

Winking World 104



The Catch Up Edition

October 2023

Contents

Preliminaries

Editorial.....	2
Submissions for <i>Winking World 105</i>	3
Letter to the Editor.....	4

Tournament Write Ups: January - June 2023

Rated Tournaments

NATwA Singles.....	5
Cambridge Open.....	6
National Handicapped Individual Pairs.....	9
National Singles.....	10
The Plate.....	16
Cambridge vs Oxford Varsity Match.....	19

Challenge and Invitational Games

Somerset Invitational.....	22
World Singles 73.....	27
Jubilee: Hunt vs Driscoll.....	29
World Singles 74.....	30
Jubilee: Driscoll vs Brown.....	33
Jubilee: Driscoll vs Jones.....	34

Occasional Articles

On Geoff.....	35
Predictive Capability of Ratings.....	37
Poetry Corner.....	39
Sophie and the Amazing Tripletton: A CUTwC Murder Mystery, by Sophie Brawn.....	40

Preliminaries

Editorial

Katherine Drew

It's finally here! But before you all skip straight to the hotly anticipated Part 2 of *Sophie and the Amazing Tripleton: A CUTwC Murder Mystery* by Sophie Brawn, I do encourage you to spare at least a cursory glance to the other articles and write-ups that have been submitted by a range of talented contributors. This bumpiest of bumper issues contains no fewer than 120 pages of winks-related content, spread over three volumes in order to preserve the stapler.

In this, the main volume of *Winking World 104*, you can enjoy accounts from the tournaments and other matches that have taken place from January to June of this year, or you can of course not enjoy them if you prefer. Separately, Andrew has kindly provided some more memories of Geoff Thorpe, Patrick Barrie has written something about the ratings program that I might be able to understand if I try hard enough, and there is some rage-inducing poetry.

My thanks are extended to all contributors, especially those who responded very promptly to my requests for write-ups. I've certainly had a lot of fun putting this together so I do sincerely hope it is well-received. Enjoy!

Submissions for *Winking World 105*

Winking World 105 will cover the ‘wink-related events of July to December 2023.

So that I can have six moths peace from Timmy’s complaints, I am hereby using my executive editorial powers to declare that write-ups from this period should be completed by the loser(s) of these tournaments. As a reminder, this currently includes:

The Teams of Four (12th August)

The London Open (10th September)

Plus any Jubilees/Golden Squidgers/invitational tournaments held in Hurstpierpoint

So if you’ve lost any of those then get writing!

Anyone who sadly misses out on this privilege due to being competent at winks is reminded that I would be very happy to receive articles relating to any aspect of the sport, and essay titles are available on page 5 of *Winking World 103* if you need some inspiration. I will also accept (and publish!) non-literary contributions, such as artwork, puzzles, etc.

Please send all submissions to winkingworld@gmail.com. You can send your excellent (and no so excellent) contributions in as a word document or in the body of your email.

The deadline for submissions for *Winking World 105* is Thursday 29th February 2024.

Letter to the Editor

The following dropped into the Winking World gmail at 14:01 on 12 November 2019. If anyone has any idea what is going on, I would be intrigued to hear it.

Dear whom this absolute wonderful, outstanding, never-before seen email may winkle upon *wink wink*,

It has come to my attention that the local winkle club hasn't been performing as per usual. I am absolutely infuriated and distraught about the decisions being made and the Scottish winkler sprinklers have been cheating at all chances they get. Toby Bruce was an upcoming prospect in my day but then was devastatingly stabbed in the spinal cord by the notorious, infamous, terrifying, world-destroying and quite frankly rude Alan Dean!!!

Despite the drama at the local winkle club, I'm hoping that the winkle committee can help sort out the buggering Scottish winklers. Despite my cognitive issues, I have coped well with this issue however it has really come to light that my young winkler prospects are being cheated out of what was once a thriving sport. Hope you get back to me ASAP since I am serving a 25 month suspension from the committee regarding the decision made against tantrums in the battle arena. I hope you can overlook my embarrassing acts in the arena and get rid of those Scottish winkler sprinklers so I can come back for vengeance; once and for all!

Yours sincerely,

R Mick Lord

From the Editor: Thank you for your largely incoherent ramblings. I am particularly intrigued to hear more details about Alan Dean's attack on Toby and would highly recommend that you turn these events into a serialised murder mystery and submit the first part to Winking World 105.

Tournament Write Ups

Rated Tournaments

NATwA Singles

Rockville, January 14th 2023

Dave Lockwood

Location: Alexandra Lockwood-Simpson and Justin Simpson's Home in Rockville, MD

Attendees: Dave Lockwood, Jonathan Lockwood, Benjamin Lockwood, Hannah Roberts, Justin Simpson, Alexandra Lockwood-Simpson.

As NATwA continues its post-COVID restart, we all hope Larry gets better. Our thoughts are with you, my friend.

