

WELSH INVITATION PAIRS - September 2012

This year the eleventh running of the Welsh Invitation Pairs took place at St Mellon's Golf Club, near Cardiff. As well as the eight local pairs, eight pairs had come from England, Ireland (Republic and the North), and Scotland (although some had more distant origins). There were plenty of interesting hands over the weekend and the final winners were David Burn and Nick Sandquist, ahead of Peter Goodman & Gay Keaveney. Here are some of the tricky hands -

<p>9 76 AJT82 AKQJ7</p>		<p>This was the first monster (board 18) of the first session. It was love all and dealer East and most people opened with a spade bid – a number opened 2S but the winners showed the way the game is played today by opening 4S. This went P-P to North who re-opened with 4N, showing two places to play.</p>
<p>AQ5 KQJT983 Q76 --</p>	<p>KJT842 2 -- T95432</p>	<p>South bid 5D, intending to play in a red suit and West competed with 5S. North passed this and South, taking that as encouraging, continued with 6D. This is actually an excellent contract and destined to make unless West – as indeed he might- underleads his top spades at trick one. But David Burn as West – looking at 14 points opposite decided correctly to sacrifice in 6S, which was doubled.</p>
<p>763 A54 K9543 86</p>		<p>Still not sure what suits partner held, Patrick Shields started with a spade. He was back in with the HA at trick two but now knew his partner had the minors and he led a club to force dummy. This defence kept declarer to 10 tricks and the par result of +300 to North-South (and 8 imps in the Butler scoring since only one other pair bid up to 6D – doubled, making).</p>

Two boards later – but now the next 6-board match – East-West again had a monster

		<p>The common start to this was 1C-1S-2D, forcing in everyone's books these days. One East got scared and passed this but the others did their duty and made a minimal response (sometimes 2H, sometimes 2N).. That often got a 3D continuation (is that forcing?) and at the end only a few pairs reached slam.</p>
<p>A K AQ976 AKQ732</p>	<p>JT95 A62 T854 98</p>	<p>Played by West the natural lead was the HQ and now came a test in the play. This is clearly the only entry to dummy. If you run the heart to the HK, you are forced into playing diamonds from hand and go down whenever there is a small singleton in either hand. Winning the HA and finessing diamonds only loses when LHO wins with a singleton HJ or HK – so that is clearly better. But it's not quite an even choice, since running the D8 on the first round also picks up KJ32 onside. That's exactly what it was and if you got all that right it was worth 13 imps to you.</p> <p>Two of the four in 6D made it. One of those defeated was unfortunate in receiving a spade lead, after which best odds are to cash DA before crossing to lead towards the king – which doesn't work this time.</p>

The theme of big and interesting slam hands continued throughout, with three (uncontested) slams in the second set of four matches (24 boards) and just one more than half the tables bid slams across these. Slam bidding is difficult. Session three started – to help with travel arrangements – at 1040 on the Sunday morning and in the first six board match there were three slam hands – two of which were competitive bidding - to test who was awake (one of these hands follows). And, for the record, later on Sunday there was another cold slam (bid 8 times), and two slams each on a finesse (each bid 3 times).

A8752 Q742 Q52 3		This slam hand was offered by the winners as one they mangled – but after the error, they escaped again. West opened 1D and proceeded very gently after a 1S response with 2C and got raised to 3C. There was no stopping him now, and three bids later he was in 6C and was favoured by a heart lead round to the HJ. It all looked straightforward so he started drawing trumps, cashing the CA and then the CQ – but had to stop in his tracks when North showed out.
-- AKJ5 AKJ74 QJ87	K643 83 T93 AK96	There are two choices now – draw all the trumps and rely on the DQ being with South, or give up a diamond and take one ruff for the twelfth trick. The problem is that if you ruff in one hand, you can get forced in the other and now lose to the long trump. Declarer's answer was to try a small diamond away from hand. North ducked this and when the DT won he could take a heart ruff, unblock the CK and return in diamonds to draw trumps.
QJT9 T96 86 T542		His mistake – as he told us – was not unblocking the C9 under the CQ at trick three. That matters because he could have been beaten as it was had North risen with the DQ and played a second diamond – cutting declarer's communications.
		Most tables played in 3N on this hand after West preferred to start 1D-1S-2H, making clubs the fourth suit. The Scottish visitors suffered from a 1S opener (in third seat) from South after which they played 6C by East, which went down after a spade lead and a diamond finesse.

There were a few interesting play problem at lower levels; this one was solved (as far as we know) only by Waseem Naqvi of Spain (playing with last year's winner, Thor-Erik Hoftaniska).

K7 JT873 K7 KQ83		The contract was commonly 4H by South after a minor suit opening by him, a spade overcall and then 2D by North as a transfer into hearts. (Not what you see at the local club, but a common style in this field.) The auction meandered to 4H and West always led the DJ.
AT852 Q2 JT98 AT	J3 954 A62 97642	With three aces to lose the HQ becomes an issue and with the need to ruff the fourth club (nearly always) you are forced into playing for the HQ doubleton. The catch with playing hearts early is that the opposition might play a third round before you knock out the CA and get to dummy for the ruff.
Q964 AK6 Q543 J5		Most declarers let the JD run and won the DQ. Now came the CJ (spotting the need to prepare for the ruff) but West countered by winning and playing back a second club. Declarer now drew two rounds of trumps and played a spade toward the king. West (if awake) could rise with the SA, put his partner in with the DA when a third heart kills declarer's chances.
		This defence has one easy counter – declarer is expecting East to have the three trumps, and needs to remove East's sole entry (surely the DA after that lead) asap – so either DK at trick one or a diamond back at trick two. That makes the contract every time it can be made.

As always the event was much enjoyed by all participants. The main organiser, Patrick Jourdain, was off to hospital just after the event for a hip replacement – we wish him all the best there.

THE END