

WALES IN THE EUROPEAN: DUBLIN – June 2012

The 51st European Teams championship – and the 7th for Wales – runs in Dublin this year. The Welsh Open team was ranked 19th out of 38 teams last time around in Ostend which is the best result to date, and this year five of the players have returned – Paul Denning with Patrick Shields, Dafydd Jones with Gary Jones, plus Peter Goodman – who this year plays with Mike Pownall. This year's captain is Alan Jones.

OPEN...AFTER 17 ROUNDS : 11th OF 17 and OUT ☹

Wales also sends a Senior Team to Dublin this year. Previous records in the seniors have not been good, but John Salisbury & Mike Tedd have that useful experience behind them, and are accompanied now by Tony Disley & Roger Penton and Mike Hirst & Jim Luck. Their captain is Alan Screen.

SENIORS...AFTER ALL 19 ROUNDS : 4 WINS and 1 DRAW

There was a Ladies team in Ostend, but the WBU has decided to hold back on a Ladies team this year.

Since Ostend, the Welsh Open Team and the Welsh Seniors team have both won their Home Internationals (Camrose), and the Ladies Team came second in the most recent Lady Milne competition.

This completion starts on Wed 13th Jun for the Open, with the Seniors coming into play on Sat 16th.

Day 11 : Seniors play Germany

Disappointing loss – but worth noting that the pair who played against Salisbury & Tedd, played against Denning & Shields in the Germany Open Team in Ostend two years ago, and they beat Wales then too. That time included them bidding a grand slam missing an ace, which disappeared when the suit wasn't led at trick one. This time the biggest German gain was when the Welsh tried for a slam but stopped in 5S, with three unavoidable losers. Final score was 5-25 and Wales ended in 18th place, ahead only of Finland. Wales did win 4 matches but they needed to win some by large margins to beef up their score.

On a brighter note, even though they lost their last match, the **Scottish Seniors** hung to be collect the bronze medal, behind France and Poland (winners in 2010) – their best performance ever, and their first visit to a World Championship comes next year. English Seniors (ex world Champions) came mid-table.

In the **Open Teams, England** won their last match against Israel but were pipped out of a medal. The final ordering was Monaco – Netherlands - Italy – England, a position of which they can be rightly proud. The team was Simon Cope as NPC, with David Bahkshi & Tom Townsend, Peter Crouch & Derek Patterson, Tony Forrester & David Gold (with Ben Green as coach).

Day 10 : Seniors play Ireland, Netherlands, Poland

Wales started day 10 against Ireland, who were just a few places above in the table. Ireland gained first by bidding a cold slam we missed, and then lost the same by bidding 6N with a flat 19 opposite a flat 12 (slam was bid at more than half the tables, for reasons not yet understood). Only the Turkish Ladies, the Scottish Ladies, and the Russian Open team were allowed (or do I mean found?) the winning squeeze on that last hand. The Irish bid another poor slam against Wales – needing to play Q95 opposite K763 for two tricks and South had the doubleton ace they needed. England beat Italy by 18imps over this same set of boards – the first slam mentioned being flat in slam, the second having England off in 6N, and the third being flat in game. The Welsh match finished with a small plus to Ireland, but no change in the ranking.

Next came Netherlands. We were leading by 9imps after 3 boards, but scored only 1 more imp in the plus column after that, losing the match 7-23. Best forgotten. Parallel to this match was the final match in the Ladies, and we must congratulate the Gold Medal winners, England – NPC Jeremy Dhondy along with Sally Brock & Nicola Smith, Fiona Brown & Susan Stockdale, Heather Dhondy & Nevana Senior.

Finally Poland – whose Senior Team won the previous European Seniors in Ostend. Going into this match they were lying sixth – the leaders being France and Scotland. Many congratulations to this Scottish team, performing very well – NPC Harry Smith, with Willie Coyle & John Matheson, Derek Diamond & Victor Silverstone, John Matheson & John Murdoch. This team has masses of Camrose and other international experience, and it was showing to good effect. Back to the Poland match. There was just one highlight – when the Polish South managed to go off in a contract everyone else made. All the other imps went in the wrong direction and we lost 4-25. We picked up another rule for the Welsh team from this match – never to bid a slam when the opposing trumps are breaking 5-3, it won't play well!

Wales has slipped down to 18th place now, with defeats by over 30 imps in three of the last four matches. They have one match left – against Germany – and a decent win might pull them up one position in the table.

