

Bowls enthusiast holds her own on the green despite crippling spinal condition

By Emma Innes

Dora Howard, 70, from Hadley Road, was diagnosed with scoliosis, a condition resulting in curvature of the spine, after suffering from back pain.

Ms Howard, who has played at the North London Bowling Club in High Barnet for 20 years, feared that she would have to give up playing bowls as her doctor informed her that she is too old to have surgery to correct the spinal curvature.

However, following a course of physiotherapy, she has seen her pain so reduced that she had been able to return to the green with a new spring in her step.



Dora Howard is now back on the bowls green.

She said: "I have been bowling for nearly twenty years; I started when I was around 50, and I immediately fell in love with the game. People think that it's an old persons sport, but I would of played it when I was younger if I would of had the chance."

Ms Howard had, for a long time, felt niggling pains in her back when playing but then suddenly, during a crucial game against another title contender, started to experience a great deal of pain. She said: "Often when playing bowls you get slightly sore on one side, as you are leaning either left or right when you play, but the pain I was experiencing was entirely different and much more painful than anything I had experienced before."

As a result Ms Howard was forced to go and visit her GP who diagnoses her scoliosis. The doctor informed her that there was no treatment available to improve the condition of her spine. Nevertheless, Ms Howard was determined to find a solution so she trawled the internet until she came across the Scoliosis SOS Clinic in London. Here she was offered a different approach to treating the condition which involved physiotherapists providing exercises and stretches to improve the state of the spine. This treatment proved so successful that she has been able to return to her beloved bowls club pain free.

She said: "I am so delighted with the outcome of my treatment, the pain beforehand was so severe, and I genuinely thought that I was going to have to give up my bowls. For me that would have been devastating, as it is very important socially to me."

She added: "It means the world to me; playing bowls is such a massive part of my life. It gives me something to look forward to on the weekend. I am a fairly competitive person by nature, but the result doesn't bother me when I am playing bowls, it is just a great place to be with my friends. I could not imagine life without bowls."

Scoliosis affects more than four per cent of the population and, if left untreated, can lead to fatal heart and lung problems. The standard treatment in the UK is to monitor the curve until it becomes severe enough to require surgery. The procedure required, however, does not guarantee success and can be high-risk.