

WALES IN THE CAMROSE: LLANDRINDOD WELLS – January 2014

MATCH THREE

After the first two matches it was Scotland in the lead and Northern Ireland also undefeated. Wales were twice defeated but only narrowly each time.

WALES & IRELAND. This has often been the toughest team we faced and in the 14 encounters in this format Wales has won only 5 of these. Wales started this match with the Kurbalija & Shields, teamed up with Roderick & Towers. The only slam was relatively easy to bid – but still there were two accidents ...

98432		East opened 1D three times, 1H twice and the man playing all the other suits as five cards had to open 1C. Over the 2C response (at all six tables) two Easts splintered with 3S, two made a forcing raise to 3C, and the others started on a more artificial sequence. Three times some cue bidding ended with a jump to 6C which the other hand passed – not having been invited to the party. For England, Holland & Green did the dutiful checks in case a grand slam was on but stopped in 6C. For EBU, the East hand took charge and then offered a grand slam without any sense of tricks to cash. It had play but it didn't come home today. And finally Northern Ireland managed to find a way to stop in 4N on what looked like a Blackwood sequence. Everyone in clubs made 12 tricks. Swings to Scotland and to England on this.
K864		
T		
Q43		
AKQT	6	
JT	AQ75	
98	AK54	
AKT76	J952	
J75		
932		
QJ7632		
8		

Ireland scored heavily against Wales in this stanza with 5 double figures swings going out and only 8 imps on the plus side. The first was a mis-played game where Shields had a unique lead against his game and fell into a trap set by the defence. The second was a forcing bid passed in error. The third was a problem over-competing in one room and a vulnerable contract down four. The fourth was, IMHO, unlucky; the Irish decision to open 4S on a 0625 hand with A98742 of hearts led to the normal 4S being played the other way up, making the winning lead the normal lead. The other room had the game played the other way but Wales sacrificed anyway and playing for two off led to four off – oh dear. Finally Ireland bid a chancy 3N and Wales had to lead the right major to beat it (Rex Anderson did for N Ireland) and the alternative lead cost a game swing.

This hand wasn't much of a swing in the Wales-Ireland match but was in the others ...

J43		Wales played in 5D-1 and Ireland in 5C-3 but the other four tables all managed to find 3N – once after a 2N opener and twice after 1D-1H-3N. Those auctions led to East being declarer but once it was played by West. Against West's 3N, Brian Senior – having heard West show clubs as well as hearts and then bid 3N, led out a top heart at trick one and once the DQ got in there were five tricks. Against the 2N opener, John Matheson led a spade as South and the diamond finesse at trick two went to his queen. Without x-ray vision, he continued spades and Dave Kendrick wrapped up 10 tricks. At the two tables of 1D-1H-3N it started with a spade and a diamond but South now continued with the HA (as declarer might have stiff K). Jeffrey Allerton signalled clearly with the HK and they cashed out but N Ireland blocked the suit and let England away with 3N making.
KQ7		
54		
QT652		
KQ8	A75	
8542	93	
3	AKJT96	
J9873	AK	
T962		
AJT6		
Q872		
4		

After much adding up, we found Wales had lost by 72-8, not a comfortable place. Scotland were 22 imps ahead of EBU and England were beating Northern Ireland by 51-6. Wales brought in John Salisbury & Mike Tedd, alongside Kurbalija & Shields. This stanza was much more contained although Wales again had only 8 imps in the plus column. The minuses came in one poor choice of game, one forgetting the system (transfer advances of overcalls) and a too ambitious 3N contract which failed by 3 tricks while the part score made in the other room.

Apart from these aberrations it was a very flat stanza for Wales, with only 17 imps exchanged over the other 14 boards. There was one slam hand and this was the one over the weekend when everyone did bid a slam. But – of course – it wasn't flat. Opposite a sound opener, the responder had a 5323 hand with 24 points. Five of the six got to 7N but two of them had to trust in values and points (no Blackwood) and the sixth, in that same boat – chickened out and stopped in 6N. There were four sets of AKQ to collect and the one jack held was in the long suit, so that produced an extra trick.

There were five hands – including that one - where five tables got to exactly the same result. But as always there was a self-inflicted loss : which went to the benefit of EBU twice, and to both Irish teams and Scotland. One part score had some interesting possibilities –

83	JT4	765	All tables started, from South, with 1S-X and a raise. The Easts who bid 3H direct got raised to 4H which was just too high. Two passed the 2S raise, and that could not be beaten. One East was able to bid 2N to get to 3H and show a weak hand (and played there) while the sixth was able to double the 2H bid by North which showed a good raise.
Q952	643	AKT7	
AQ83	K4	T65	Against heart contracts, two tables started with three rounds of spades, and declarer went straight for the diamond finesse and now could only make 8 tricks. There's a good case for a small diamond away from the AQ early and it will be hard for North to duck lest declarer has Jx – and this might have let 3H make. Even ducking the first diamond and dropping the king is possible when North shows an (in context) good raise. In the end everyone took 8 tricks.
AQ3	K7642	T98	
	AKQ92		
	J8		
	J972		
	J5		

After that stanza was over England has slipped to win by just 13 imps, while Ireland had piled on enough to get them 20-0 and Scotland ended 12 ahead of EBU. The table now showed Scotland the tiniest amount ahead of Ireland and all the other teams below average. Not all equal however – Northern Ireland at less than 1 VP below were 12 VPs ahead of Wales, with both English teams in between.

END OF MATCH THREE