Along with the NATwA Pairs in Ithaca in December, NATwA welcomed several new players in the Singles. In reality, there were three groups of two in the Singles – the aspiring, the siblings, and the newcomers. The matches for 1st, 3rd, and 5th turned on the games within each of these three groups.

Format was a Round Robin with 1 extra game between the top 2.

Jon beat Dave 5-2 in the extra game, creating a tie. In the second extra game, Dave beat Jon 4-3.

In summary, Dave barely edged Jon to become the first non-Larry winner in 21 years. Justin deserves praise for holding up in what must have been a long, tough day. (There will be better days to come. I guarantee it.)

	Dave	Jon	Ben	Alex	Justin	Hannah	Total
Dave		4.5	4.5	7	7	7	30
Jon	2.5		5.5	5	7	7	27
Ben	2.5	1.5		1	7	7	19
Alex	0	2	6		7	7	22
Justin	0	0	0	0		0	0
Hannah	0	0	0	0	7		7

Cambridge Open

Selwyn College, 18th - 19th February 2023

Tim Hunt

The 2023 open Tiddlywinks season started with two tournaments confusingly similar in time, space and format. They both involved going to Cambridge around the end of February and playing winks with random partners against random opponents. Thus they were very enjoyable and sociable, speaking of which, all the lunches were taken in the Red Bull. They were both very well attended. They also (spoiler alert) resulted in the same winner; and thus, thanks to this journal's strange editorial policy, the same person being reluctantly forced to write them up.¹ Despite my hazy, beer addled, memory, the two events were not entirely indistinguishable. The detailed records on the CUTwC web site (thank you Andrew) enabled me to tease apart the two happenings.

The earlier to the two events (I am reminded) lasted two days (18th & 19th February) and took place in the Selwyn diamond. A very impressive 37 people played in at least one game, although that is not quite as impressive as the 43 playing a year

¹ *From the Editor: What a tragedy. How ever will you cope?*

prior. As usual, there were people who played just one game, and ended with a stellar PPG but ineligible to be ranked. (Well done Seung June Rhee for your 6 PPG.) Even more impressive was Matthew Rose, with 5.9 PPG, but he only played on the Sunday. (You'll never win that way.) Also playing 5 good rounds was Sam Dernie (4.4 PPG).



Sophie wonders whether Stew's plan to squop his glasses will get them enough tiddlies

Since I mention number of rounds I could go into a whole rant about slow play but, justified as that would be, I will spare you all. (All? Does anyone other than the editor actually read this stuff.¹) Anyway, we only managed 6 rounds each day, which really will be the death of English winks, won't it? I am sure all 37 participants would agree.

Normally, the Saturday evening of the Cambridge Open would be the CUTwC Club Dinner, but Cambridge college catering

¹ From the Editor: To be honest I barely even read it.

seems still to be reeling from the effects of the pandemic, so this had proved impossible to arrange. A team curry was substituted, and 20+ of us gathered at the Curry King. Whilst waiting outside, Paul Moss, Andrew Garrard and I exchanged witty repartee, hypothesising that to give Patrick Barrie food poisoning was the best way to maximise our tournament chances. Whatever the evidence might be, we really didn't put anything in his butternut squash curry, and the rest of the meal appear to have been edible! However, Patrick ended up missing the first two rounds on Sunday in unpleasant circumstances. He then heroically arrived to play in the afternoon, having only missed two rounds, so he was still eligible to finish second, with Harley third. The only thing I really remember about the winks is that I had a very lucky draw throughout. I played with a lot of experienced partners, and no complete novices. Thank you draw computer.



Zach counts the number of fucks he has left to give

National Handicapped Individual Pairs

Newnham College, 5th March 2023

Tim Hunt

A mere two weeks later (not optimal scheduling) we were all at it again on Sunday 5th March. This time, it was only a one-day tournament with 22 participants, and in the Barbara White Room, Newnham. Newnham has lovely gardens where you can walk on the grass(!) and there is a back exit straight to the Red Bull, so really a premiere winks venue. Also, the tables were large and sturdy, and the room lovely and light.

This was the NHIP, which is not just handicapped, but also draw is rigged to pair old nargs with new people. This aims to help spread the winking know-how, and tries to prevent tedious old winkers from winning. Hopefully the first part worked, because once again I won, with Patrick Barrie second. On this occasion, equal third place was shared by Sam Clayton and Sophie Brawn. Also, we all won a bit because we managed to get 7 rounds in a day, a step in the right direction.

Thanks, as ever, to CUTwC, for working so effectively to prevent the death of English winks, by recruiting new players and hosting witty tournaments.





Timmy celebrates at the thought of another tournament write up

National Singles

Newnham College, 22nd - 23rd April 2023

Patrick Barrie

Qualifying

There were a few regular players missing from this year's National Singles, so there were only 15 entrants. They were divided into groups of 8 (the "big" league) and 7 (the "small" league), with the top four from each league qualifying for the final on the Sunday.

Two of the entrants (Adam Smith and Dean Griffin) were beginners at winks, but members of a group called the "travelling veterans" who give each other particular challenges. In this case the task was to play in the national singles tiddlywinks tournament after just one month of practising the game. Both seemed to enjoy themselves – and managed to get some 1-6 losses rather than being obliterated in all games.

