

## SPECIAL OLYMPICS BOCCIA 3<sup>rd</sup> BEST TEAM IN COUNTRY

On Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2018 Special Olympics East Herts Boccia Club travelled to Sheffield to compete in the National Boccia League finals. Over 100 teams competed in the National League this season and the regional winners met at Sheffield Sports Centre to compete not only for medals for the top spots, but also the additional prize of a place in next season's Super League.

Shooting Stars won their division at the end of May but then had a nerve racking three-way final with the winners of the two other East Region division winners. A trip to Chalfont St Peter proved challenging and although they did not win the three-way competition, their 2<sup>nd</sup> place meant they qualified for the national finals.

Shooting Stars were one of three teams in their pool. Their first match against IM Leeds was a great morale booster as the team won all 6 ends with a final score of 11-0.

After a break of over an hour the team went into the second match against Romford YMCA with confidence. However this proved to be a much harder challenge. Both teams were evenly matched and there was nothing to choose by the end of all 6 ends, the score 5-5. This meant they had to play a tie break. Unfortunately YMCA won the game on the last ball and consequently the match.

Shooting Stars were 2<sup>nd</sup> in their pool and had an agonising wait to see if they had qualified for the quarter finals as one of the three highest losers. Relief when their names were posted on the board. Next round versus YMCA Wildcats. Would YMCA prove to be our nemesis again? A good start by SS, winning the first two ends but their opponents hit back with the next three ends, 3-3. In the final end a mixture of great shot play and good tactics meant SS won by one point. Through to the semi-finals!

The match against Paul's place Raiders started on a knife edge, as it seemed both teams were well matched. Shooting Stars lost the first end

0-1 but won the second and third ends 1-0, with Raiders taking the fourth. Score 4-4. However the Raiders then seemed to get into their stride and won the last two ends with the final result 2-6. On reflection the team that had been playing as a team, each player contributing with amazing shots, were starting to play as individuals and this was reflected in the final score.

So all to play for in their last match. Equilibrium was restored. Opponents Northern Power. A bronze medal the prize. Another stressful, exciting close encounter, both teams winning ends by only one or two points. Spectators holding their breath with every shot. The score after 6 ends 4-4. Another tie break! Just like the England football team all our players held their nerve and the tie break was won convincingly by 3-0. Bronze medal.



Andre, Ian and Harry – Bronze Medallists

Head Coach, Rita Leader said, ***“The team Harry Herbert, Andre Hagley-King and Ian Leader were a credit to the club. Despite having reached the finals for a number of years the players are still learning with every competition. Despite a few setbacks they never gave up and fully deserve their ranking as the 3<sup>rd</sup> best team in the country.”***