

WELSH INVITATION PAIRS - September 2010

This year the ninth running of the Welsh Invitation Pairs took place at St Mellon's Golf Club, near Cardiff. As well as the eight local pairs, there were pairs from Ireland (Republic and the North), Netherlands, Scotland and Switzerland. For the first time a clash with a major English event meant no top English pairs, but then England has only provided the winners twice in eight years.

The winners were the only pair to have won it twice before – Rex Anderson & David Greenwood from Northern Ireland. They started well when Rex had to play this hand

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| <div> <div>QT42</div> <div>---</div> <div>KT7543</div> <div>T86</div> </div> | | <div>AK853</div> <div>73</div> <div>A96</div> <div>K93</div> |
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This 12 imp gain left Rex & David in second position, just behind Peter Goodman & Adrian Thomas. This was the most interesting hand in the second set

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| <div> <div>JT</div> <div>AKT952</div> <div>Q972</div> <div>Q</div> </div> | | <div>63</div> <div>64</div> <div>AT8643</div> <div>864</div> | <p>Those who opened 2N as West found themselves in 3N and did not enjoy things when North cashed the first six tricks. To rub it in, it seemed natural to play South for the diamond queen and that was one more loser! But it was when West opened 2C or 2D and North overcalled 2H that it became interesting. South raised to 3H and West doubled to show a strong balanced hand and that was usually passed out.</p> |
| <div>AK874</div> <div>QJ</div> <div>KJ5</div> <div>AKJ</div> | <div>Q952</div> <div>873</div> <div>---</div> <div>T97532</div> | | |
| | | | <p>All those in hearts made 9 tricks, but more interesting is how it should be defeated. The most common lead was S6 to the SK and a trump switch. Declarer wins and knows he can only take one quick ruff, so he tries first to set up a spade trick, playing the SJ. West won this and played back a spade immediately, so his partner could ruff one of the winning spades, but North threw the CQ and could not be prevented from one spade trick, six trumps in hand and two ruffs in dummy.</p> |
| | | | <p>The secret is to make dummy ruff a diamond before the spades are set up. West needs to do this after winning the first spade. And if East leads a trump at trick one (he really should since his partnership hold the vast majority of the high card points) then the contract will go two off if West plays a diamond after winning the SK.</p> |

The third set included three slams each of which were by about half the field, but the winners on one were losers on another so it balanced. This game hand was interesting

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| <div> <div>A986</div> <div>AK9862</div> <div>---</div> <div>874</div> </div> | | <div>K3</div> <div>QT</div> <div>T83</div> <div>QJ9653</div> | <p>After Adrian Thomas opened 1H (promising five) and a 2D overcall, the next hand was stuck for a bid, and passed. Now came a 2H cue bid – a game try in diamonds, rejected by the overcaller with a 3D rebid. Now Peter Goodman came to life with that awkward 2236 hand, by bidding 3H. This had to show some values but only a doubleton heart (else 2H previous round) and short spades (else a negative double last time), and Adrian recognised this and bid 4H, which can't be beaten. Two other pairs reached 4H also, but at least one of those auctions is X-rated!</p> |
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The last set produced this tricky play hand.

AKQ
K875
A7
AJT2

J83
J6432
82
K75

West ended in 4H on a diamond lead and won the DA. It's always best to return a diamond but the defenders unhelpfully return a spade. There are three lines to consider – cross to CK to lead a heart to the ace, or lead to the HJ, or play out spades first. The first line beats the second line for 25% of the 2-2 trump breaks and this outweighs the second line's edge which avoids a club guess on just one extra of the 8 3-1 breaks. But in fact, the third option turns out to be better than either (67% against 55% and 48%) since it more often forces the defence to open up the club suit. In practice the second and third lines succeeded but the first line (found by only one player) didn't.

But actually there is a fourth option, which is to cash the spades before exiting with a second diamond – found by Gary Jones. This beats the previous line and delivers – by my suspect calculations – an extra 2% chance of success!

THE END