The novices' tournament took place in the same room and ran as a separate competition. I admit that my preference would be for them to play in the standard qualifying leagues of the national singles, but with the Geoff Thorpe trophy then awarded to the novice with the best PPG (or tournament rating). Beginners do in any case have the opportunity to play less intense winks in the plate competition on the Sunday.

The National Singles is the only tournament for which we usually use a qualifying format and this means unusual pressure on the first day. [Aside: 30 of the last 36 National Singles have featured qualifying leagues and a final; the other 6 tournaments had an all-play-all format.] Highly seeded players know that they may struggle to qualify if they drop points to players seeded below them, while lower seeded players know that they can challenge for a qualification place with some narrow losses or surprising wins against players seeded above them.

After four rounds in the Big League, Nick Inglis looked vulnerable after close games against Keith Seaman, Alexei Newton and Christian Gowers. He had 17 points – which is not a bad score after four games – but he still had to play the top seeds in the group. Matthew Rose, Tim Hunt and Andrew Garrard all had plenty of points, though it's worth noting the 3½-3½ game score between Andrew and Keith as this is the rarest score in the ratings database (making up only 0.58% of scores). In the next two rounds, the top three seeds guaranteed qualification before playing their final game. However, there were still four players who could qualify in fourth place. Nick had 20 points and was up next against Andrew; Christian had 18 points and was up against inexperienced Adam Smith; Keith had 17½ points and was playing Alexei (who could himself qualify if he got a 7 and other results went his way). Christian soon potted out for 7-0 against Adam, meaning Nick now needed a big win against Andrew if he was to qualify. Andrew's solid play gave him a 6-1, while Keith's 6-1 in the final round also overtook Nick.

Qualification from the Little League was also highly competitive. Paul Moss caused an early upset with a 5-2 win over Alan Dean, while Steve Phillips took 3 points off Dave

Lockwood. After the penultimate round, Patrick Barrie was unbeaten while Dave had also guaranteed qualification. Paul Moss knew he needed a point against Sophie Brawn for qualification (though later analysis showed he would have qualified no matter what happened); he got a $5\frac{1}{2}$ - $1\frac{1}{2}$ win and actually overtook Dave for 2nd place in the league. The final qualification spot was between Alan Dean and Steve Phillips who were playing each other. In a tense game, Alan only managed a 4-3 win, needing $4\frac{1}{2}$ to qualify, and so Steve took the fourth qualification place.



While everyone else is focused on more important things, Timmy tries to stare down the photographer

The Final

And so to the final on Sunday – 8 players with an all-play-all format, with seedings decided by PPG from qualifying. The schedule meant that the top four seeds competed first against the bottom 4 seeds, before then playing the games against each other.

After the first 4 rounds, Tim Hunt, Patrick Barrie and Andrew Garrard were still unbeaten. Of the other likely contenders,

Matthew Rose had gone down 6-1 to Dave Lockwood, while Dave's chances had disappeared by losing three of his first four games.

In round 5, Tim beat Andrew obtaining his fifth 6-1 win in a row. Patrick was beaten 2½-4½ by Matthew. This was a high standard game that could have gone either way, and featured an awkward pile reconstruction after a foul shot. Patrick was now 4 points behind Tim who was at the top of the table.

In game 6, Matthew pegged Tim back by beating him 4-3, while Patrick defeated Andrew 6-1. Patrick had the upper hand for most of this game – but was glad when Andrew missed his first pot attempt in round 5 as Andrew might have sneaked some points if he potted well from distance.

The title now depended entirely on the final round game between Tim and Patrick, with Tim having a 1 point lead. The game was of high quality with both players squopping well. Patrick had the positional advantage from the start but, at a critical moment, missed an attempt at a pile. The wink landed where Tim got a doubleton in a position that was hard to attack. Tim defended well and going into rounds Patrick was a long way behind – with only one mobile wink (a small red), and two blue winks on singletons. After some thought, Patrick decided there was nothing for it but to play aggressively – he made a 6 inch squop with his last red wink to bridge the pile and the defender. With blue he played a John Lennon memorial shot to interfere with another pile. His next 4 shots became gentle breaking of piles in a way that tried to cover Tim's winks (even with Tim's winks) to prevent him potting and to complicate the situation. While it had looked like whoever potted best would get first place, Patrick changed tactics half-way through round 4. He went for, and made, two successive "must get" 3 inch squops onto Tim's pottable winks. Patrick was now in first and joint second place, despite having no winks in the pot. Ending round 5, Tim needed to pot two winks in order to get a 3-4 scoreline which would result in a tie and a play-off game. Tim got the straightforward pot, but not the second one – which was a horribly positioned slightly nurdled one-on-one.



