

# WALES IN THE CAMROSE: BELFAST – March 2015

## MATCH ONE

Wales started this weekend in a never-before-held position, leading the Camrose table – ahead of all the other teams. In Edinburgh they had scored 71.67 VPs from an average of 50, a score they had never achieved before. The Republic of Ireland were a fraction of a VP behind and England at 57.7 VPs were the only other team above average. Wales wanted to turn out the same team as last time but Tim Rees, having dropped out ill just as the January weekend started, was not yet back to normality so Filip Kurbalija & Patrick Shields came in to replace Tim & Gary Jones. The remainder of the team – Patrick Jourdain & Tony Ratcliff, John Salisbury & Mike Tedd, with Paul Denning as NPC – remained unchanged.

As usual there were 5 matches to be played, involving two teams from Northern Ireland who were the hosts for the weekend. We refer to these teams as N. Ireland (the stronger team) and NIBU.

**WALES & REPUBLIC OF IRELAND.** In the first weekend Ireland was the only team to win a stanza (16 board segment) against Wales but over the two segments Wales had come out a narrow winner. The new match started with Patrick & Tony in one room, John & Mike in the other. Some of the hands were quite tame but the Irish had a streak of losing decisions all of which cost them double figure swings. One hand which created swings in the other two matches, but was flat for Wales – Ireland, was this

5		Everyone opened 1H as East and 5/6 doubled with the South hand. This got
74		varied responses from West – 1S thrice, 2S once, XX and 4H. The last of
T97543		these was Andy Robson giving up on any slam (very reasonable given the
JT53		minor suit holdings) and leaving the non-vulnerable North with the option of a
AQT973	K4	fairly blind 5D, duly doubled, and with dummy's excellent fit (not the A-
J92	KQT63	doubleton of clubs) it went only two off for 300 to England. Tony Forrester
KQ	2	turned this into a useful gain by starting against 4H (the final contract at all
Q9	K8742	other tables) with the CA and then a spade switch. He could tell his partner
		had no high cards and so a ruff was needed to give the defence four tricks.
		Robert Plunkett, back playing again for N Ireland, also found this defence.
J862		Ireland, NIBU and Wales missed this and scored up -620. But to be fair,
A85		where the DA has been led, declarer could have spotted what was about to
AJ86		happen, thrown the SK on a top diamond and scrambled 10 tricks.
A6		

Wales were already 37 imps up when these two slam hands appeared ...

AK3	QJ9	Tony Ratcliff upgraded (I still don't understand how) the West hand to be a
KQ953	T64	20-21 balanced and then showed a 5-card heart suit when Patrick Jourdain
K743	AQJ5	enquired. A 4D cue bid came next from partner, and Tony now forced into
A	632	slam (4S-5H-6H). The heart suit has a 58% chance of coming in for one
		loser, and it duly did. Wales were the only team to bid a slam.

There was a big swing in one other match on this. The big hand was actually sitting in fourth seat at red, and the hand in third at green, holding T54 – J8 – 962 – QT875 surprised me by passing at 5/6 tables. Only Tony Forrester opened (for England) and his minimal (and nebulous) 1C bid had a great effect; the Scot sitting over him doubled and heard his partner bid 1N. The doubler looked no further and blasted 3N, but a club lead killed that contract and England picked up 13 imps.

The next slam hand was against silent opponents, except for the occasional double of a cue bid.

52 AQJ4  
 AQT76 KJ952  
 KJT86 --  
 J A864

After the 1H opener by West, we had a Jacoby 2N at most tables (the others being a 4D splinter and a 2C natural GF). For Wales Jourdain responded with a natural 3D bid and Ratcliff later asked for aces and bid 6H. Three other tables saw the responder resort to Exclusion RKC (in diamonds), while the fifth just punted 6H and the sixth cue bid around the houses. That cue bidding seemed to be going well for Ireland but it petered out at 5H and that means Wales gained another 13 imps (peaking now at 63 imps ahead).

In the other matches David Greenwood punted the slam for Northern Ireland (gaining 13 imps) and Iain Sime bid 7H for Scotland, also gaining 13 imps. Iain had more justification than David, as he (with the good spades) had an artificial spade bid doubled – to indicate lack of an interest by that hand in a spade lead. He deduced that either his partner or his RHO had the king, and therefore that suit was tied up – and he bid the grand confidently.

