

WALES IN THE CAMROSE: MANCHESTER – March 2014

MATCH FIVE

The last match for us in this Camrose weekend was between two also rans. The main trophy would go to England if they picked up a big enough score over Scotland, but if they faltered then either Northern Ireland or EBU could overtake them. Wales started with its third line up of the day, now Filip & Patrick in the North-South seats, and John & Mike sitting East-West.

WALES & REPUBLIC OF IRELAND. Although we had seen plenty of slams already, the number peaked in the first set of this match with 6 hands out of 16 on which slams were bid. Admittedly on two of them the hands concerned were missing two cashable aces. Wales did it once, and Ireland did it once – both in cases where there was no scope to use Blackwood, but both were instances of being too ambitious. England also bid the first of these two but against them Scotland sacrificed in 6H and went for -800. One more hopeless slam was bid, this time a grand slam by EBU missing an ace after the opposition sacrificed correctly against the small slam. The other slam bidding was sensible! The first two hands were both slams:

	A765		
	--		
	KQT2		
	AQ865		
J8		QT42	
AKQ942		T8653	
964		--	
97		KJT2	
	K93		
	J7		
	AJ8753		
	43		

Only Ireland opened 1D as North here, and almost hit the jackpot when South raised to 5D and North gave himself a sixth. John Salisbury found the H8 lead (where only a small spade beats it for sure) but declarer's choice of CA before leading up to the queen left him insufficient entries to set up the long club and he was off. The other table in 6D, Tom Townsend as South for England, got the SJ lead but won that in hand (preserving entries for the clubs) and could no longer make.

EBU bid this to 7D, which has play but not today and lost 11 imps to N Ireland who stopped in 5D. Both Wales and Scotland failed to bid the good slam but collected from the oppositions' 5H going off.

The next hand was purely a bidding exercise, nothing in the play –

AKQ8753	9		
J94	AQ32		
8	AKQJ2		
AJ	QT2		

The two tables playing 3N as "good 4M opener" started with that and then confirmed trumps and applied Blackwood. Knowing of a seven card suit to AKQ and an outside ace, they had an easy 7N bid. The Acol Two opening from David Greenwood looked to be heading for the grand slam but a failure to cue bid clubs at the right time led them to stop in 6S. The 4D opener from the Irish got a too hasty 6S response, which leaves us the two 1S openings to consider. Inevitably they started 1S-2D-3S and they both checked for aces. However the length of the spade suit wasn't certain and one chose 6S (assuming six) while the other bid 7N (assuming 7). Gains here only for EBU over the North.

Wales had its good moments and its unlucky moments as we went forward in this match. Our weak 1N opener with a decent 14-count missed the game that the 14-16 openers with the same hand reached (10 imps out). We mis-guessed the trump 10 playing in 2S while other tables led a trump and saved declarer the bother (5 imps out). The last hand of the set only the Welsh declarer went down on this board.

Q2
QJ92
AT95
KQ8

AT743
T73
Q2
963

K
864
KJ876
J742

J9865
AK5
43
AT5

Everyone played in 3N by North and got a diamond lead (except Iain Sime who had opened 1D and got a club lead – his oppo never touched diamonds so he could lose three spade tricks and make happily) . There are 8 top tricks and declarer needs one from diamonds or one from spades, and must avoid losing any more than two diamonds and two spades. An extra diamond comes if two honours are onside, while a spade comes usually from finding the ST. But there is an extra chance in spades of finding AK of spades both in the West hand, which adds another 11% to the 56% shot you started with (above 50% since leading towards queen first might smoke out singleton T or doubleton KT/AT).

Two players ducked the DQ at trick one, and got a diamond back at trick two. This clarified that the diamonds were unfavourable, something that could also be deduced where the lead was a fourth best D7. Two others crossed to HA at trick two and tried a diamond, losing to the jack before giving up on that suit.

