



SKILLS NIGHT

Wednesday 4 March, 2026



Sixty years ago, in March 1966, one of the most coveted trophies in global sport, The Jules Rimet Trophy, was stolen from its apparently secure display location in Westminster. A couple of days after an aborted ransom sting, a dog named Pickles discovered a parcel containing the trophy in a hedge beside his owner's home. Pickles became an overnight sensation, the Jules Rimet was presented at the 1966 Football World Cup Final, before being retained by Brazil, then, a few years later, in Rio, permanently stolen.

The Hinds Trophy (aka The Skills Night Wooden Spoon Trophy), another of the most coveted trophies in global sport, recently had a similar journey. The original Hinds was snatched from its secure location behind the Lord's hazard end galleries, at some point in the summer or autumn of 2024. No ransom was ever demanded, nor was any canine heroism involved. But just a few weeks ago, long after its replacement with a replica trophy, the original Hinds reappeared just as mysteriously as it had disappeared. The replacement Hinds will continue to be engraved and displayed. The original Hinds is now preserved at a highly secure, secret location.

Ironically, the coveted Hinds Trophy was nearly won this time by Andrew Hinds's own team, *Three Ravens*. Numerically and temporally challenged in many ways, that team started with just two but ended up with four players. They need words, not numbers; the collective noun for ravens is "an unkindness".

The Ravens team was especially unkind to two teams. By performing so well on the final discipline, they knocked *Souldiers Three* (**Hugo Fenwick, Gavin Yeats & David Pritchard**) into the Hinds Trophy slot. Then, with the final scoring of the event, those unkind Ravens denied *Three Things In Store* late surge to the top spot. Instead, *Three Poor Mariners* - **Richard Boys-Stones, Mary Strevens & Huw Humphreys** – were, fairly, reinstated at the top of the podium.

The Close But No Cigar Award went to neophyte **Gerald Slocock**, whose ability to almost-but-not-quite hit a target might become the stuff of legend, if he maintains form in that regard.

The Most Valuable Player (MVP) Award went to **Shaheed "Sid" Rashid**, not least for being the only player to score two points off one hit on the central beam of the dedans gallery.



The Philip The Bold Golden Moment Award went to **John Thirlwell**, for an extraordinary hat trick of coups du patageoire – landing the serve in a paddling pool – which is much harder than it sounds.

There is a serious purpose to skills night; honing skills. True, most of the skills honed on such nights involve eating curry, drinking, singing and the like, but the evening does include some real tennis skills too.

Skills night unquestionably proves the skills of the MCC admin team who organise the event so well, and our tennis professionals, who make the game swing with great reliability. Which is more than can be said for most of us players' tennis swings!

IAN HARRIS