

WELSH INVITATION PAIRS - September 2011

This year the tenth 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 England, Ireland (Republic and the North), Netherlands, Norway, Scotland, and Switzerland. The event is scored in three sessions and the winners of each session were Thor Erik Hoftaniska and Svein Arild Nass Olsen from Norway, who as a result won overall by a large margin. There are 15 matches played against each of the other pairs and their worst result was losing by 1 imp to the Dutch juniors. They ended 76imps clear of the field, so there wasn't a lot they could do better, but here are some hands on which others might have improved ...

J5 KQ94 973 KT75	T		K7632 T832 Q6 J4	When Filip & Diane Kurbalija were North-South they bid this hand 1C-3D-3S-4D-5D and received the inevitable heart lead (the H8, second from a bad suit). After winning the HA the best avenue was to try first to ruff out the SK but that was shown to be a lost cause when West discarded on the third round.
	765			
	KJT8542			
	32			
	AQ984			The DQ dropping made things look rather better and now Filip cashed a few trumps. West discarded down to H-KQ and was duly end played to lead from the CK. Clearly a top heart should be discarded (partner is known to hold the HT). What is more tricky is to make the discard of a high heart before partner – discarding twice ahead of you – has thrown two (hopeless looking) hearts away. Two Welsh internationals failed to unblock, allowing Filip (and Mark Roderick) to make 5D.
	AJ			
	A			
	AQ986			

There were plenty of slam hands around over the weekend, with exactly one hand bid to a slam at all 8 tables (of the 10 excellent slams on offer). The five cases where only one pair bid a slam were all terrible contracts and went down but there was also one excellent slam nobody touched, and another only bid once. Would you have done any better on this?

AK9 AJ83 6 A7653	Q854 K6 A8 J9842	The sixteen count was fourth in hand and the bidding started P-P-1D, so he doubled. Next hand raised to 3D and partner produced a responsive double. At this point West must remember that 4H now would show a hand with hearts that was too good to overcall 1H, and must make a return cue bid. Over that 4S shows spades and clubs and West can convert. But the beautiful fit was too much for anyone to fully diagnose. Those who (mis?)bid to 4S were rewarded an extra 2imps on the scoresheet!

This excellent slam was only reached once and the declarer was ashamed to go down ...

A9632 J64 --- KQ873	T754	KQJ8 3 Q972 J542	With EW vulnerable and dealer South, many had a tendency to open 4H. Whether after that, or by means unknown, there were two EW pairs who were allowed to play in 5C going one off. The two pairs left in 4H were comfortable, and the pair in 6H got a club lead from the Scot David Walker, after which there were only 11 tricks.
	97		
	AKT53		
	AT		
	---		The prize for the winning auction went to the pair who opened 1H and then proceeded 1S-2D-4S, 5D-P-6D-end. This received a spade lead ruffed, and when West showed out on the D6 North had to pause. He found the right play of the DT but now East found a counter – he too ducked. The winning answer – a text book puzzle in real life – is for declarer to play a second small diamond toward the DJ. When he cashed hearts instead he was one off. Not often you have to say twice to the opponents “please take your trick”.
	AKQT852		
	J864		
	96		

This hand offered a chance for thoughtful defence -

T9764 KJ7643 5 8	QJ5 AQ 97 AQT632	AK32 T2 AQ32 KJ4	South dealt and passed and North chose to open a strong 1N (15-17) over which East wisely passed. South bid 2N (their mechanism to reach 3D) and when 3D was passed around to West he came to life, vulnerable, with 3H. Not realising that his assets were insufficient, David Greenwood raised his partner to game and a contented North led the D9.
	8 985 KJT864 975		This was won by DA and now the HT went to the H9-H3-HQ. North knew declarer had a singleton diamond and now tried the CA and a second club but that wasn't enough. Declarer cleared hearts and led out the S9 and finessed it, picking up the S8, to make the contract.
			North needed to realise that West had come in with only 4hcp and a six card suit (South's H9 showing an odd number) and didn't open a weak two; it had to be because of a side suit of spades. Next step is to identify from South's play on the CA that West must have a singleton club and so South has a singleton spade. A switch to the S5 now, allowing a second spade when in with the HA, defeats the contract. Failure cost 12 imps.

Finally another bidding problem, which some did solve ...

QT6 AK9875 42 A5	AK432 63 QJ5 K98	The bidding failures all proceeded : 1H-1S-2H-4H-end and when the hearts broke badly this could not make. The most successful got to 4S but 3N was also a make for the one pair who ended there. Would you have reached the right game?
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As always the event was much enjoyed by all participants and very ably managed by Ken Richardson.

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