Three newcomers show confusion during their match

I was really pleased with this tournament win. It had been a while since I'd been in the position of not holding any major titles, and so I wanted to do well. I was also pleased that I actually played well on the second day, particularly after lunch. And I was pleased with how the final game ended – I am used to potting winks to win tournaments; I have far less experience of taking 3 inch one-on-one squops late in rounds to win.

Tim finished in 2nd place – his best ever result in the National Singles. From what I saw, he played well all weekend and deserved his points. Matthew was 3rd. He played well but maybe was not as sharp as he is at his best – but then he had played a World Singles match on the Friday and I know how mentally tiring they can be. Dave finished the tournament strongly, winning his three games in the afternoon to finish 4th. Andrew was 5th, falling away slightly in his games against the stronger players. Paul Moss was 6th and scrapped for points as ever. Steve Phillips was 7th, his best ever result in the National

Singles. He had only qualified for the final once before – and that was in 2008 – but his shot play means that he is always a tricky opponent. Christian Gowers did not win any games in the final but made people work for their points and should be proud of qualifying for the first time. He is a far more consistent player than he was a few years ago and can now get points off any player.



Big league:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Total
A: Matthew Rose		5*	1	5*	4	6	6	7*	34
B: Tim Hunt	2*		6	6	6	6*	6	7*	39
C: Andrew Garrard	6	1		6	3½	7*	6	7*	36½
D: Nick Inglis	2*	1	1		4	3	3	7*	21
E: Keith Seaman	3	1	3½	3		6	1	6	23½
F: Alexei Newton	1	1*	0*	4	1		2	6	15
G: Christian Gowers	1	1	1	4	6	5		7*	25
H: Adam Smith	0*	0*	0*	0*	1	1	0*		2

Little league:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	Total
A: Patrick Barrie		5	6	6	6	6	6	35
B: Dave Lockwood	2		6	2½	4	6	6	26½
C: Alan Dean	1	1		2	4	6	7*	21
D: Paul Moss	1	4½	5		5	5½	6	27
E: Steve Phillips	1	3	3	2		6	7*	22
F: Sophie Brawn	1	1	1	1½	1		6*	11½
G: Dean Griffin	1	1	0*	1	0*	1*		4

Final:

Pos'n	Name	Total	PPG
1	Patrick Barrie	37 ½	5 5/14
2	Tim Hunt	34 ½	4 13/14
3	Matthew Rose	32	4 4/7
4	Dave Lockwood	28	4
5	Andrew Garrard	22 ½	3 3/14
6	Paul Moss	17	2 3/7
7	Steve Phillips	16	2 2/7
8	Christian Gowers	8 ½	1 3/14

The Plate

Katherine Drew

As the defending champion, I naturally felt a lot of pressure coming into this tournament. Harley has been slacking lately so our trophy cabinet would have been looking rather sparse without the plate. Details of the matches are hazy as I am unused to winning things so wasn't really paying attention to anything that didn't directly concern me (but that's nothing new) and I am now only writing this as I put together WW 104. Ah well, I'm sure this journal has seen worse.

For the reasons listed above, I can remember nothing of the morning matches and staring at the list of results on the CUTwC website has done nothing to bring back any memories. Clearly the excitement of winning both of my matches 6-1 with point transfer in my favour has wiped my memory. It looks like Harley was the only other person who won both of their morning matches so the chances of one of us leaving with the most impressive trophy in our collection were looking good in the early stages.

With a formidable PPG going into lunch, I decided that my best chance of winning the tournament was to play as little as possible. I therefore enjoyed an extended lunch (the highlight of which was my rolling 100 for 5 in pigs) with the intention of joining the second round after lunch. However, my tactically brilliant plan was foiled by an extreme case of 'failing to get on with it' by the three people who had returned for the advertised start time, so despite arriving nearly an hour later, I was still about 15 minutes early for the first round of the afternoon. Fortunately I had brought myself to the optimal point of intoxication, so this combined with Bertie's strong performance (and their -0.5 handicap) meant that this match was another 6-1 with point transfer in our favour.

Owing to slow play in the Plate and fast play in the Singles, it was decided that we should only play one more round in the Plate, which meant that the tournament only lasted four rounds. This last match is the only time I have been disappointed to be partnered with Alan Dean because, against Alexei playing singles, the point transfer was decidedly not in our favour so there was no hope of a repeat of my earlier triumphs. This did end up as my worst match of the tournament, with a 5-2 victory becoming $3\frac{1}{2} - 3\frac{1}{2}$ after point transfer, but my earlier lead proved insurmountable.

It was a few months before this tournament that I had decided to get a tiddlywinks-themed tattoo should I ever make it into the top 30 in the ratings. This endeavour left me tantalisingly close, at 31st with a mere 3 points separating me from a permanent testament to my winking devotion.