Day 9 : Seniors play Bulgaria, Spain, Estonia

There were four double figures swings in the out column against Bulgaria, and only two on the in-column, but a number of smaller gains more than compensated and Wales won the match by 4 imps. Three of those swings were slam hands (2-1 in Bulgaria's favour) and the fourth slam hand of the set was flat. This one was the Welsh success

KJ96	AT752	This was bid to 6S by Roger Penton & Tony Disley. It was missed by 7/18 tables in the Seniors and 4/18 in the Open. The opening hand is almost too strong for a strong NT, but if that is chosen the hand can get really excited over a 2H transfer from partner. For England, Forrester & Gold managed only to get to 4S and England lost 13 imps (to Bulgaria as it happens) on this board.
A72	KT	
A3	KT942	
AJ82	9	

The penultimate hand of that match saw the same pairs holding 9 outside tricks, needing three quick tricks from A63 opposite KJ84 to make 6N. This was one of the fortunate times that the queen was onside, but our slam bidders played in 6C and not 6N and had to lose an extra trick in that 4-3 fit ☺ to go down.

There was only one slam hand in the Spain match which followed, and it was down to John Salisbury & Mike Tedd to bid that, which they did for a flat board; this slam was bid at just half the tables. A major gain in this match was from this hand

	AKJ754	There was fierce competition at all tables between hearts and spades here. For Wales Mike Hirst & Jim Luck got to play in 4H making for EW and +620, while John Salisbury & Mike Tedd bid on to 4S.
	9	
	KJ	Against 4H, after a top spade, North does best to switch to a trump. This limits the number of ruffs but both minors are so well placed that 10 of the 12 declarers in hearts managed 10 tricks. Including ours!
	T632	
Q92	3	The number of tricks made in spades varied a lot more – from 8 through 10 tricks. Declarer will try to ruff some clubs in dummy but when the first one gets over-ruffed, he just has to draw trumps. When he (or she) continues trumps, East is squeezed in the minors to provide the tenth trick. The alternative, and perhaps attractive, line of drawing trumps and ruffing out the diamonds, fails today when the diamonds break 4-1.
AKT8542	Q76	
4	QT98	
K5	Q9874	
	T86	
	J3	
	A76532	
	AJ	

Against Spain we lost 12-18, and the last match of the day was against Estonia, who were 20 VPs below Wales at that time. But we didn't do well - there were very few imps in the plus column and we lost 7-23, allowing them to move much closer.

Day 8 : Open Team GO HOME : Seniors play France, Scotland, England

Must start today's report with a magic hand from Monday (day 6) which has only just come to light

QJT98632	East was dealer at both vul and the field was split, but the majority favoured a 4H opener over a 1H opener. After 4H-P-P North inevitably bid 4S and it went P-P-X and that was the contract at 46 of the 68 tables. There were 3 tables in the Ladies where the same contract was not doubled. [Often 1H-P-2D-4S, P-P-X-P
AT5	
6	
J	

AK4	--	led to 5H by East, going off]
--	KQ86432	For Wales in the Open, the HK was led at both tables and ruffed and the contract was one off for a flat board. A top heart was led at 36 tables, but the contract was only defeated 26 out of 36 times – the other cases being, like at both tables in the Scotland-Turkey match, where the lead could have been K from AK, and the West hand didn't ruff!
JT8543	72	
A873	KQ62	
75		
J97		But there was only one declarer in 6S-X and this was the doing of Mike Hirst. He was sitting West and raised the 4H opener to 5H. North naturally bid 5S and South assumed that West was continuing the pre-empt and clearly his partner had a void heart, so he bid 6S – and now Mike doubled. This scored a complete, unique top across all 68 tables.
AKQ9		
T954		

This was a difficult day for the Seniors. France have strength in depth in the Seniors and in this match they successfully competed while Wales didn't, and France ran out winners 23-7. Our team failed on this slam, which the opposition did find, but it is worth noting how accurately the Italians bid it

KQT32	AJ94	They bid 1H-3D which shows a raise with a singleton, then 3S-4C with the first asking for the shortage and the next showing it. Finally 5D-5S these being Exclusion
AKJT84	Q976	Blackwood and a 1-ace response (note how 41/30 is bad for Exclusion). And they could bid the slam with complete certainty. Do you think playing their system would make bidding as easy for us? The slam was bid at 9/18 tables in the Seniors, but only 5/18 in the Open – Ladies had a day off today.
--	JT97	
32	Q	

The next match was against a strong Scottish team – stronger some would say than their Open Team, with a wealth of Camrose experience behind them. And the hands were explosive. One of the biggest losses was 14 imps on this -