A few boards later the swings were all about playing in 3N from the right hand. At two tables the auction started with 1N (weak) and the next hand with A63 – 93 – K5 – AKQJ65 had no trouble doubling this; when it was taken out the bidding patterned out to let partner bid 3N and that was fine. The other tables saw a nebulous (2+) 1C opener three times, and a 1S opener once. Three tables overcalled 1N and were raised but the heart lead killed them. The fourth passed and bid clubs on the next round, but partner didn't pick up on the strength and passed this out; it was better than going minus but only saved the team 2 imps as their opponents were making 3N by the other hand. That was gains for Ireland and Northern Ireland.

At the end of the first stanza, Wales were still 40 imps ahead of Ireland, Northern Ireland were 56 ahead of NIBU, and England were 12 ahead of Scotland. Wales sat out Patrick & Tony now, bringing in Filip Kurbalija & Patrick Shields.

Ireland started the second set with a misunderstanding (nebulous 1C – P – 1D showing hearts – 2H thought by one party to be spades and a minor, and by the other to be hearts) which gave Wales another 12 imps. And then it continued with another silly double figure swing to Wales and along came this hand -

AJ84 9 Q9843 A65  
 93  
 7653  
 KT4  
 T76  
 QJ8  
 K9  
 63  
 AJ52  
 KT742

After the opening bid by South (mostly 1C but also 1D and 1N) both Scotland and Wales managed to use transfers to end up with South playing 4H. They both got diamond leads and played on spades at trick two. The heart switch by West was taken by the ace and the South hand was entered with a spade ruff to discard a club on the DA. Game made by Filip Kurbalija and by Frazer Morgan!

With North as declarer the leads were a diamond (in response to a 1D overcall), twice a spade and only once the CQ. The latter beat the game quickly. On the Welsh defence of S6-S9-SJ-SQ and a spade back to the ace, Mike Tedd pushed through a heart but Ireland won the HA, unblocked the DK and ruffed a spade. Now came DA throwing a club, but fatally next the DJ throwing the last club. Mike was on the ball and played a fourth diamond now and this promoted the HT for John and Ireland were one off. Wales were now 73 ahead!

The next two boards seemed innocuous in our match, but on the first of these England punted a respectable slam which nobody else tried (making on favourable distribution) and then NIBU tried a hopeless slam to give 11 more imps to their compatriots.

This declarer and defensive problem came up a few boards later

A542 T542 T5 J3		All 6 tables played 3N by East on the C7 lead. Two declarers (John Ferguson for NIBU and David Gold for England) put up the CQ and on knocking out the SA had 9 tricks. The others – not realising that the C6 might be enough to hold back the clubs if the CK was offside – won the CA at trick one and played a spade to the king.
KQ 76 AJ632 Q642	JT8 KJ93 KQ97 A9	Three defenders grabbed this, but now declarer was in control and could get his 9 tricks. For England, David Bakhshi ducked and now John Matheson was in trouble. He couldn't continue spades without setting up that suit for the defence, so he tried a heart to the HJ and HQ, and now a club continuation killed him. He ended down 3 for 14 imps to England.
976 AQ8 84 KT875		

when we get to board 30, it was curious to note the choices in first seat at love all with 53 – 5 – T983 – KJT764. Both Matheson for Scotland and Gold for England opened 3C, which seems normal with only 3 cards in the majors, but the other tables all passed. When the next hand doubled, partner starting licking his lips; his AJ62 – AKJ92 – K4 – A2 was well placed to defend but Scotland bid 3N and England did get to double 3H but it was pulled and they ended in 5C making. At the other four tables a pass let the opponents have their say with a 1S opener but the danger of a large penalty just wasn't there any more.

At the end of the match, Wales had increased its lead by another 26 imps, to collect nearly 19 VPs, and England had hammered Scotland (57-3) to get the same VP score as Wales. Northern Ireland continued to smash the NIBU team and came away with a 20-0 win.

The overall tables showed Wales now 14 VPs ahead of England who were 4 VPS ahead of Ireland.

---

END OF MATCH ONE

---