coming boys who are keen to broaden their golfing experience by playing courses other than their home club.

The HGU are grateful to those clubs who run junior opens and provide the results so promptly. This allows the BOOM table to be updated regularly on the website to maintain the interest of junior golfers.

115 boys recorded merit points in 2003, whereas 122 boys recorded points in 2004. A trio of Mitchell's, and none of them related, dominated the top of the merit table in 2003. Last year it was just a pair. In 2003, Tony Mitchell was third but in 2004, with national tournament commitments and international duty restricting his entry in opens, he finished in 11<sup>th</sup> place. He won at West Herts, after finishing second the previous year, and was second at Harpenden Common, and obtained 108 points.

In 4<sup>th</sup> place and for many weeks the leader of the BOOM was Tom Shadbolt of Mid Herts who won at Great Hadham, with a new course record, and took his own home club open title.

Another up and coming young man whose game blossomed and handicap came tumbling down during the season was in 3<sup>rd</sup> place, Ben Cooper of Great Hadham. He accumulated 142 points with wins at Bishops Stortford and Harpenden Common, and high finishes at Great Hadham, Letchworth and Berkhamsted.

In 2<sup>nd</sup> place, and yet again the bridesmaid in 2004, was Stewart Mitchell of Brickendon Grange with 153 points, 18 points better than 2003, he won the junior open at Brocket Hall even with a lost ball off he 18<sup>th</sup> tee. He finished second at South Herts, and had top ten finishes at Aldwickbury Park, Bishops Stortford, Great Hadham, Porters Park, and The Hertfordshire.

Out in front for the second year running was Jason Mitchell who had an outstanding gross 206 – 5 points better than his 2003 total. When netted back to his 6 best-combined place points in junior opens, plus his second place in the Boys Championship, gave him 170 points (similarly 5 points better than 2003). Jason had an outstanding season showing impressive consistency whenever he played. After an impressive display in the Boys County Championship he won at Aldwickbury Park, with a birdie at the first extra hole in a play-off against Tom Lewis of Mid Herts, and had top 5 finishes at West Herts, Mid Herts, Redbourn, Great Hadham, South Herts and Porters Park.

It was reported that 2003 was a year he would remember but he surpassed that last year particularly with the added responsibility as Boys County Captain. Clearly 2004 was his season to remember as he also won the John Gill Trophy as Colt player of the year.

It has to be recorded that Jason was an exemplary boys captain. He led with distinction, epitomized by his positive attitude in the final afternoon at Ashford Manor in The South East Boys Inter-County Foursomes Match play tournament. With all the pressure of knowing that with his team lying in third place they had to win both their matches against Kent and Surrey to take the trophy. Not only did they do it - they did in style with Jason winning both his matches on the 13<sup>th</sup> green.

Past County President, Mr Ted Foster of Moor Park, who generously donated the BOOM trophy, paid tribute to Jason when he presented the 2004 Hertfordshire Boys Order of Merit trophy to Jason Mitchell of Porters Park at the Annual County Junior Delegates Meeting at Welwyn Garden City Golf Club on Tuesday 1 March.

## **2005 BOOM**

In addition to continuing with the scratch order of merit, the County Union will introduce a Handicap BOOM in 2005. This will be based on competitors' nett score at junior opens and The James Cup will be donated and presented for this annual award. The winner will be the Boy with the 6 best-combined place position points in junior opens. It is hoped that this will encourage more mid-handicap and younger golfers to enter these competitions and will give them an incentive to accumulate points in the Handicap BOOM.

Such is the interest and growth in this order of merit that 18 clubs plan to run junior opens in 2005 including new events at Welwyn Garden City and Verulam Golf Clubs.

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