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Our biennial journey to compete for the John Northcott Trophy took place on **Saturday 2nd August**, with Combe Martin Bowling Club making the short trip to face our local rivals Ilfracombe BC.

Played over **18 ends** across **5 rinks**, the contest was set against a backdrop of warm and pleasant weather, with temperatures reaching a testing **24°C** at times.

The green at Ilfracombe was in excellent condition, ran at above average pace and overall played honestly, offering the bowlers ample opportunity to showcase their skill.

Ilfracombe played at a different level, hyper competitive in nature, and clearly demonstrated their strength in depth with a good number of passionate younger bowlers who made every wood count.

It was the hosts who seized the advantage early and never looked back.

Ilfracombe BC displayed quality throughout the afternoon and meant business ! Their competitive edge was clear from the outset, and CMBC struggled to match their consistency and sharpness.

By the end of play, Ilfracombe had secured a comprehensive **103–56** win, claiming **4** out of the **5** rinks and underlining their position as a force to be reckoned with in local bowls.

Despite the lop-sided scoreline, the afternoon retained a strong sense of sportsmanship.

Following the match, the hosts demonstrated their usual hospitality and provided a well-earned post-game meal of hot dogs, followed by generous helpings of Eton Mess and fresh fruit salad—a fitting conclusion to an enjoyable afternoon of bowls.

While the result was a clear statement from Ilfracombe, it also served as a valuable reminder to CMBC of the level required to compete against the region's top clubs !

There's no shortage of spirit within the Combe Martin camp—but if they are to challenge for honours in the future, an honest appraisal and clear improvement across the board will be necessary!

A thoroughly enjoyable day—and a match befitting the memory of John Northcott.

**\*\*** As starting time neared, CMBC became aware that one of their number had mixed up the match date and they were a man short.. Credit must go out to 'super sub' Marie Irving who stepped into the breach and played an absolute blinder, shoe-less and with a strange set of woods procured from the Ilfracombe store room.. 'Well Done Marie. **\*\***