Pos'n	Name	PPG	Played	H'cap	Orig H'cap
1	Katherine Drew	5 25/32	4	4½	3
	Harley Jones	4 3/4	2	7½	7
	Marc Mills	4 1/4	1	3	3
2	Bertie Politi	4 1/8	4	0	0
	Alex Fairclough	4 1/12	3	1½	1
3	Alan Dean	3 1/16	4	6½	7
4	Marie Moss	2 31/32	4	3	3
5	Alexei Newton	2 19/32	4	2½	3
6	Sam Clayton	2 1/8	2	2½	3
	Sam Dernie	1/2	2	3	4

The Geoff Thorpe Trophy (Novices' Singles), won by Sam Clayton:

	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D	Total
A: Bertie Politi		1	2	3		2	3	7*	18
B: Sam Dernie	6		3	4½	5		3	6	27½
C: Sam Clayton	5	4		7*	4	4		5	29
D: Emmy Charalambous	4	2½	0*		0*	1	2		9½



Cambridge vs Oxford Varsity Match

University College, 20th May 2023

Bertie Politi

I was told it couldn't easily be done. I was told it would be a long shot to raise a new generation of Oxonian winkers. But, on the 20th of May, the Cambridge University Tiddlywinks Club and Oxford University Tiddlywinks Society clashed over the Varsity Trophy for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Throughout my first year, I attempted to court interest in reviving OUTS among my Oxonian friends only to be met with remarks of 'I'm not that uncool', so in my second year, determined that a Varsity Match should take place during my reign as President, I turned to the Facebook page Oxfess with the plea of 'Want to earn a blue without doing any exercise?'

As it very fortunately turned out, William Roberts, who played in the previous match in 2020, was still around by virtue of studying medicine, and was up for leading the charge. I am enormously grateful to him for doing the actual legwork of reviving OUTS after my initial call to action.



Is this even legal??

On the day of the match, we drove to University College, Oxford, where we were graciously offered juice and biscuits by the Oxford team, and then brunch. Shortly after we sat down in the beautiful hall (which we definitely weren't that impressed with or whatever because we have our own beautiful halls), some equally beautiful girls descended on our now-president Sam Dernie to ask him what tiddlywinks is. More fool my Oxonian friends who thought themselves too good for the noble sport, as a quarter zip fleece with 'CAMBRIDGE TIDDLYWINKS' emblazoned on the back is clearly something that impresses girls.¹

After brunch and a little bit of warming up, we started the match. Overall, we played well but not perfectly, with Oxford winning three games and often keeping up well, winning three points across two pot-out games. Our worst defeat was at the hands of Héloïse Picolet and Anthony Adamson, winning five points against Romy Negrin and me. Héloïse is already shaping



¹ Perhaps this only works if you look like Sam Dernie, who is also a rower.

up to be a formidable potter, having won the aforementioned pot-out points, which took Romy and me by surprise. The game was a perfect illustration of the need to adjust one's tactics to one's opponent, and to not play too conservatively against novices who are keen to pot, but we were also outplayed physically, as I made some fatally bad shots. Oxford did not only display promise in potting, as SJ noted that Will especially had a good grasp of tactics and squopping as well as potting, and he and his partner Dom gave SJ and Sam D a run for their money with a large pile that could have gone either way. In most games, the varying quality of bring-ins from both sides dictated the flow of the early game.

Overall, we were very impressed with how well Oxford played in general, especially considering that the vast majority of the team had only been playing for a few weeks. I am sure I'm not the only Light Blue to have realised how lucky we are to have the opportunity to learn the sport from proper nargs, which I hope that in time, the current Oxford team will become, and pass their knowledge to future generations of OUTS. Holly and SJ in particular found a lesson in boondocking given by Patrick Barrie the week before the game very useful. Many of us reflected that tightening up on shot technique will improve our game, and we were all very impressed at the accuracy of Oxford's squopping given that they played every shot pot-style! We are keen to continue to foster a relationship with OUTS and can't wait to see how they grow and develop, and of course spend more time with them in the pub.

Cambridge	Oxford	William Roberts Dominic Seymour	Matthew Simpson Marcus O'Connor	Héloïse Picolet Anthony Adamson	Maeve Burton Maeve Dever	Total
Bertie Politi Romy Negrin	2 5	2 5	5 2	1½ 5½	17½	
Seung Jun Rhee Sam Dernie	3 4	0* 7*	1* 6*	0* 7*	24	
Sam Clayton Chizzy Zimphango	4½ 2½	0* 7*	2* 5*	3 4	18½	
Maja Seremak Holly Smith	4½ 2½	3 4	3 4	2 5	15½	
Total	14	5	11	6½	75½ 36½	

Challenge and Invitational Games

Somerset Invitational

The Old Down Inn, 3rd - 4th January 2023

Andrew Garrard

I had an exciting new experience. I actually made it to the Old Down Inn at lunchtime on the 2nd (just), and for once I was driving in bright sunlight. This allowed me to see exactly how wiggly all the roads are, and that it wasn't just the normal darkness and torrential rain which terrified me. Timmy was keen enough to go for a walk and establish that some of the paths were still rivers by walking down them, but Stew, Nick and I played random conversation and Lisa Bendall and spent a while trying to work out which room was which. Meanwhile, Sarah having been incapacitated by her digestion, we had a brief frisson of excitement that SiBo might join us as the new Sarah, but apparently having got on a train he realised he wouldn't be able to get back due to industrial action. Toby was volunteered to provide a taxi service to Harley, though, so we had a full complement for the evening's BFT and for me to discover that I'm not as good at Glengariff as I thought I was. I slept very well, by which I mean repeatedly if not for very long - the room was at least warmer than last year, although that might have been because I couldn't get the window open. Apparently others had the same problem sleeping, although I don't blame the traffic. This might explain us, and especially me, doing poorly at the quiz.

