

WALES IN THE CAMROSE: MANCHESTER – March 2014

MATCH TWO

The second match started with Northern Ireland at the top of the leader board and Wales at the bottom. We were to play England now, a team against which had played in each of the previous two years. Last year we lost by 21 imps, but that was a lot better than the 73 imps the year before. It is the strongest English team and the backbone of their Bali team and the team going to Croatia for this summer's European Teams Championship.

WALES & ENGLAND. The first stanza here was a relatively flat set of boards, and only 38 imps were exchanged by England and Wales over the 16 boards and there were no double figure swings. The biggest swing was on this board ...

8		Jeffrey Allerton for EBU opened 1H while all the other tables started with 1D. The consequence was that he ended in 5H on the lead of two top spades. He drew two trumps and then knocked out the DA but was let off when Ireland didn't play a third spade. For the others the key question was what South did after the 1D opener got a 1S overcall : two raised diamonds while three passed. Opposite a pass only Tom Hanlon came back in as North so England and Northern Ireland were allowed to play comfortably in 4S, making for +620.
QJ542		
KQT976		
A		
QT53	AKJ97	
T863	9	
J3	A2	The three other tables ended in 5D after spades had been supported and two Easts doubled and followed through with the H9 lead. Declarer won that and played a diamond to the queen and ace. Now the spotlight was on East and the choice would all depend on where partner's entry was. The H8 from Filip Kurbalija led Patrick Shields to underlead the top spades and he got a ruff for one off when the SQ won. The H2 at the Scots' table got a club continuation and Northern Ireland collected +750 as a result (and 16 imps).
K73	QJ865	
642		
AK7		
854		
T942		
		The double and unexpected lead should stand out as a singleton and the duty of West is to make a McKenney signal to indicate an entry. It was surprising not to see everyone on that wavelength.

The other interesting hand was a bidding exercise which most people failed ...

87	AJ9	The preferred opening in fourth seat was 2N (upgrading with the extra club) but two tables opted for 1C instead. Over 2N three tables just settled for game, while Filip Kurbalija made a mild slam try (but that was declined). The fifth table subsided also in 3N but for EBU, Hinden & Osborne, once the latter (as a passed hand) showed values and no major length, bid easily up to the excellent slam. Issues at the table resulted in an adjusted score (a mix of 6D and 7D) but they still gained 11 imps over the opponent's 3N+4.
J76	A4	
AJT53	KQ	
AT4	KQ9653	

The set ended with England 14 ahead of Wales, EBU 10 ahead of Ireland, and the North 6 imps ahead of Scotland. Wales now sat out Filip & Patrick and brought in Laura & Mike to play with John & Mike. The second stanza was so different, with lots of swingy boards. The first board was

AQ5	KT63	With so many HCP and a plethora of tricks you would expect everyone to reach slam but 3 tables failed (ending in 4H, 4S and 4N). The two Irish teams and Scotland got this one right. Only Ireland vs EBU saw a swing on this board.
AKQ5	J86	
A43	QJT72	
AK8	3	

The next hand also failed to fill us with confidence ...

AT763
KQT54
7
42

The 1N opener by East at two tables was raised to game and both got the H2 lead. Ireland cashed the C-AK before testing the diamonds and were doomed, but Gold for England correctly tested diamonds first and then could finesse in clubs. That gave him 8 tricks but Mike Tedd defended correctly as North holding onto all his hearts and the contract had no chance.

Q82
73
J92
AKJ85

K4
A8
AKT843
976

Of the four tables which started 1D two got a 1N response from partner and two got 2C. Over 1N one North passed and the other bid 2D showing the majors – which was good in a way but when his partner supported hearts, East-West quickly scampered into 5D and made easily (on a spade lead, although it is always there). Over 1D-P-2C, the offerings were double and 2H and those two tables joined the silent North in defending 3N.

J95
J962
Q65
QT3

They all got a major suit lead and one table let South win the DQ and was then quickly off. The other two saw Mike Close and Phil Stevens win the opening lead, test the diamonds and run the clubs. What was a surprise was that their opposition threw away the suit that had been set up and that allowed them both to set up a ninth trick and make 3NT. So a 10-11 imps swing in all three matches here with EBU, Scotland and Wales all gaining.

A few boards later Wales hit some bad luck, with some good English defence ...

74
J83
4
AKQ8654

Three opening bids were chosen here, by North, at red: twice 3N, twice 3C and twice 1C. Over 3N both Easts bid 4D and one was raised to 6D (successful, +920 for Scotland) but in the other room the opening bid was not seen and the 4D taken to be a strong 4S opener – so West bid 4S and played there, losing 6 trumps tricks.

Q
A652
KT3
T9732

A93
KQ4
AJ8752
J

Over 1C, east overcalled and in both those rooms South ended playing the hand in spades making 9 tricks. Over the 3C opener Phil King bid 3D and his partner 3N (making +1) but over the Welsh 3C opener David Gold doubled for takeout and when his partner passed they had hit the jackpot. Three rounds of hearts was followed by the SQ to the ace and a ruff. Tony Forrester now carefully cashed the DK and then played a fourth heart – setting up an extra club trick for the defence and collecting +1100 and 15 imps for England.

KJT8652
T97
Q96

Just a few boards later came this bidding exercise, which most failed

AK3
KJ92
Q753
Q6

QT4
A7
AKJ9
K975

Everyone diagnosed the slam values here but only England and EBU reached to the diamond slam where two ruffs make all the difference. The others were in the hopeless 6N (except for one pair in 4N). Jagger & Allerton succeeded when the former started the auction with a natural 1D, while Allfrey & Robson succeeded after a 1N opener through 2C(range enquiry)-2D(minimum)-5N(pick a slam)-6D(how about this). We do well to remember that a 4-4 fit usually generates an extra trick and can allow a slam in a suit on fewer values than a slam in no-trumps. Wales lost 17 imps on this board ☹

I should report that the next board to this was also a 6D slam but, and this might be unique – all tables bid and made 6D. Things were a little quieter for the last eight boards but still only one was a part-score hand. In this stanza England collected twice as much in the plus column as they did in the first half and won the match by 55 imps (roughly 18-2 in victory points); this was enough to put them, for the first time this year, in the lead in the Camrose table ahead of Scotland who had beaten Northern Ireland by 10 imps and with EBU pushing the Republic of Ireland back into fifth place by beating them by 31 imps. Wales are ☹

END OF MATCH TWO