

O.I.B.A. – 2025/2026 COUNTY AUSTRALIAN PAIRS FINAL

The 2025-2026 O.I.B.A. Men's Australian Pairs final was played on Sunday 29th March at Oxford & District Bowls Club. The final was contested by Jake Gibson and Craig Morphet of Carterton and Dave Leighfield and Martin (Shep) Shepherd of Chipping Norton.

This was always going to be a good match with four of the best indoor bowlers in Oxfordshire. With the talent on display there was never going to be any high scoring ends. The first three ends went to Dave & Martin 3 – 0 up. End four Dave, who was playing alongside Jake, had a close toucher although Craig came in with the perfect draw and scored one shot, end four 3 – 1 to Dave & Martin. The heads were so tight that it was difficult to see what the exact position was from the far end of the green. Ends 5, 6, & 7 went to Dave & Martin picking up two 2's and a 3 despite Craig driving into head and not getting anything out of it. End nine saw a turn around, Craig and Jake picked up 3 shots and on ends 10 & 11 picking up a further two single shots. Score now at end eleven Dave & Martin were 11 – 6 up. End twelve the players were all drawing close to the jack, however Martin's last wood was dead weight and rested on the jack for a single shot, now 12 – 6 up. Ends 13, 14, 15 & 16 were all single shot ends which were shared between the two teams, Dave & Martin now 14 – 8 up. End seventeen again another good head with some very close woods to the jack and with Martin holding shot. Craig played a controlled weighted wood into the head and scored two shots, the gap was closing 14 – 10 to Dave & Martin. Going into the final end Jake drew shot inches away from the Jack and Martin got 2nd wood almost touching Jakes short wood. Craig fired and missed, not by very much. Dave put a blocker in and Jake fired missing the head. Dave put a better second blocker in and Jake fired again this time passing the head on the other side at which the teams shook hands.

Final Result: Dave Leighfield and Martin Shepherd of Chipping Norton 14
Jake Gibson and Craig Morphet of Carterton 11

This was an excellent game; another display of high quality bowling from all four players.

Well done to Dave & Martin who are O.I.B.A. County Australian Pairs Champions for 2025/2026, commiserations to Jake & Craig you both played exceptionally well.

This is only one of two OIBA competitions that the prizes also include a monetary prize. This is due to the generosity of Michael Andrew who for the third year donated £100 each to the winners and £25 each to the runners-up for which I and the OIBA would like to say a big thank you. Michael attended the final and presented, along with President Paul Saxton, the Cup, financial rewards and the OIBA glasses to the winners and runners-up.

Thanks to Bill Turner & Oxford & District Indoor Bowls Club for hosting the final.