After a brief period of Timmy helping me feed the draw into the computer and my eventually remembering how the draw program works, we got under way, with the weather outside

having returned to obnoxious and Toby managing not to die en route. Timmy got off to a sprightly start, while I followed up a successful partnership with Stew by letting Harley stuff me in singles. Stew did a lot of complaining about the lack of light and inability to tell blue from green, somewhat improved after we found a light switch, but to me just bringing back memories of the Erasmus Room. A year of not playing (despite intentions and efforts to the contrary) had allowed me to retain an inflated ranting, but apparently had been detrimental to my squopping (but I can still knock an opponent free with a wayward bring-in very effectively). Timmy enthusiastically dragged me to a pot-out in a revenge match over Harley, and the relatively potty theme of the tournament was established, as was Tim's large pre-lunch lead.



Something tells me that things aren't going to plan

Lunch was very piggy, which perhaps explains the slightly more restrained post-lunch games. We had five to get through in the afternoon before Nick's evening Zoom call, so I tried to forge

ahead by potting out against him in singles. Nick had some unfortunate bring-ins (not improved by being on borrowed squidgers), but apparently still has his tradition of believing a game is over very early on and not being up for complements on shots that work right; Nick, buck up, and don't underestimate how much I can fuck up (although I did feel bad about it). Timmy meanwhile had finally been defeated in pairs, a trend which Stew and I managed to continue in the next game. It had all got very strategic: attempted pot-outs on both sides, and a lot of scrambling for points. I was beginning to get my eye in for some preposterous rescue shots that I didn't deserve, although if I could really claim competence I wouldn't have got into those positions in the first place.

Timmy and Nick got revenge over me and Harley in the next round, with Stew staying in touch by punishing Toby, and in the last round of the day (with the bar open) I tried to get things over with in a timely fashion by competently potting five against Timmy, then missing an easy sixth. (I maintain that yellow had enormous scratches, although not that it would have made a difference.) After a very brief struggle to rescue myself, Tim punished me for it, removing any hopes I had of overtaking him, while the pairs game looked much more convoluted.

Evening. Drinking games. Nobody remembers how to play Don. Me feeling quite ill and exhausted by half nine, and excusing myself as too old for this, with about a pint still owed. This time I slept very well until about 3am, then couldn't get back to sleep - though I do recommend the Honest Trailers for the Star Wars films as a way to pass the time if you're not actually inclined to get up and do work. I still managed to be late vacating the room, and had a little excitement when I found my laptop hadn't suspended and its battery had died.

On to day two, in which Harley was the strongest player. There was a gentle start, where Toby and I managed not to give too many points to Timmy and Harley and Stew won by the battle of the former Queens' doctors. After that, everyone clearly wanted to get back to the drinking games. Nick talked me into letting him run at the pot (I don't remember Nick being especially potty, but maybe now everyone knows what an Inglis game is

he's changing), which required a final wink rescue after some heroic squopping by Stew but otherwise worked, and Harley similarly decided to put Toby in his place and started a trend of singles pot-outs that lasted the rest of the day. Harley was handed his only defeat of the day before lunch by Timmy, while I tried to get us to the bar in a timely fashion by taking advantage of Stew.

Lunch, in which I made it through my overhanging fines. Codenames anyone, while Toby's here? No, pigs it is, then. Stew is not a fan of the comedy bird identification cards. Harley and I had a game against Stew and Toby which felt far too intellectual for after lunch, while the newly potty Nick kept Timmy within touching distance of the rest of us. Tim got his revenge by partnering me to a slightly risky pot-out with only one of Nick's winks still on the mat. Did I run six to get the seven points? Yes. Did I enjoy it? No. Realising that by this point the tournament was down to Timmy and myself (unless we both threw it at Harley), I decided aggression was appropriate, and maintained my adrenaline levels with a risky run at the pot against Toby, with one of my colours in trouble - but fortunately with most of his winks too distracted to have brought in. I felt bad about it, but also stressed enough that I felt it was sporting. Stew and Nick meanwhile kept my competition honest, meaning I went into the last round with just enough of a lead to have the chance of throwing it away; thanks to Sophie for encouraging me to practice mid-range pots. Timmy tried to do his part to keep the tournament alive by potting out against Stew, but Stew took the critical point off him to reduce some of my pressure. ("Who did I just let win?" "Andrew." "Oh no". Thanks, Stew.) Nick again wanted to run at the pot when partnering me, and it went wrong enough to be very stressful; Harley had done the same, and had he come out, as it were, it could have gone wrong. Coming last in the last game seemed like a suitable way to scrape the tournament win; not very convincing, not very deserved, but I've now won all the tournaments I've played in the last year, so I'm going to be smug. I expect to come last at the 2023 Cambridge Open. It's only polite.

