

PEGGY BAYER TROPHY, 2010 - WALES

This year's Peggy Bayer (PB) competition was held in Porthcawl, South Wales. With home advantage and some new faces to this competition, the team went into the weekend with hopes of improving on the third place finish in 2009.

The Team

Since making their Welsh junior debut in Italy (2007), Elin and Benjamin Barrett made their PB debut this year. This time-out in representing their country has by no means deterred them and their eagerness to advance their game – and it showed. Playing in 4 matches over the weekend, Elin and Benjamin contributed significantly to each of those matches (all wins) and were the highest placed Welsh pair in the Butler.

The newest addition to Welsh junior bridge is Romanian born Horia Alexandru Maior who since arriving in Swansea has established a partnership with Becky Watkins. After only a matter of months to practice and familiarise themselves with each other at the table, Horia and Becky played extremely well all weekend with very few errors and almost no misunderstandings.

The most established pair on the team, Jonny Richards and James Harris, also put in a solid performance. A few missed opportunities arose but these were few and far between. Again, a good performance by the 'veterans' of the PB team.

The Welsh PB team 2010:



(l-r) Elin Barrett, Benjamin Barrett, James Harris, Jonny Richards, Becky Watkins, Horia Alexandru Maior

The Competition – Day 1

As is usual practice in the PB (and Junior Camrose) the home nation has the advantage of sitting out the first and last match on Saturday. The draw which had been carried out prior to the weekend meant that Wales would begin the competition against a Northern Irish team who we secured 20-10 and 16-14 victories over in 2009. It was clear from the very first board that the Northern Irish had come back stronger than last year and did not want a repeat of the defeats they suffered against the Welsh last year. In what was a very close match, with very few swings Wales emerged victorious by the smallest possible margin, 16-14.

Less than 15 minutes after finishing the first match, Match 2 saw Wales in action against Scotland. It is evident that the Scottish team has returned each year stronger and stronger than the previous, and this year was no different. In a match full of IMPs changing hands, Scotland pulled ahead and ended winning the match 24-6. Missed opportunities on a small number of boards meant the Scots inflicted a heavy defeat against the Welsh.

Undeterred, Wales went into the next match afresh against the Republic of Ireland. For many years the RoI have found the Welsh to be tough opposition and this year was to be no different. The team went into the match with the Scotland result out of their mind, and were concentrating on the match board-by-board. Excellent cards from both the open and closed rooms saw Wales beat the RoI 24-6, just one VP off the maximum.

The end of this match saw a much welcomed break for the players (and captains!). Dinner was served and preparation for the next match against England began.

Having the advantage of sitting out the last match, the penultimate match on Saturday was to be Wales' last for day one. After being fed, the players went into the match full of confidence they could beat England. The match saw Horia & Becky in the open room against Mungo Jackson & Alex Roberts, whilst in the closed room, Jonny & James were up against Shivam Shah & Tommy Brass. Never easy opponents to play against, the English pair in the open room got off to a bad start, missing two slams and over-bidding to a no-play 5♣. Knowing potential good boards were 'in-the bag', Horia and Becky played an immaculate set of bridge bidding every game and winning the part-score battle. The open room finished the match before the closed room and we would have to wait before we knew if we had beaten the English. Jonny and James finally emerged from the closed room full of confidence having bid one of the two slams and produced several other good boards. The end result was a 20-10 victory to Wales – a fine achievement.

A board that contributed to this victory was the following deal which saw Jonny and James in the closed room bid and make 6♦, while the English settled in 5D - an 11 IMP swing to Wales:

♠KT8653			
♥842			
♦72			
♣82			
♠AQJ7		♠-	
♥AQ93	N	♥KJ	
♦KJ3	W	E	♦AQT65
♣97	S		♣AQJT64

♠942
♥T765
♦984
♣K53

West	North	East	South
<i>Harris</i>	<i>Jackson</i>	<i>Richards</i>	<i>Roberts</i>
1♦	P	2♦ ¹	P
2♥	P	3♣	P
3N	P	4♠	P
4N ²	P	5♠	P
6♦	P	P	P

¹ Game forcing

² RKCB

At the end of day one, Wales had won 3 of their opening 4 matches and lay comfortably third with all to play for on day 2:

Standings after Day 1

Team	NI	E	W	Rol	S	Total
Northern Ireland		7	14	16	9	46
England	23		10	25	17	75
Wales	16	20		24	6	66
Republic of Ireland	14	1	6		2	23
Scotland	21	13	24	25		83

The Competition, Day 2

Having sat out twice on day one, Wales would have to play in all 4 matches on day two; a return match against each of the other four teams. It is in these situations that having three pairs really benefits a team. The order of play was the same as day one with the Northern Irish up first.

After the narrow win against the Northern Irish the day before, Wales went into the match confident another win was obtainable – which was exactly what happened. In another close match between the two teams, IMPs were rarely given away with a couple of boards deciding the match – Wales prevailed by winning 18-12.

Next came Scotland and after the heavy defeat on day one the team were hoping for a better result in the return leg. It wasn't to be. Wales were out-played by the Scots with Wales missing a couple of games and a slam. These missed opportunities cost Wales another defeat, 23-7 – slightly better than the previous encounter.

After another short break, Match 3 saw the second match against the Republic of Ireland. Not much to say about this one! One-way traffic ensured Wales secured the double against the RoI with another convincing 24-6 win.

Last match. Wales were sitting a comfortable third and an emphatic win over England (25-2) would give Wales second place. Scotland had all but won the event at this point. England fielded a different line-up for this match, whilst Wales kept the same players who played them on day one. Unfortunately Wales were not to get the double over England. Missed opportunities cost Wales victory with a slam swing all but deciding the match. England emerged eventual winners 21-9 to secure 2nd place.

It was all over. Wales had won 5 of 8 matches and finished 3rd. Final standings were:

Final Standings

Team	c/f	NI	E	W	RoI	S	Total	Rank
Northern Ireland	46		5	12	16	6	85	4
England	75	25		21	23	14	158	2
Wales	66	18	9		24	7	124	3
Republic of Ireland	23	14	7	6		1	51	5
Scotland	83	24	16	23	25		171	1

Unfortunately for Wales, the two heavy defeats against the Scottish dented our chances of a higher placed finish than in 2009. Despite this, Wales secured 15 VPs more than in 2009 which in itself is a sign of improvement – for which credit goes to the players for the hard work they have put in over the past 12 months.

2010 is the start of my second year as Junior Co-ordinator and NPC for the Peggy Bayer team. May I take this opportunity to thank the players for their excellent behaviour throughout the weekend – at and away from the bridge table. I must also congratulate them on the standard of Bridge played throughout – they certainly made my job (pleasingly) difficult with all pairs performing well and giving me selection problems.

It would have been fantastic if more WBU members were able to attend the weekend to see the juniors in action – it was a pleasure for me to captain the team who have made considerable progress. The Welsh junior game is certainly moving in the right direction, and with the Monmouth Comprehensive Bridge Academy established, and two more in the pipeline for Aberystwyth, the future of Welsh junior bridge is looking good.

More information on the weekend can be found at:

www.swanseabridgeclub.org.uk/Juniormcamrosepeggybayer2010/juniormcamrosepeggybayer2010.html

Welsh juniors – the next generation.

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Should you work in, or know someone who works in a Welsh school and thinks it would consider establishing a bridge academy then please contact me via my details above. Help, support and funding is available.