	863		
	98		
	AQ98764		With EW vulnerable, the bidding – just about everywhere- started 3D-3H and in the Seniors there were 10 contracts of 4H, and 6 where NS sacrificed in 4S. By contrast in the Open 6 tables played 4H and 10 played in spades, mostly doubled. Worth noting that there were two cases in the Open where 3D was passed out.
	4		
AT5		K	
KT5		AJ7632	
JT3		K52	The success of 4H all came down to the opening lead – 13 of the 18 in 4H led the SQ (including our man) while 5 led the CA – and it made a difference of 4 tricks to the defence when the CA led to four ruffs. Wales lost 14 imps. In the Open
K985		QT7	England-Germany had a flat board in 4S-X going for 800 – neither team could be pleased with that.
	QJ9742		
	Q4		
	--		
	AJ632		

We lost on this hand, as did England – it's tricky at first to see how declarer will ever succeed, but watch what happens when he goes about his "normal" business –

	AJT7		
	J92		
	Q965		
	J7		
Q963		K54	East ends up in 3N on a club lead, and there looks to be at best 1+3+1+3 tricks available. Tackling the strongest suit first, he played CA and JD at tricks one and two and South won the DA. With no future in the club suit, he switched to H6 and declarer ducked the HJ, winning the return. Giving up on clubs does tend to highlight that North has the SA, so declarer now cashed his winning clubs and hearts and what could North throw. Clearly one spade but if he throws another declarer can set up his S4 as a winner – and when he threw a diamond instead, declarer played DK and another and now North had to lead away from the SA to give declarer two tricks in that suit. Easy game isn't it? But in practice only 10 of the 28 declarers made 3N, so we shouldn't feel too bad! The England East won the club and started with a spade to the SQ and SA, after which he was dead.
853		AK74	
JT82		K73	
A2		KQ9	
	82		
	QT6		
	A4		
	T86543		

The match against England was not a pretty affair, from either perspective. England, with no opposition bidding managed to play a fair 6C in 3N with A97 diamonds opposite a void, but that made. At the other table Wales passed out the hand after a 1H opening by the opposition – oops! And then there was an occasion when England was doubled in 3H which could have gone for -1400, but Wales rescued them ☹. In the end, England won 20-10 and Wales had dropped back over the day to 16th of the 19 teams competing.

Day 7 : Open play Austria, Switzerland : Seniors play Sweden, <bye>, Denmark

This was the crunch day for the Open team, starting in last qualifying place but needing a decent day as Iceland were breathing down their neck. There were four poor slam results – a good one missed, a bad one bid, a tricky one where guessing right would have made it but didn't – and the one with a trump suit of AT98432 opposite J, which sometimes would have come home, but found KQ6 offside this time. One interesting hand on which we gained was

	J863		East started with a strong club, and since interference tends to be obstructive rather than constructive, our man passed, and after 1D-P-2C he bid 3C, promising a good hand with at least 5-5 in the majors. This, and a little push from West, got us to 4S on the lead of two top clubs.
	T85		
	KT863		
	T		
T		Q52	
Q764		9	The 2C rebid suggests that the opener is not balanced, and so a singleton is likely.
J952		AQ4	That could well be trumps, in which case Patrick Shields as north was never going to get back into hand to finesse in hearts, so he finesses now. West won and forgot to give his partner a ruff, leading back the ST (!) to pick up that suit and let 4S make. That was combined with 5C-X one off in the other room for a 6 imp gain.
J986		AKQ752	
	AK974		
	AKJ32		
	7		
	43		

We lost the match 10-20 which now put us clearly below average and needing a 22-8 win in the last match to qualify. Our contenders for that qualification place were Iceland who were having a BYE, and whose score we therefore knew. Last match was against a Swiss team who had been playing very well after a bad start (only three wins in their first nine matches). There were of course chances, and we were unlucky when two slams – one 50% and the other a bit less, both failed, swinging about 25 imps the wrong way when it could have been 25 to Wales. The opposition did this too –

AQJ74	K653	They opened 1S, as many do, and the 3N response showed a raise to game with no singleton. Our (anti) hero found a pass at this point – to be in exactly the right spot, and he wrapped up 9 tricks. The Jones' had done very well by passing first in hand and stopping in 3S making 9 tricks, while 27 of the 32 tables in the Open played in 4S going off. This was vulnerable too, and cost Wales 10 imps.
Q63	J2	
Q95	AK8	
64	QT75	

There was this curious hand two boards later

K5432	AQ76	The Jones' opened 1N and played there, and were gifted 10 tricks for +180 and +5 imps when it was passed out at the other table. In two matches the hand was passed out in both rooms, while in another both rooms bid up to (yes, really) 6S and went one off when the DQ was sitting badly. The majority played in 4S.
965	4	
KJ5	A984	
AT	9865	

