

Clifton entered the Edward Harris Cup for the very first time this year but their preparations were thrown in to disarray on the eve of the tournament when their inspirational leader, and Royal Porthcawl member, Lloyd James, had to pull out with an injured wrist. That kind of devastating news, along with the absolutely abysmal weather forecast would have been enough to derail a lot of teams heading in to such a prestigious event. Clifton though, well they had other ideas. A talented team of eight assembled at a blustery and overcast Royal Porthcawl, famed for being the course that brought Tiger Woods to his knees. With heavy rain and gale force winds set to hit South Wales in the afternoon, teams knew they had to do the bulk of their scoring in the morning before the weather turned and Clifton executed that game plan to perfection.

The format was better ball stableford and the brilliant Andy Rudge partnered rookie Iain Grant in the opening pair and they made hay whilst the sun attempted to shine. Grant took to competitive Clifton golf like the proverbial duck to water and was a tremendously solid partner for the hugely talented Rudge. Playing with a yellow ball after taking inspiration from his golfing hero, Rory Sabbatini, Grant delivered one of the great up and downs on the difficult par 3 4th to set the tone early. With Grant's exuberance and Rudge's consistent ball striking, they were ultimately able to come in with a fabulously impressive 34 points.

Second off were Adam Fielder and another rookie in Christian Walters. The pressure was on them as they came in to the day unbeaten together as a pair in their careers across various formats and they certainly didn't disappoint. Walters, who hits his wedges like Justin Thomas and putts like Steve Stricker, is an invaluable addition to the team and the perfect foil for Fielder. They got off to a steady enough start but it was on the 5th that they caught fire as they both made birdie and then Walters stiffed it to 3ft on the 6th to accumulate 8 points in the space of 2 holes. They made the turn with 22 points and were able to steadily go about their business on the back nine in brutal conditions coming in with a total of 37 points to hold the clubhouse lead.

That clubhouse lead didn't last long though. Tom Atkinson and Harry Hood made up the 3rd pairing and my goodness me, they played quite superbly. Hood was a last-minute replacement for James and fortunately there were no signs at all of the chipping yips from earlier on in the season. He found himself 1 under par on his own ball through the opening six holes and had really made a statement for the day ahead. Atkinson stood and admired for the opening hour or so but never one to shirk the limelight, he then found his best golf on the back nine. He drove the ball brilliantly and holed out like Cameron Smith which led to them scoring a quite ridiculous 39 points and ultimately picking up the spoils for the highest scoring pair on the day.

The last pair off saw a lovely blend of youth and experience with Hugo Ross partnering Chris Trembath. There's little doubt that they drew the short straw by going off in the final group as they suffered the worst of the elements for the longest period of time. However, the fact they were still able to come in with a highly respectable score of 29 points is testament to not only their talent but also their grit and desire in hurricane like conditions.

A special mention as well to Captain James who as I mentioned earlier wasn't able to play because of injury. That didn't stop him though being out on the course all day in the driving

rain supporting his teammates and walking holes with each group. "Lloyd James reminds me of a young Colin Montgomerie" said one gentleman in attendance. A leader like no other, he has all the attributes of a future Old Cliftonian Golf Society President.

Unsurprisingly, with three scores in the mid to late 30's, Clifton were victorious and were crowned the 2022 Edward Harris Cup champions. How great it was to see so many new and young faces making up the side and it certainly showed that the future of Clifton golf is very bright. Hopefully it was a sign of things to come and we can continue bleeding new talent in the coming years.