Then came the play in spades. The Irish had ignored the diamonds and crossed to HA at trick two to lead spades. The Welsh West leapt up with the SA to lead through a diamond but that just killed the defence. Others got round in slower time to leading a spade. The Scottish West also rose with the SA solving the problem there. Avoidable since it's almost impossible to find partner with diamonds good enough for this, given declarer didn't duck at trick one. Three were left and led the S9 – two ran the 9 which, allowing for diamonds splitting 2-5, is nearly a 60% shot and that worked. The third was Patrick Shields for Wales who led to the SQ which reads as a 64% shot, but that failed. ☹ Wales lost 10 imps.

After the addition was done we found that Wales was 23 down to Ireland, Northern Ireland was 11 up on the EBU (which if repeated would move them 5 VPs ahead), and England were 15 ahead of Scotland and still in the lead. Wales swapped out John & Mike and swapped in Laura & the other Mike.

The first hand of the new set was unlucky for Wales; as at most tables, we played 1N after that opening bid, and leader had to choose from 76 – AQ73 – 872 – Q864 and three tables chose the C4, looking good when dummy showed the singleton 3, but not so good when declarer showed up with AJT92. But against Wales, Tom Hanlon found the devilish lead of D7, finding his partner's suit and declarer with AK doubleton. The lead made 4 tricks difference. Well done Tom.

Another interesting part score turned up soon ...

T54
KT82
J52
832

KJ
--
KT7643
KQ964

A763
QJ643
98
75

Q982
A975
AQ
AJT

Three tables opened 1N as South and two opened 1H. Where West started with diamonds the contract was 3D, but three times West preferred (and should he?) to bid 2N and this led to East playing in 3C. The 3D contract was never in danger but against 3C, each East had to face a spade lead. One declarer fell at the first hurdle by not overtaking the SJ with the SA; he then bashed out trumps from the top; South needed to switch to hearts to beat the contract but missed this, so Ireland recovered. The second declarer overtook with the SA and played a diamond; up with DA, and a heart ruffed was followed by DK and a diamond ruffed and over-ruffed. Another heart came through and Scotland fell at this hurdle, ruffing in dummy; this allowed Tony Forrester to continue the heart force when in with CA and the C8 became a winner. For Wales, Shields survived both hurdles, discarding a winning diamond on the second heart; he was now protected from the force and got his 9 tricks.

There was only one hand with slam potential in this stanza and the bidding when Wales were East-West was very quick; it went 4N-P-6C-end. What's not obvious is that it was North-South who bid this way and they had found the necessary sacrifice over 5H but they had two losers. Three other tables ended by bidding 6C over 5H, but two tables got to play in 5C-doubled which made. At one of these tables it was a "walking the dog" manoeuvre by Tony Forrester which brought in the money – he passed when he learned his partner had a weak hand and that they had a 6-5 fit, and came back in later, and his partner was duly doubled and made.

A few boards later two declarers missed a chance on this hand

Q975	A4	Playing in 3N from the K98 of diamonds, after RHO had overcalled 1C with 1D, they got the D4 lead. One chose the DQ which allowed the ace to win, while the other played low and then ducked the DJ. Neither ploy worked as overcaller had AT732 and an entry; winning the DK blocks the suit – and the clubs come in and your 3N is always there. Missed chances for Wales and Northern Ireland,
K742	A63	
K98	Q6	
A9	Q85432	

When we had finished Ireland had piled on another 31 imps but it was the other matches which everyone cared about. Northern Ireland had picked up just 1 more imp against EBU but had overtaken them now by 1.65 VPs. Any win would be enough for England and they actually collected another 24 imps to beat Scotland by plenty and collect the Camrose trophy.

It's a tough game – Ireland and Scotland had moved from 1st and 2nd on the first weekend, to 4th and 5th place after two weekends. Wales hadn't moved! England and EBU had the top scores this weekend but the performance in Llandrindod Wells by Northern Ireland means they had second place overall. It's a great performance for a small community, who came last in both weekends in 2011, last and second last in 2012, but moved up to third overall last year and hit a new high with second overall this year. Wales needs to find out what their secret is – we seem to have lost ours. Well done also to England – better than coming second to EBU as five years back, and England have now won it for the past three years (after coming second to Wales in 2011). The organisation in Manchester was great, and many thanks as always to BBO and the operators who provide the records on which these reports are based, as well as interest and entertainment for the hundreds, sometimes thousands, of spectators worldwide.

END OF MATCH FIVE