This monster turned quiet in our match, but wasn't in others –

	AKT983		East was dealer at love all and some opened and some didn't. For Wales it was P-P-3D and North bid 4D showing the majors. Dafydd bid 5C as a lead directing effort and it went X-5D-X-end and that contract went three off for -500.
	Q75432		
	--		
	5		
Q7		J642	In the other room it started 1C-P-1D and Peter Goodman now bid 4D. Mike took a slightly conservative stance with 4H and there it ended for +480.
K		96	
QJT976		K83	
Q642		AK97	Other matches reached 6H and if East had passed first in hand there was often a good case (say on a club lead to the CK) for deciding that East had three honours in the minors and so the HK was offside – and today it dropped if you played for that.
	5		
	AJT8		
	A542		
	JT83		

At the end, the Open team lost 10-20 and were knocked out of the competition, in 11th place with the top 9 going through.

In the Seniors, there were good results - a winning draw against Sweden, followed by a BYE, and then a 16-14 win over the current leaders Denmark. Tomorrow they face a very challenging day ..

Day 6 : Open play Monaco, Cyprus, Denmark : Seniors play Turkey, Italy, Israel

Not sure we want to talk about this day or at least the Open team doesn't. The team was annihilated by Monaco, 94 imps to 7 imps. This was a 25-0 defeat, one of only six in the 480 matches played so far in the Open. They took 6 double figure swings off the Open team and gave us none in return. Here's what we had to compete against

	J6		
	T98743		
	A5		For Monaco Claudio Nunes opened the South hand 2C (clubs and a moderate hand) and it went 2S-3C-4C(good raise) and now he bid an unexpected 5C. We bid 5S-P-P-X and there it ended. Fantoni led the DA just to check and then gave his partner a heart ruff to beat what looked like a solid contract. In fact a heart at trick one will put it two off, or beat 4H.
	JT7		
KQ9432		A85	
AQJ5		K62	
T		K7643	
K4		96	In the other room Peter Goodman opened 3C as South, promising both minors. The next hand bid 4D showing both majors but longer spades, and that meant the contract was 4S by <u>East</u> . With the void on lead, it was just impossible to beat this.
	T7		
	--		
	QJ982		
	AQ8532		

We dusted ourselves off, after playing the top of the table, in preparation for playing Cyprus who were at the bottom of the table. We actually made their day for them, giving them their best result so far, when we lost 13-17. They seemed to be on self destruct to start with, offering us 500 for a part-score,, bidding a hopeless slam, and then letting a game through and playing in 4H-3 when 5C was cold. But we had people playing misere too! The less said about this match the better.

The next match was much tighter – we played Denmark (on BBO) and beat them by 3 imps. One hand that proved too difficult for both tables was this

A94	KT87653	This was bid 1H-1S-2H-4S in one room, and 1H-1S-2H-3S-4S in the other. An excellent
AJ8532	--	slam here, but both teams were lucky that the trumps were 3-0 and 11 tricks was the
K3	A6	limit. France-Monaco had the same pair of auctions exactly. Greece got to the slam
93	AT42	after the opponents pushed on to 5D; England bid the slam but no details are available.

In the Seniors there was a win against Turkey, a heavy defeat to Italy and then a small loss to Israel. The one bright hand in the Italy match was when the Italian holding A-AK98653-QJT97-void never bid his diamonds and went one off in 5H, while Wales found the 5-5 diamond fit and bid and made the slam. In the Open match against Cyprus, exactly the same swing went the other way round !

Day 5 : Open play Netherlands : Seniors play Norway

This was set to be a key match, against the current World Champions. We started with a 12 imp gain when in 3N we guessed the suit of A4-QT7652 correctly and they didn't. And then came this monster hand

	T8		
	932		
	Q975432		West sensibly passed in first seat and East opened 2N. The hand with 6-6 in the blacks now showed spades and then clubs, and finally offered partner the choice at the six level. For the Jones' it went 6C-P-P and South doubled for a heart lead – after which our man ran to 6N. This had no chance, The other room had a bidding mis-understanding to stop in 4S (20 of the 32 tables bid a slam), so Wales lost 13 imps here.
	9		
Q97642		AJ	
T		KJ864	
---		AK8	
AJ8654		KQ3	The Welsh Seniors were in the most interesting 6C, and unlucky to get a heart lead which was run to the HQ. Our man missed an extra chance here – after winning the club return and forcing out the HA with a ruff – you find that the H9 drops on the third round and there are 5 discards available – all your spades disappear and you don't need the spade finesse after all!
	K54		
	AQ75		
	JT6		
	T73		

Towards the end came this hand, on which only 6 of the 32 tables in the Open bid the winning game –

63	K87	When given a free run, the Dutch bid this hand 1H-1N-2D-3D-4H-end. The hearts broke badly but the SA and DK were onside and that was an easy 10 tricks. Only 5
AKQ874	65	tables bid the game, which suggests that the QJT9-J932-K-A983 sitting in first seat
AT86	QJ543	must have opened the bidding at most tables. The Finns did just that against the
7	Q54	Seniors.

