

WALES IN THE CAMROSE: EDINBURGH – January 2015

MATCH FOUR

At the end of Saturday, Wales lay second in the table, just 0.44 VP behind the strong Ireland team and almost 8VP ahead of England. So the Sunday morning match against Ireland was a proverbial 6-pointer.

WALES & IRELAND. John and Mike started, with Patrick and Tony playing Hanlon-McGann, one of Ireland's top pairs. Mike unnecessarily went off in an early 2H contract but then made 1NT on poor defence while Tony and Patrick pushed the Irish to a poor 3C, off three. Level at 6 Imps each after 5 boards. Then Wales lost 3 by playing in an ill-fated 2NT contract. Board 7 saw Hanlon-McGann the only pair to bid slam; this was a very poor contract – a trump suit of 109 opposite KJ852 so about 26% - but with Qxx onside this rolled home for 13 Imps to Ireland.

Then there were 6 flat boards in this match. Not flat in the others: Northern Ireland managed to go off in a nearly impregnable 3NT, while NIBU bid two hands to very poor slams going down. Then Tony and Patrick were one of only two pairs to bid 3NT on 24 points with good intermediates which rolled home for 6 to Wales. Board 16 was remarkable.

	K3		
	QJT9432		At all tables West opened 1D and North bid 3H. Three Easts bid 5D and when South bid 5H, East understandably doubled this. Two Easts bid 4D, over which one South bid 4S - doubled by East who also doubled the retreat to 5H; the other South bid 4H then 5H after West bid 5D, again doubled by East.
	7		
	JT4		
J4		62	
6		K	
AKJT62		98543	
Q753		AK962	The Welsh East bid 4C over 3H which must be right, then South bid 4NT (Blackwood?), West bid 5D passed to South who bid 5H which East doubled. Only at this table is there a case for East passing 5H as West's 5D hints at a club fit. Anyway the outcome was 5H doubled making at every table!
	AQT9875		
	A8775		
	Q		
	8		

At half time Scotland was beating Northern Ireland 19-3, England was beating NIBU 51-1 and Ireland was leading Wales 23-12.

In the second half Patrick and Tony again played Hanlon-McGann; Gary and Paul came in to give Mike and John a rest, and they played the other top Irish pair, Carroll and Garvey.

The third board of the set cost Wales 5 Imps on imperfect defence to 1NT. Then came this:

	AT8		
	A92		6C and 6D are both excellent slams. In the England-Northern Ireland match each room had a free run and managed to reach 6D. The Northern Ireland and Ireland North-Souths also had a pretty free run but stopped in 5 of a minor (the Irish methods stopped them finding the diamond fit). At another table the Northern Ireland West was able to open 2H showing hearts and another; after North doubled and East bid 4H South for Scotland settled for 5C.
	AK954		
	J5		
Q962		K543	
KQT53		J8764	
T87		Q	
K		862	
	J7		When Wales were North-South, the Irish West opened a very light 1H, North bid 1NT and East 3H putting the spotlight on South. Unfortunately he chose 3NT which only had 8 tricks, so Wales lost 12 Imps.
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	J632		
	AQT9743		

The next board was played in 4H at five tables (5H at one). The ability to open a 4-card major meant that Wales played it from the better side and Patrick played it carefully to make 10 tricks; Ireland played it the other way and the lead made it difficult – one off and 10 Imps back.

Then board 22

8 Q8 T532 AJT986		Two Easts opened 3H at red and played in 4H. One made it when the club Ace was ducked after South led his singleton. The other declarer had a chance; after a spade lead, the HJ to the Q K and Ace, then the CA ducked when the club singleton came through, and the DA cashed, he succeeds by playing the H9, but he understandably tried to cross to the SK to discard his clubs and that was 2 down.
AK64 J KQ964 K43	73 K97532 A Q75	Three East's opened a weak 2 (two 2H, one Multi). This provoked NS into more action with North bidding clubs and South his spades. Although Wales were left to play in 4H, beaten 2 on accurate defence, one South bid 4S which cost 500, while Northern Ireland lost 1100 when they played in 4C doubled five down, after 3S had been doubled.
QJT952 AT4 J87 2		The Irish East opened 1H which led to a 3NT contract. A spade lead would defeat this, but North understandably led a club. Declarer made no mistake: the first round of hearts went J Q K A, and then in the dummy with the DA he led the H9 pinning the 8 and setting up the suit, having the CQ to reach the winners. This was 13 to Ireland who now led by 29. It looked bleak.

Then things improved for Wales. Ireland went off in a tight game when Wales stopped in 3D (+5). Wales made 4S in one room and found a cheap sacrifice in the other (+9).

KJ5 AQT9 Q6 8653	T4 KJ2 K42 AQT97 93 876543 J95 J4 AQ8762 -- AT873 K2	Board 26 was an awkward bidding challenge where lots of shape may lead the optimists to get too high. In the Scotland- Northern Ireland match both North-South pairs reached slam: Northern Ireland opened a strong 2S and so North insisted on 6D when the 5-3 fit was found; Scotland optimistically tried 6C. Each contract was poor but had chances which didn't materialise – flat board. In England-NIBU, each room saw a sensible sequence to 4S+1 –another flat board. Ireland did likewise, while Wales ended in 3NT played safely for 9 tricks and -2 Imps.
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The Welsh fight back continued. Hanlon-McGann's slam luck ran out when they bid a decent 6S, only going off if a club lead is found and the trump Q not found (+13). Then Ireland bid a thin 4H which went off when declarer had to play clubs of xx opposite KJ and guessed wrong (+6). So Wales narrowly won this match 61-57 (11-9 in VPs). Scotland beat Northern Ireland 40-17 (14-6) and England beat NIBU 94-33 (18-2). Wales now led the overall table by 1 VP from England with Ireland just 1 more behind in third place.

Really tight!

END OF MATCH FOUR
