

Junior Camrose 2010 - Porthcawl, Wales

The Welsh team comprised Eve Hatfield and Cat Evans, veterans of Beijing and, at 24, each playing in their last ever Junior Camrose. Eve and Cat have played together in the JC since 2007. The other half of the team was Chris Owen and James Boulton, familiar faces in the Welsh lineup but in a new partnership. Chris and James had put in a lot of work in a short space of time leading up to the event, playing online and getting their system and agreements tight.

This year was perhaps the strongest set of teams for a while - any of Scotland (who fielded two juniors who are knocking on the door of the Open setup), Ireland (who have now been together as a unit for several years and are building huge amounts of experience) and of course England were in contention to top the table. That strength was certainly a disadvantage to us, and in all the matches we faced experienced partnerships who had played together consistently at international and domestic level for several years - matches featured few mistakes and often turned on good fortune or small swings.

As the home team, we had been favoured by the draw, which saw us face England last on each day but sit out for perhaps the hardest slot of the weekend, the final late night match on Saturday. We also sat out the first slot, giving us time to get in the zone for our opener against the Northern Irish.

Unfortunately, the match against Northern Ireland came down to just one massive swing. Holding AK AJ9832 AKJ76 void, Eve heard a spade opening on her right, which naturally she doubled, raised to three on her left. When this passed back round Eve chose to double again and with a hand that amounts to xx Kxxx xxx xxxx Cat passed! Of course you have to bid here, and Cat was lucky that 3S goes off. However, in the other room Ruth Connolly had tried 4S with Eve's hand at her second go and then driven to slam on her own. -1430 scoring up with +100 was not a success, and wiped out the small gains we had made elsewhere.

This loss set the tone for the day, unfortunately, as both Ireland and Scotland beat us comfortably. Too many missed games - the cardinal sin of teams bridge - and strong performances from both teams against us meant we went into our final match of the day against England without a win to our name.

However, both pairs produced excellent cards, with some really good solid bridge. For the first time in the day we also had a bit of the luck on our side - Eve and Cat watched their opponents freely bid a slam in the wrong strain (Eve's 10987643 of trumps was a bit tricky to pick up!) while Chris and James did well to bid two slams on the set. It's never easy to get to slam in new partnerships, and both times they deservedly gained IMPs. When we scored up we had defeated the English with IMPs to spare. This was a great way to end the day; why couldn't we produce it against the other teams?! We had a free evening while the other teams had to play a match, so there was time to reflect on the day's bridge and get ourselves ready for the second day.

Sadly Sunday saw more of the same mistakes that had characterised our matches against Scotland and Ireland - missed opportunities and tight games that we stayed out of to our cost. And of course once again the team saved their best for the England match - we couldn't quite match the previous night's triumph but a narrow loss was perhaps less than we

deserved following another good performance. Clearly Wales should just play England in every match...

So a disappointing weekend for the Junior Camrose team, especially as the host nation. However, looking ahead to the future the encouraging performance from the Peggy Bayer team, and especially Horia and Becky who will be making the move up in 2011, really does auger well. I would like to thank both Eve and Cat for their efforts - they will be missed both at the table and away from it. James and Chris have a year now to really work on their game together and this was a good start, whatever the overall results. Hopefully with some training during the year and a bit more experience, they will take on the mantle of being the 'experienced' pair and leading the team.

We're also very grateful for all the hard work of the team running the Junior Camrose - organising dozens of juniors to be in the right place at the right time is no mean feat.

James Ewington
NPC