The final score for the Open was 11-19 to the Dutch, and for the Seniors was 13-17 to the Finns.

Day 4 : Open play Finland, Estonia : Seniors play Belgium, Finland

The Open, Ladies and Seniors all play the same hands – so lots of comparisons to offer. The first potential swing for the Seniors was this hand

<p>K3 8752 T763 J87</p>	<p>AJ2 J43 KQJ K942</p> <p>94 AKQT9 A82 653</p>	<p>QT8765 6 954 AQT</p> <p>In the Open Series, that was 3N in both rooms, for a flat board</p>
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Both Welsh pairs failed on this bidding exercise

<p>AQJT3 QT86 9 J94</p>	<p>--- AK9743 A764 AK6</p>	<p>The Open started with 1S-2H-3H, but responder then tried Blackwood and gave up when there were no kings opposite. In the Seniors is started P-P-1H and the opposition overcalled 1S. Dealer now bid 4H and his partner settled for the small slam. The grand slam was bid at 21 of the 32 tables in the Open, but only 7/18 in the Ladies and 4/18 in the Seniors (where two tables stopped in game!)</p>
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Against Finland, the Open team struggled – playing 5D-1 when failing to collect the missing Qxxx trumps, and playing in 5H-1 when they should have collected many many hundreds against 5D-X. We pulled back a bit when they went off in a cold game, and we bid a slam which was let through on the opening lead. We were 3 imps down when this came along

<p>52 J86 KQ2 AKQ53</p>	<p>AKQT KT4 AT75 J6</p>	<p>Almost every table played in 6N and the most common lead was S7, but Patrick Shields got a C2 (third & fifth) lead, and won the CJ. Not knowing what to discard from dummy on the clubs, he started by investigating diamonds to find that they were 4-2 offside. With a strong suspicion that the clubs might be splitting 5-1, he continued with three rounds of spades. On the third of these LHO discarded a club from his remaining four cards, and now the club suit was running and with the HA onside there were 12 tricks. This was worth 14 imps (the contract only made 7 times out of 30 in the Open). Israel suffered a 5 imps loss on this when their opposition stopped in 3C !</p>
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This gain was followed by a 13 imps loss on the next hand when we missed a cold slam (on an unusually crowded auction) and a part score loss on the last hand led to a 14-16 defeat. The Seniors meantime had a torrid start against Belgium and lost 25-5.

Both teams set off to change things in the second match of the day. For the Open it started with an exchange of penalties, with an avoidable 800 going out and then 500 coming back in. We were losing when this turned up ..

<p>K3 K83 QT832 AK8</p>	<p>QJ652 A976 AJ T7</p> <p>A JT52 K9764 542</p> <p>T9874 Q4 5 QJ963</p>	<p>The majority of tables played this hand in 3N but the Jones are playing a weak NT so they opened 1D and it finished with Gary, sitting West, playing in 5D. He got a spade lead and eliminated the black suits before playing a diamond. North won and was luckily (for him) able to exit with a second diamond.</p> <p>Now it was down to Gary to negotiate the heart suit. There isn't a 3-3 heart break which denies the defence two tricks, so he had to play for the suit 4-2, with a doubleton queen onside. He led the HJ, covered all round and North returned the H7. The only choices are South now down to the singleton H9, or North having led away from the nine. The latter is clearly better odds and Gary was rewarded with 11 tricks when he played for that. This 11 imps started a strong Welsh recovery.</p>
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A good run followed – a 24 point 3N missed by most but bid by our men, and a slam which required no loser from a suit of J85 – AK64. Yes, the man led away from the queen at trick one and the slam came home! After this and a few more the score was 23-7 to Wales, and we had moved into third place in the table.

