

Captain's Report – Junior Camrose – February 17th - 18th 2007

Bunratty, Republic of Ireland

Thanks to the excellent organisational skills of the Wales Junior Co-ordinator, Elaine Sharp, the whole Junior Camrose (U-25) and Peggy Bayer (U-20) teams assembled at Bristol Airport for the short flight to Shannon to take part in the Junior Home International series arranged by the Contract Bridge Association and North Munster Region of the CBAI at the Bunratty Shamrock Hotel, Co. Clare.

The Wales Junior Camrose team was:

Alan Jones and Jonny Sharp

Catherine Evans and Eve Hatfield

Tom Stephenson and Christopher Owen

The last three players were making their debut for Wales and prior to meeting at Bristol Airport Tom Stephenson and Christopher Owen had never met – communication between the two players being limited to a few e-mails. Further team bonding at “Dirty Nellie’s” after arrival in Bunratty also ensured an excellent team spirit throughout the weekend.

The event was held at the Bunratty Shamrock Hotel, which had a conference facility across the hotel car park and therefore made a suitable venue for the event. There was a full viewgraph facility (with coverage on BBO), which attracted a reasonable and knowledgeable audience, two large rooms as the Open and Closed Rooms holding four tables in comfort and a large room with several tables for scoring and use as a focal point for each team. From an organisational point of view the event ran smoothly with true Irish hospitality.

Wales started against an experienced Scottish team, including one player who had represented Scotland this season at Camrose level. The boards were relatively unexciting and resulted in a low scoring match, which Scotland won by 20-7 IMPS (or 19-11 VPs). There were only two swings of note, one when Wales missed a simple game and the other where Wales wrong-sided a 1NT contract that resulted in a 5 trick difference.

The next match against England was anything but flat and unexciting, resulting in a 0-25 VPs loss for Wales. This was followed by a further defeat to the Republic of Ireland by 11-19 VPs.

Although the organisation by the CBAI was excellent and copies of the hands were available immediately after each match, there were no full hand records provided to the Captains with details of bidding, play and scores (Ref: BGB Regulation 7.8). Consequently any detailed subsequent match by match analysis is difficult.

In match 4 Wales easily beat Northern Ireland and finished the Saturday evening with a convincing win against Scotland, who were at the time challenging England for the overall lead. This match was particularly encouraging as the first three boards in the Open room were each big swings to Scotland.

Wales went to bed lying in 3rd place, although somewhat behind Scotland and the overnight leaders, England. Plans on Sunday were to look to consolidate our position.

Sunday started with England taking another maximum 25 VPs from Wales although Wales did fare better than in their previous match against England and salvaged 5 VPs, However this was followed by defeats to the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland resulting in Wales finishing in 5th place.

The final scores were:

England	155
Scotland	136
N Ireland	126
Republic of Ireland	100
Wales	76

The final score did not reflect the overall performance of the Team and the future promise that they could show.

Christopher Owen and Tom Stephenson had not met prior to this weekend and Tom had not played bridge at this level previously. They played four stanzas as having additional playing time towards the end of the event to gain experience for the future.

Alan Jones and Jonny Sharp were the most experienced pair and have been involved in the Wales junior team for many years, both separately and latterly as a partnership. Although they brought in a lot of IMPs, their aggressive style, coupled with occasional misunderstandings, also resulted in IMPs being lost. Both should be available next year and it would be of benefit for them to play regularly together on the internet, with some coaching being of value.

Eve Hatfield and Catherine Evans played steadily throughout the weekend, although an occasional lack of aggression in pushing for thin games or competing for part scores did cost IMPs. It was Eve's first junior Camrose and she shows potential. Both players will be available for a number of years and should become established within the team as a regular and dependable pairing.

Thanks must again go to Elaine Sharp for her work in ensuring Wales was able to enter teams in both the Junior Camrose and Peggy Bayer this year.

Simon Richards, NPC



The Junior Camrose team: Catherine Evans, Tom Stephenson, Chris Owen, Simon Richards npc, Jonny Sharp, Eve Hatfield and Alan Jones.