

WALES IN THE CAMROSE: BELFAST – March 2015

MATCH THREE

Wales had improved on a good position over the first two matches of the weekend but the crunch match was now coming – against England. Of the three teams above average, Wales had beaten Ireland well and Ireland had beaten England narrowly, and now it was Wales – England. After today all those three teams had to play teams from the bottom half of the table, so this match was crucial.

WALES & ENGLAND. England was turning out its top team this weekend and they fielded Forrester-Gold in one room and Bakhshsi-McIntosh in the other, and these were lined up respectively against Salisbury-Tedd and Kurbalija-Shields. Wales scored first when they stopped in 2S with a combined 23 count and 6-2 fit which made easily (but on a bad day could go down); the 4S bid at four other tables (including England) had little play. Although two declarers were allowed to make, Wales defended carefully and beat the game.

England hit back a few boards later collecting +500 after a start of P-P-1C-X-XX managed to pin the Welsh in a 4-3 fit at the one-level with only 17 hcp. There were few hands of interest in the stanza; this one had a number of choices but nobody quite managed all the hurdles

	73		
	AT9754		Everyone opened as North, showing a weak two. Over one instance of 2H and one instance of a multi-2D, East overcalled 2N, and duly went off in 3N.
	3		The three who doubled 2H had better chances – South raised and West now
	KT73		doubled showing the minors. All three ended in 4S and the combination of
A95		KQJ6	both minors breaking badly was too much. Each time it started with HK and
82		Q6	then to the HA and the D3. Declarer could succeed by playing two spades
Q765		AKT8	and a club to the C9 but the diamond position really wasn't known, so that
AJ53		Q96	wasn't happening. The sixth East passed over a multi-2D and heard his
	T842		partner double South's 2H for takeout. He got to 2S which was doubled but
	KJ3		when he redoubled his partner ran to 5C, also doubled and down 300.
	J942		
	82		

Finally just to illustrate some careful play ...

			Everyone opened a strong bid and, with varying spade interference, bid to
AJ	9		a slam. NIBU chose an impossible 6H but the others were in 6C. Four
T6	AQ432		tables got a spade lead and the CA at trick two dropped the CT. Only
AT	QJ54		Andrew McIntosh for England found the right continuation – cross to the
AKQJ975	863		C8, finesse the DT and now the DA drops the king. Back with a spade ruff
			and the heart loser disappears on a diamond.

At the end of the set England were ahead 24-8, while Scotland were 3imps ahead of NI and the Republic were 32 ahead of NIBU. England brought in Alfrey-Robson to play against Jourdain-Ratcliff, while Forrester-Gold switched to play against Kurbalija-Shields.

England had already gained another 11imps when this opportunity came along

	T85		
	92		Two teams overbid (NIBU to 6S and Scotland to 5S) and of the others three
	AKJ72		landed in 4S while England judged better for North to play in 3N. Against
	KQJ		that, East – noting the failure to play in spades – led the S9 and declarer can
AQJ7		9	assure 9 tricks by playing on spades but went for over-tricks after SJ won
Q4		JT86	and a club was returned, by tackling diamonds. The defence now held him to
3		Q9654	8 tricks. Playing in 4S, the leads from East were once D5 and twice a club.
T96543		872	With the DT winning trick one, Tommy Garvey had enough discards to take
	K6432		care of dummy's hearts, and started trumps by leading small from South,
	AK753		after which he was home On a club lead David Greenwood crossed to a top
	T8		diamond and played to SK and SA – after which he had four trump losers. ☹
	A		Patrick Jourdain started more usefully, playing on hearts but once he had
			ruffed in dummy he was losing four trump tricks. So mostly a flat board.

A couple of boards later came a big swing hand

	T6 AT98642 KQ65 --		South dealt at both vulnerable and at four tables it went P-P-4H. Two of the relevant Easts passed and their game disappeared. For Wales, Patrick Shields tried a double and Filip now bid 4S, which was fine until it passed around to David Gold whose 5H ended the auction. Rather better for England, Andy Robson bid 4S as East; now when South bid 5H it was normal for West to bid 5S and that was a good sacrifice when it was difficult to find the best defence (club lead at trick one) and it was difficult also to double it. Wales took its three tricks in high cards for +100 but a loss of 11imps.
K754 K 874 K7542		Q9832 3 AT AQT98	
	AJ QJ75 J932 J83		The other two tables started P-P-1H and P-P-3H. In both cases East shows a 55+ hand (with spades) and West in both cases went on to 5S. Fine so far but in both cases North bid on to 6H and got doubled for -200. Swings on this board to NIBU and Scotland as well as England.

Towards the end came this interesting 3N ...

	J73 KJ42 Q84 A74		Scotland and NIBU stopped in 1N but the others all bid to 3N by South and all got the S2 lead. Clearly the key is how to play the diamond suit and there were three different lines chosen. Two declarers won the SJ and led to the DJ and three diamond losers killed all chance of the contract. Patrick Jourdain let the lead run round to the S9 and led a diamond from hand; when West rose Patrick had 3 diamond tricks and he ended with 11 tricks. John Carroll won the SJ at trick one and led out the DQ; when the ace won and a spade came back he won that and led a small diamond to the now singleton king, earning him 11 tricks (with the same squeeze as found by Patrick).
QT82 QT65 K7 K32		654 983 AT9 JT96	
	AK9 A7 J6532 Q85		So what should happen? It's hard to believe the contract can make if diamonds are 4-1, so it is down to leading through the short diamond hand or finding one hand with both the ace and king. If the S2 is fourth best and we reasonably assume West has no 5-card suit, then (as far as my calculations go) starting with the D4 works best, and it makes it less likely that the defence can open clubs. So unlucky for England and NIBU against whom declarers on a different line were successful.

The set ended with another gain for England, when Forrester was the only North to sacrifice after pushing the opposition up to 5S; this was right on multiple grounds – the favourable vulnerability, a possibly favourable lead, and the possibility of escaping a double. All three combined on this hand and England got 11 moreimps as a result.

The final count showed that England were now 45imps ahead of Wales, and Ireland beat NIBU by exactly the same margin. Scotland had a much more narrow 15 imp win, and in the overall table the Welsh lead had dropped to just 11 VPs.

END OF MATCH THREE