There were 40 fewer imps exchanged in the Seniors match (against Finland) with the same boards. On the hand above the Welshman led HQ against 5D, but this time it was for 11 imps to Wales and in the other room Salisbury & Tedd had collected +800 from 5S-X. Jim Luck was unlucky on this hand

J	A8652	Jim & Mike Hirst bid this 1D-1S-2D-3C-3N, which was fine but the auction ended with P-P-X. This persuaded he man on lead to lead his 3 card spade suit and his partner had KT93 and an entry – so that put 3N one off. [In the Open, Peter Goodman for a heart lead to make 3N while in the other room Jones senior led an unfortunate ST from KT93 and that cost the setting trick.
JT82	K64	
AKQ85	--	
QT5	KJ632	

Day 3 : Open play Luxemburg, Croatia, England

First match against Luxemburg looked to be coasting along – they doubled the Jones' in 4S making an overtrick on board one, and on board two the opposition bid a slam off two aces. But we ran into two late disasters. One was a bidding mix-up, and as result of which we have made it a team rule to avoid bidding slams where the trumps break 6-1. The other loss was unlucky – the hand on lead against a slam led from JT84 in an unbid suit and declarer had KQ62 in hand and A93 in dummy. He picked up four tricks in the suit and that swung 22 imps. We still won the match by 27 imps, but we felt unlucky there.

Next match was a team who, to our surprise, were very near to the bottom of the table. They stumbled into a grand slam on board one and needed four tricks from AQT4-K83. The grand slam was bid at 7 tables, while 4 stopped in game and the other 39 bid the small slam – and 13 tricks rolled in everywhere, so Wales started by losing 9 imps where another day they might have gained 14. We pulled back a few boards later when they bid a poor slam (needing to play J983-A652 for one loser) and then along came this hand

AK2	Q8754	Peter Goodman and Mike Pownall bid up to 7D on these hands – an excellent contract which just depends on the spades being 3-2. Sorry but today there were 4-1 and our opponents who languished in 4S gained a bushel of points. Across the 50 tables only 9 pairs bid a grand slam (2 in 7D), while 5 bid 6D (making). A few more (7 tables) bid 6S, which had to fail with the bad break while 6D made, and the majority (29 tables) played the hands in game. This cost Wales 13 imps
A2	83	
AKQ654	JT3	
T7	A83	

We collected a few imps after that but missed two chances on the last two boards and ended the match with a deficit of 5 imps and took home 14 VPs.

The third match of the day was England – to whom we had lost heavily and then narrowly in this year's Camrose matches, and then we beat them in the Spring Fours. All went well at the start and at half time we were 14 imps ahead, really because of this hand

K84	QT92	The bidding in the Closed Room started with 1C from the English North, and then 1S-2H-2S. Patrick Shields produced a pre-emptive 3S as East, and after South bid 4C he found himself in 4S doubled. The opening lead of the HA fetched the queen and eight. South went into the tank and eventually continued with a small heart, ruffed and North exited, as he must, in trumps, Declarer drew trumps and, knowing from the bidding that North had the DK, played DA and another towards his hand. Unaccountably, North ducked that and was end played on the third round of diamonds to lead the CA. This set up the CK to take care of East's losing heart and 4S-X made.
954	Q	
AJ73	K65	
KJ8	AQ972	
	AJ7653	In the Open Room it started 1C-2S-3H-3S, P-P-4C-P and now Gary Jones bid the fifth club and that contract came home easily.
	JT8	
	QT42	
	--	
	AK7632	
	98	
	T6543	

One very avoidable game swing was self inflicted in the second half, and then we got to board 19, with England 3 imps in the lead –

A865	KQ972	David Gold opened 3C as South (favourable, first in hand) and it went X-P-3N. This can be made but West had extras and raised to 4N. The lead was the HT and Patrick Shields carefully cashed a second heart before playing a spade towards hand, which Tony Forrester won with the SQ. The inevitable club came through now and the CQ was (as it must be) ducked by South. The contract looks good at this point if the clubs are 7-1 – so declarer crossed to a heart in dummy and tried a second spade – but now the defence had four tricks to cash.
AKQ83	J4	
AQT	KJ54	
9	64	
	J43	The alternative 4H contract made at most tables but after a club lead (extra value from that pre-empt!) it is quite tricky. It seems to involve ducking the first club to the CJ, ducking the spade switch and allowing a ruff, and then setting up the KQ of clubs to discard West's two losing diamonds. 4H made easily in the other room of this match when North led a diamond at trick one, and Wales lost 12 imps,
	7652	
	72	
	KQT7	
	T	
	T9	
	9863	
	AJ8532	

At the end, Wales had lost 12-18 and moved down the table to equal fifth place with the current world champions (Netherlands) whom they play on Sunday. England are second in the section behind Monaco, and Scotland notched up their first win today too. Ireland are 8th in their section, behind Israel and Italy.

Day 2 : Open play <bye>, Poland, France

We were of course perfect all through round 4 and collected our 18 VPs for that; meanwhile France produced their fourth consecutive win and lead the group, while England collected their second win and are 6 VPs ahead of Wales.

