

WALES IN THE CAMROSE: BELFAST – March 2015

MATCH TWO

Wales had started this weekend in a Good Place and by crushing its main rivals in the first match moved into an Excellent Place, being 14 VPs ahead of England and a further 4 VPs ahead of Ireland. The second match looked easier; in the first match in January Northern Ireland had failed to capture the form of last year, although in the first match the previous evening they had collected the maximum of 20 VPs against the compatriots (the NIBU team).

WALES & NORTHERN IRELAND. Wales started well collecting +150 from 1N-3 when four tables played in 4H going off, but in the other room the North stopped in 2H+1 for a flat board. The next hand did gain 8imps for Wales when Kurbalija & Shields stopped well in 2H while the other tables all bid higher and went minus. And then this came along ...

AK84 A2 AKJ632 7		After two passes four Norths opened 1D and these twice got a spade overcall and twice got an overcall showing both majors. The other tables opened a strong 1C and a strong 2C. Two Norths got mild encouragement and bid the 3N game, two bid 3N opposite no encouragement, and two stopped in 3D (an easy make). Against Ireland, Allfrey had only shown spades so he tried a surprise attack in hearts but the HQ won the first trick and Ireland had game and a gain of 7imps. The GF 2C opener by NIBU led to 3N by South against silent opponents and a club round to the king gave the ninth trick here. Scotland and Wales had a top spade lead and won that to play three rounds of diamonds. West won and continued spades, ducked to East who switched to clubs and the king lost to the ace. NI returned a heart against Shields but he knew the king was with East so he rose with the ace and cashed his diamonds. This squeezed East down to two spades and the HK (he had to throw his top club) and now he got end played. Against Iain Syme the defence played a second club which now squeezed North instead; he ditched the H2 but East now mis-read the shape and returned a spade into the K8 for the ninth trick. So four different ways of getting 9 tricks out of an 8-trick hand !
76 985 QT6 AT853	QJ952 KJT63 5 QJ	
T3 Q74 974 K9642		

The next big gain for Wales was primarily a bidding exercise but with a play element too ...

AQ6 7532 AQT43 A	K54 AQ9 KJ65 JT5	One table in each match reached 6D on this hand, played by the 3451 hand, and the leads were a spade, a diamond and a club. Carroll for Ireland & Kurbalija for Wales found the right line – drawing trumps, eliminating clubs, cashing spades and a heart to the H9 to guarantee the contract. Our man from the NIBU missed that line but the heart finesse worked so today it didn't matter. Gain of 12imps to the three slam bidders and minimal sympathy for those who opened 1N as West.
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A little while later this came up ...

T64 AKQ93 A4 Q64	AJ82 654 K3 AJT2	Most tables opened 1N as West and three of them ended in 3D also by West (after a transfer). These declarers were all very grateful for a heart lead and quickly threw two clubs from dummy. So far so good, but they all then took their eye off the ball and missed the need to lead a spade. If they had done, they would have been able to force a spade trick by leading a second round when in with the DA. Missed opportunity for N Ireland and for Scotland, and missed for a moment for Ireland but England returned it by attacking spades (unnecessarily). For Wales it was fortunate that we beat 3D, as in the other room the Ratcliff 1H opener had killed the lucky opening lead and our men played in 2D going one off when the opposition cashed the first 5 tricks in the black suits.
	Q93 2 QJT762 873	
	K75 JT76 985 K95	

And finally a hand which proved expensive for most teams ...

<p>Q87 Q AT542 T762</p> <p>J9 A42 K876 AJ95</p> <p>AKT654 K5 -- KQ843</p>	<p>32 JT98763 QJ93 --</p>	<p>The bidding started with West and East responded in two cases with hearts at the 1-level, in three cases with hearts at the 3-level, plus the Welsh transfer to hearts at the 2L over a weak NT opening. Curiously (to me), we now saw five of the six Souths jump to 4S. This was the right contract to be in but the consequence of the leap was that when (West twice, East three times) continued with a sacrifice, North preferred to bid 5S rather than double, and that was just too high – they all went minus.</p> <p>John Matheson for Scotland started 1S and later bid 4S and was allowed the play there. The NI team against Wales decided to sacrifice in 5D, which was much easier to double (although gentle defence – including the lead of the HK at one point!) let them out for a mere 500. Double figure gains for Scotland and Wales on this board.</p>
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After the first 16 boards of match two, we had Scotland and Ireland just ahead in their matches, but Wales had taken 60-6 imps off Northern Ireland, to give them an even greater lead in the Camrose table.

Kurbalija & Shields came out now, and Salisbury & Tedd came in. Wales gained 6 on a opposition accident on the first board, and then we saw West at all tables looking at JT95 – 873 – KQT83 – 6 after two passes at favourable vulnerability. The two brave enough to open 3D (John Carroll for Ireland and David Greenwood for the North) earned their teams a double figure swing when this was passed out and the opposition missed their easy 3NT. The Scots opened 2C (strong or a weak two in diamonds) which somehow propelled NIBU into a 3-3 heart fit at the four level (going off for an even better score). The English opening (1D by Forrester) failed to have effect and the passes by Wales and NIBU gave the opponents an easy run. Those three tables ended in 3N making (the other way). So a game swing in every match, and down to the opening call (pass or bid). The next board was awkward in the bidding and in the play

<p>T83 JT Q4 AKT652</p> <p>J5 AK8762 85 QJ8</p> <p>AQ762 Q5 AJT732 --</p>	<p>K94 943 K96 9743</p>	<p>Everybody opened 1D as South on this hand, and West bid hearts. Apart from one chicken, the Souths now bid spades twice and ended in 4S on the lead of two top hearts. Three defenders played a third heart which allowed declarer to get to dummy with a ruff and then play diamonds. Every declarer went for diamonds after which the contract cannot be made. If they had played to clear the spades, East (if dummy still had a top club) would be end-played to give an entry to the North hand and let 4S make. The only card to beat the game, at trick three, is the SJ from West but nobody found this (and other days it would not work). Where West switched a club at trick two (two tables) declarer had a chance but only John Ferguson for N Ireland got that right (diamond finesse and then SA and SQ to pin the jack).</p>
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It was curious to see the bidding on board 23, when at amber six responders, looking at 743 – 987 – T8532 – Q, had to decide what do to after partner opened 1S and the next hand passed. They found four different answers! Both 2S and 3S got two supporters, while Pass and 1N got one each. The passer (strange isn't it?) ended with the best result on the board (perhaps undeservedly) as he later heard partner bid diamonds and he got so excited by the double fit he now bid game (4S, due to go 2 off), over which Scotland sacrificed. Finally a suit play problem from a hand where ...

<p>KT63 62 QT3 AQ62</p>	<p>Q8 Q983 A9765 K9</p>	<p>... five tables played a NT part-score on a club lead. Clearly diamonds are the key suit and you can play towards either hand first. Two declarers blocked the club suit by winning in West and leading a high diamond. Both managed to get back to dummy to lead the suit again and made their contract. Three chose to win the CK and lead towards the QT3, but one of them went wrong (in both theory and practice) by trying the DQ. The calculation is too difficult, but I am with Hasting Campbell & Tommy Garvey on this and would lead to the DT.</p>
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Wales came through the stanza successfully, gaining another 14 imps to generate even closer to 19 VPs than they had in the previous match. Scotland gained a little to get themselves 13 VPs, while the big match between Ireland and England was level in that stanza so that Ireland had won the match overall 11-9 in VPs. Wales were now 24 VPs clear.

END OF MATCH TWO