We cleared everything away just in time for us to discover Mark (not Withersea) from the Mendip Times had turned up to take some photos, so we engaged in a little fakery for him.

We finally played a couple of rounds of Codenames, in which we discovered that Timmy mistrusts Stew so much that he won't believe "Oldfield" might be a clue for "tube" and "bell" even when Stew points it out, and that Harley is suspiciously good at it. I finally learned what Perudo is (loud, mostly); we're not entirely convinced. Royal and Ancient passed the cusp, although we weren't quite clear what happens if you've got four fives in your hand but someone else goes down first. Harley's engagement ring is sharp, which is how he and I became very confused that he's right-handed but left-carded. Dalmuti happened, but the cards were defective because I got dealt such rubbish that I ended up Peon. Then I had the fun of a drive back in which I almost ran out of both fuel and bladder capacity, but arrived shortly before I fell asleep. I trust everyone else enjoyed their breakfast, although possibly not as much as the parrot enjoyed the vacuum cleaner.

The above is approximately what happened, but not necessarily in the right order. I am, nonetheless, convinced that a good time was had by all, although not necessarily at the same time.



Pos'n	Player	Total	PPG
6	Stew Sage	31½	2 1/10
5	Toby Bruce	37	2 7/15
4	Nick Inglis	46½	3 1/10
3	Harley Jones	59½	3 29/30
2	Tim Hunt	68½	4 17/30
1	Andrew Garrard	72	4 4/5

World Singles 73: Barrie vs Rose

Emmanuel College, 11th March 2023

Matthew Rose

Having unexpectedly earned a challenge the previous April, in the first major post-pandemic tournament, we had been spurred on to arrange a date by the gauntlet of a future challenge from Dave in April. I'd played a few games only at the Cambridge Open and practised minimally other than bringing in as that has generally been a weakness. Against Patrick, who is such a solid all-rounder it is hard to give any sort of start. It was almost 20 years since we had a World Singles match.

We arranged this for a convenient date in March and Harley generously offered to umpire.

Game 1 was close but Patrick was always slightly ahead and deservedly won this 5-2.

Game 2 was not dissimilar but Matthew turned the tables by potting more strongly to end 5-2, so we were able to retire to the Free Press all square at 7-7.

Game 3 was one which Patrick looked likely to win comfortably but Matthew battled back to take 3 and be just one behind. Patrick 11 Matthew 10

Game 4 was one where all colours brought in well and Patrick had first attempt at the pot and succeeded – also following in for a 7 and an 18-10 lead after 4.

Game 5 again had good bring in in and Matthew potted 5 and missed the 6 amongst his other colour – Patrick could not squop it and Matthew eventually got a 6 to bring it back to Patrick 19 Matthew 16 and still in the balance.

Game 6 saw good bring ins and Matthew considered a further more difficult pot attempt but declined to attempt it – a close game but Matthew managed to keep sufficient of one colour to get 4 to make it Patrick 22 Matthew 20 after 6 games.

Game 7 was clearly one where a pot out would be sufficient for either player. Matthew brought 5 in well and Patrick tried to cover one but just failed to do so. Given the circumstances Matthew ran 5 and brought in, and had an attempt with the sixth but went well over the pot. Patrick's next attempt subbed under the sixth but left it at an awkward angle. Matthew attempted this trying to “correct” for the likely deviation and amazingly went in – a protracted remainder of the game left the final result Matthew 26 Patrick 23.

This was quite a high tempo, high quality game with as far as I can recall no shot judges, umpiring or clock stopping, although Harley would have done so admirably.

I believe the potting and bringing in standard was fairly high and I expect Patrick will be a World Singles contender pretty soon.

Barrie	5	2	4	7*	1*	3	1*	23
Rose	2	5	3	0*	6*	4	6*	26

Jubilee: Hunt vs Driscoll

Tim's House, 1st April 2023

Patrick Driscoll

Blue / Red won all games, triumphing 27.5 - 7.5

1. Tim made 4 doubletones of his own winks right next to where Patrick had brought in. Controlling post-pub crawl hand tremor was Patrick's main challenge.

2. Slightly better, very potty-threat bring in but no-one really went for it. Squops got taken and Patrick came into Tim's area. After failing to lunch two of his own winks, Tim lunched a Patrick green and red helped consolidate.

3. Patrick potted two reds early on and then went for unorthodox tactic of trying to defend an area of singletons, which paid off when some nice pile shots created a quadruplet on of greens.

4. Blue and red had to stop a green pot-out. Then green and yellow sort of had to come out to Tim's area in rounds. Blue was rampant and did enough to win. Green, finishing rounds, was sitting on a 3-4 loss but tried to pot off a red to get a 4.5-2.5 win. He missed, costing half a point.