Poland can be a very dangerous team but had only produced one win in the first four matches. Against Poland, Denning-Shields had two slam disasters but the Jones were on fine bidding form; look at these –

KQT3	J95	Their sequence started, like many, 1C-1D-2S-3D and now they bid 3H(fourth suit)-3S-4D-4S and there they rested. They were the only table out of 50 in play to reach 4S, the rest being 3N down one apart from Sweden who were allowed to make 3N and the Israeli ladies who tried 5D (also down 1). Dafydd used entries to dummy to take club finesses and he could cope with clubs 4-2 where the 3N declarers could not.
AT	KJ	
K4	Q98652	
AQJ64	73	

and

A85	6	They bid this 1H-2C-3S(fragment,short diamond)-4C-4D(cue)-X-P-P-XX(complete control)-4N(ace asking)-5H-6C-end. The bidding in the other room started 1H-<1S>-X(showing clubs)-<4S> and that made life rather more difficult. Of the 50 tables, 20 bid the small slam; two tables in the Ladies played in a club part-score, the Iceland Open team played in 2C-X making 12 tricks and losing 9 imps for that, and Lithuania got away with 3N (for a 1 imp loss).
KQJ75	2	
A	98542	
JT92	AKQ743	

When the dust had cleared we won the match by 1 imp, but that scored 15-15 in VPs. Next came France, who now had 5 wins from 5 matches. We played France in the opening match in Ostend and lost by a little. This time it was different – we lost one swing of 10 imps and two of 1 imp, to run out winners by 48 imps, scoring 25-5. The most interesting were these two play hands

	AKT	After North and South had shown their suits, Peter Goodman ended in 3N by North on a diamond lead. He ran this to his DT and now played a heart to the queen and cashed two winning diamonds. After that came a second heart and he ducked the HT. Bessis for France switched to spades and Peter won SA. He played a third round of hearts and East exited with the SQ. Or at least he tried to, but Peter read the shape right and ducked, and now a club into the AQ gave him 9 tricks.
	K864	
	T	
	AQ754	
J875	Q2	In the other room it started with a diamond to the DT but declarer then tried three rounds of spades. A club came through to the CT, but East had thrown a heart on the third spade and was now end played. Flat board.
JT2	A75	
973	Q542	
632	KJT8	
	9643	
	Q93	
	AKJ86	
	9	

This next hand was flat in 4H except in 5 matches where one team bid the slam. England didn't just bid the slam, they made an overtrick.

---	Q864	The English bidding was 1C-P-1D(Stayman-like)-<2S>, and now opener doubled to show hearts. His partner raised to 4H and opener (we are told) went on. Notice how East ended up declarer and now the SA was led and ruffed; heart finesse and another ruff and now draw trumps. Next comes the top clubs ruffing that suit good, which leads to 12 tricks. When these are cashed you find RHO started with SK and four diamonds and has to discard one in the end game, to give you the thirteenth trick. Easy game this!
T987	AKJ4	
A642	K98	
AK873	T6	

At the end of day two, Wales are 10 VPs above average and lie 7th in the group, only 13 VPs behind Monaco who now lead.

Day 1 : Open play Russia, Iceland, Romania

The day didn't start very well with a loss to Russia in the first match. The Russians were expected to be a strong team but didn't play particularly well and we could have won. There were only two swings above 6 imps – the remaining hands going 19-19 – but the two big swings went the wrong way and the Russians ended up winning 20-10 in VPs. Here are a few of the games our team missed

KJ7	A6542	Shields opened 1D and it went 1D-1S-1N-2C which is a puppet to 2D, after which Denning continued with 2H showing spades and hearts and invitational values. This got passed out but merited a raise to 3H which might have meant game. At 12/32 tables they bid game (and one of those was Russia ☺)
QJ54	AT98	
A974	K2	
97	86	

8	942	After a 1S opener we bid 2H and next hand bid 2S. The fourth hand passed and the stronger hand doubled for takeout. It went P-3D-3S-P-P and now the weaker hand tried again with 4C. It heard only 4D is response and there it rested, with the good diamond game missed and 12 tricks rolling in. This time 14/32 tables bid game and one table bid and made 6D. Flat board for Wales.
AQJ86	7	
AQ95	T7432	
QJ9	AK62	

The second match was against tough opponents who had just lost their first match. The Icelanders had the better of the luck, including a gain of 13 imps when one of our players didn't see his partner's bid, plus this -

