

JUNIOR CAMROSE TROPHY 2011 – SCOTLAND

This year's Junior Camrose (u25) and Peggy Bayer (u20) trophies (home international series held annually between Wales, England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland) were held in Ayr, South Ayrshire over the weekend of 19-20 February. Availability issues meant Wales were only able to enter the Junior Camrose competition which meant the Peggy Bayer consisted of three round-robins rather than the traditional two. The Junior Camrose consisted of the usual two round-robins with each country playing each other twice.

The Team

The only pair who played in last year's Junior Camrose was Chris Owen and James Boulton. This was their second appearance in the competition (as a pair) and their performance over the weekend was excellent. The time and effort they had put in during the preceding 12 months was clearly evident in their performance.

The other two pairs were Jonny Richards & James Harris and Horia Maior & Becky Watkins. After several years of playing Peggy Bayer, this was their first Junior Camrose competition and given the jump in standard between the two competitions they acquitted themselves very respectably throughout.

The Welsh Junior Camrose team 2011:



(l-r) Becky Watkins, Horia Maior, James Harris, James Boulton, Jonny Richards, Chris Owen

The Competition – Round-Robin 1

The draw which had been carried out prior to the weekend meant that Wales would begin the competition against Northern Ireland. The Northern Irish have returned to the Junior Camrose each year stronger and stronger and this showed in our first match. Missed opportunities by both Welsh pairs and a strong performance by the Irish meant they inflicted a heavy defeat on us, 25-3.

After a quick lunch break, Match 2 saw Wales in action against England, one of the favourites to win the competition. Many of the English team were part of the silver medal winning teams at the 2008 World Mind Sport Games (Beijing) and 2010 World Youth Team Championships (Philadelphia). A very strong performance by England meant a second consecutive 25-3 defeat.

Undeterred, the team went into the next match afresh against the Republic of Ireland. This match has historically proven to be close and this year was no different. Unfortunately for Wales one game swing decided the match, going in favour of the Irish. This meant another Welsh defeat, this time by 19-11.

The final match before dinner saw us play the host nation, Scotland. Having won the event in 2010 (held in Wales), Scotland were keen to use home advantage to retain the trophy. A very experienced Scottish team (some of which have played at open level in the Camrose and European Championships) outplayed Wales meaning another Welsh defeat by 23-7.

The competition had got off to the worst possible start with 4 consecutive (heavy) defeats. A break was needed and after the Scotland match came dinner, followed by a Welsh sit-out. At the end of the first round-robin the standings were as follows:

Team	Ni	RoI	Scot	Wal	Eng	Total
Northern Ireland		21	4	25	14	64
Republic of Ireland	9		14	19	4	46
Scotland	25	16		23	7	71
Wales	3	11	7		3	24
England	16	25	23	25		89

The Competition – Round-Robin 2

The second round-robin began late on Saturday night and following the same order of play from the first, Wales would be up against Northern Ireland. An improved performance by Wales in the second half of the competition was needed to avoid a potential whitewash. The players responded magnificently and beat Northern Ireland 16-14. Whilst only a narrow victory, we were unlucky the winning margin wasn't more.

One hand which helped towards this victory was the following deal:

Dlr: E

Vul: Both

♠ KT965			
♥ 2			
♦ J9763			
♣ 63			
♠ 7		♠ AQJ	
♥ QT87653	N	♥ 9	
♦ Q5	W E	♦ K42	
♣ 942	S	♣ AKJ875	

♠ 8432
♥ AKJ4
♦ AT8
♣ QT

North	East	South	West
<i>Nash</i>	<i>Richards</i>	<i>Connolly</i>	<i>Harris</i>
	1♣	Dbl	2♥ ^A
2♠	3NT	Dbl	P
P	P		

Jonny opened 1♣ which Ruth Connolly doubled. James now bid 2♥ which shows a weak hand with a long heart suit. Over this, as north, Keri Nash bid 2♠. Jonny now had a decision to make. He judged well with stoppers in spades, a protected diamond king and a good 6 card club suit and bid 3NT. Connolly doubled again and led a low spade. Nash inserted the king to allow an overtrick: 3 spades; 1 heart; and 6 clubs. At the other table Horia and Becky did well to win the auction in 3♠ drifting two-off undoubled. -100 at one table and +950 at the other for 13 IMPs to Wales.

This was the last match of the day with all teams (except Scotland) having played 5 matches. As the host nation, Scotland sat out the first and last match on Saturday and would have a busy day on Sunday playing in all four matches. The match finished just before midnight and after a long and gruelling day the players retired to their rooms buoyant that their performance that evening would continue into the second day of the competition.

Sunday morning saw us up against England. Similarly to the match against the Republic of Ireland, Wales lost narrowly with one game swing costing an 18-12 defeat. The performance by the team was much improved when compared to the first round-robin and despite the defeat, the signs were encouraging.

After lunch, Wales took on the Republic of Ireland, seeking revenge for the defeat the previous day. A solid performance at both tables saw another Welsh victory by 17-13. Once again, a couple of mis-judged decisions denied Wales a much bigger victory, but nonetheless a win was a win. In the first three matches of the second round-robin Wales had scored more VPs than in total during the first round-robin.

By this point in the competition England were leading with Scotland hot on their heels. Scotland could still retain the trophy should they inflict a heavy defeat on Wales and other results went their way. Scotland outplayed Wales and beat us comfortably 22-8. Once again opportunities went astray and cost Wales the match which meant both Scotland and England completed the 'double' against us.

It was all over. We had finished our 8 matches and were to sit-out the final session. Should results go our way we would remain in fourth position. A resilient performance by the Republic of Ireland against Scotland in their final match saw them leapfrog us into fourth position despite losing 16-14.

The final standings were:

Team	c/f	NI	RoI	Scot	Wal	Eng	Total	Rank
Northern Ireland	64		25	12	14	7	122	3
Republic of Ireland	46	3		14	13	12	88	4
Scotland	71	18	16		22	21	148	2
Wales	24	16	17	8		12	77	5
England	89	23	18	9	18		157	1

Unfortunately for Wales, the margins of defeat over the weekend dented our chances of a higher placed finish. Not capitalising on opponent's mistakes and some declarer play errors proved very costly. There were plenty of positives to take from the weekend however, including the step-up from the Peggy Bayer by four of the players which was very encouraging, no penalties were conceded all weekend (an historic trait of previous Welsh Junior Camrose teams), and bidding was virtually faultless all weekend.

This was my first year captaining the Junior Camrose team, after two years in charge of 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.

Next year both events will be held in the Republic of Ireland and the signs from this years competition, especially the second half, are encouraging and Wales will go into next years event confident of improving on this years result.

Congratulations go to England on winning both the Junior Camrose and Peggy Bayer competitions, the latter with a score of 222/225!

Finally, on behalf of the Welsh Bridge Union, myself and all the players, I would like to thank the Scottish Bridge Union, Ayrshire Bridge Union, match manager Fiona Abbott, tournament officials and the countless volunteers who helped organise and run a most enjoyable event.

More information on the weekend and results from both competitions can be found at:

<http://www.ayrshirebridge.co.uk/>

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