AQT64	K87	They bid the hand 1S-P-2N(support)-<3H> which was doubled, presumably to show shortage there. It proceeded <4H>-P-P and now the opening bidder asked for aces with 4N and over confirmation of them all bid 6C as some sort of grand slam try. His partner bid 7S, and this turned out to be one of those few occasions when the diamond suit played for no loser. That cost 14 imps – the small slam was bid 16/32 times and the grand slam 5 times.
9	AJ6	
K53	AT862	
AKJ8	QT	

One tricky problem rarely solved was this

	T972	Mike Pownall passed in first seat as West and Peter Goodman got to open 3N, gambling style. All the books say South should lead an ace against this and he duly did lead HA, instantly killing the defence. In fact the lead of either ace lets the contract through. Only Luxemburg and Cyprus found the lead of the H2 to beat 3N (although we don't know what their auctions were). Our man led the S5 which didn't kill the heart tricks but did let declarer run for 9 tricks.
	Q	
	K9753	
	T94	
AQJ84	3	
JT974	65	
Q6	JT4	
7	AKQJ653	
	K65	
	AK832	
	A82	
	82	

Our only serious gain was when Iceland failed to solve this bidding problem –

Q	A872	There was a weak 2S opening in front of the big hand, who doubled and his partner responded 2N (Lebensohl) intending to show a weak hand with hearts. The big hand was scared of being passed out in 3C and bid 3S over 2N – and the other hand converted to 4H. This happened at 4 tables – and was avoided at others where the (hidden) hand was considered too good for a 2S opener, and the extra space over a 1S opening made life easy.
A52	T863	
AKQT42	975	
A53	92	

We lost this match 23-7 and were heading for the bottom of the table. Next match was Romania who had beaten Iceland comfortably and then sat out (an odd number of teams means one BYE). They really didn't perform well against us, and we did well enough to score a 25-4 win (55 imps ahead over 20 boards). There were two slam hands, and one we bid and one we didn't – here's the success

Q732	A5	It started with a 16+ 1C opener and a 2H response showing 12+ balanced. West then showed diamonds and spades, got diamond support and a cue bidding sequence led to 6D, which turned out to be no problem when the SK was onside. It was bid at 18/32 tables and gained 10 imps for Wales.
J	A542	
AKT73	Q952	
AK6	Q32	

At the end of day one, Wales has 42 VPs from an average of 45, and needs to improve on this slightly to qualify for the final stages. England in the same group are on 45 VPs (playing four handed while the reserves are called in because one pair had to abandon due to a sickness at home). In the other group Scotland are on 33 and Ireland on 52.

LAST TIME – IN OSTEND

Before is gets started, here are a few highlights from Ostend

First the last board of the opening match against France – being played on BBO and watched across the world

AQT73	J	Paul Denning opened this hand with 1C (any 16+ hcp hand) and got a negative 1D from partner; he rebid 1S and now Patrick Shields bid 2H showing a 5cd suit and 5-7 points. This excited the strong hand – who could see no way to get partner to cooperate and just bid 6H. This put the ball in the court of the defence and when the man led out the DA, setting up the king, it was all over. Despite a trump switch, with 3 outside winners and 9 tricks on a cross ruff, the slam was home. Wales gained 13 imps on this to lose the match by 4 imps.
AKQ65	JT982	
8	K76	
A9	J643	

When we played the strong Italians this came up

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AJ9832		
AKQ832		In the other room Patrick Shields opened a strong forcing 1C as North, Sementa doubled and Paul Denning passed showing 0-4 hcp. After 1D from East, North continued with a forcing 2H and the Welsh pair were able to agree hearts and ask about key cards, before stopping in 6H. Unfortunately 6H can't be made, although a few did. Cyprus opened 2D and were doubled-P-P and decided that wasn't enough, so the man bid 3D and was doubled there and now that was game, so he was happy with +1070 and 15 imps.
A		
QT2	AKJ9	
---	QT65	
J764	---	
J97653	KQT82	
876543		
K74		
T95		
4		

And here is the Jones at work ...

JT8	AKQ7643	The Jones started 1H-1S-1N showing 15-17 hcp, and then the 2C enquiry got a 2S response showing 3 card support. Dafydd was now able to bid a splinter 4D, at which point the other hand could see all his points were working and they soon reached the slam. In the Seniors match, Wales had to contend with an opening bid in front of the strong hand and missed the slam, to lose 13 imps. In the Ladies Gilly Clench & Laura Woodruff started the same way as the Jones but over 1N bid a self agreeing 4D splinter and quickly reached the slam to gain 13 imps. Over the three matches, Wales broke even on this hand!
AK97	T82	
J52	T	
AK9	Q4	