5. Patrick, having blue and red, naturally won, since those colours were better all day. Actually, Patrick probably only missed one squop in a fast-paced squopping game. Tim subbed some winks while trying to rescue the match rather than settling for a 3-4 loss and ended up giving away a quintuplet on.

Well done to Patrick for some good squopping all day; well done Tim for his excellent hospitality. It is a shame he isn't still champion so we can't all go and challenge him all the time. The ETwA chairman, being notified of the result, issued a challenge for the trophy within a minute of the match outcome.

Hunt	1	6	2	4½	1	14½
Driscoll	6	1	5	2½	6	20½

World Singles 74: Rose vs Lockwood

Downing College, 21st April 2023

Matthew Rose

Having also unexpectedly found myself with another World Singles match I did not expect I had to reorganise some work to be available. I will admit this was not likely to be, on paper, the same type of match as against Patrick, after a somewhat challenging game in the Singles final the previous year.

Anyway, handshakes and pleasantries and Harley's set up in a new ground floor room in Downing enabled us to start pleasingly early in the afternoon.

The first game was one where Matthew was slightly more aggressive and looked like getting 5 or 6 but Dave broke a pile close to rounds and the potting was not stellar from either player, with Matthew retaining a small advantage with 4-3.



The second game was not dissimilar – going into rounds Matthew decided to put one colour early to apply pressure and was likely to get first place – Dave missed in round 5 and Matthew was able to earn an extra half so the running total was Matthew 8.5 Dave 5.5.

The third game Matthew brought in well and had an opportunity to pot out – 5 in well and the sixth was missed a few times before disappearing into the pot and Matthew should have got 7 as Dave's winks were far away but eventually scraped a 6. Matthew 14.5 Dave 6.5.

The fourth game was more convincing and Matthew was always ahead, again choosing to pot early and was always likely to get first place, Dave missed a key wink in round 5 allowing Matthew the chance for an extra half and get 5.5 to make the score Matthew 20 Dave 8.

The fifth game was similar with Matthew slightly up with one colour most of the game – Dave potted better in this to get second and third so would extend this beyond 5 games. Matthew 24 Dave 11.



The sixth game was a strange one as it was one of the first Dave played more aggressively as he needed two sevens. The pot threat was repelled but Dave remained ahead not trying to free one colour seemingly accepting the outcome and potting a number from the edges and being more pumped up. However it was only enough for a 5 and leaving the final score Matthew 26 Dave 16.

In retrospect this was not as challenging as I expected – not too many umpiring issues and not too long a match – thanks to Harley for staying around though. The quality was not great – rounds potting very average and my impression was Dave was keen to play the challenge he had not had in Singles for some time but did not seem to have the belief he could win. I expect he could have made it much closer. Anyway I was pleased to retain a World Singles having lost previous defences, and expect a future game against Patrick will be way more difficult.

Rose	4	4 ½	6*	5 ½	4	2	26
Lockwood	3	2 ½	1*	1 ½	3	5	16



Jubilee: Driscoll vs Brown

Patrick's House, ???¹

Patrick Driscoll

Ed was reaching the end of his stay in Cambridge, having completed (or at least reached the end of) his veterinary qualification. Through a remarkable feat of planning, endurance, and bloody-mindedness, Ed had eaten and drunk precisely all his money, leaving himself with just enough for a half pint of beer in the Queen Edith about a day before. Ed relieved the Vet School of some kind of dodgy alcohol, which he brought along.

Not having been notified of Ed's precarious financial and gastronomic situation, Patrick did not provide food. Beer, wine, whisky, etc., was of course pressed on the guest before, during, and after the winks. I believe the cheese (Ed's only sustenance during the last 48 hours in Cambridge) was well received.

The winks was somewhat one-sided. Ed's chief success was in shaming Patrick into trying to (and succeeding in) potting out when he had squopped Ed up with 11 free turns in the last game. Patrick would have been prepared to sit on the squop up for the win had his conscience not been pushed.

Happily, Ed has been seen subsequently, which suggests that either his previous economic position has improved or that he is a competent forager.

¹From the Editor: It seems that neither participant saw fit to inform the Secretary of this match, as I only have Patrick's (nearly illegible) handwritten notes as 'proof' that this challenge took place. If either participant has the date and scores to hand, I advise passing this information on to the Secretary so that it can be duly recorded. As we all know, if it isn't on the website then it didn't happen, so I encourage you all to treat this as a fever dream of Patrick's until further notice. I have used contextual clues to determine that this fever dream likely belongs here chronologically.

Jubilee: Driscoll vs Jones

Patrick's House, 25th June 2023

Patrick Driscoll

Harley arrived at Patrick's house, which was eventually complete, having experienced nearly endless renovation.

The Driscoll Tiddlywinks Arena©, untouched by the renovations, was the venue. The Driscoll cats were standoffish.

To avoid tension-based illnesses, we will dispense with tension. Patrick won in five games. The first game involved some disappointment for Harley as a plausible situation deteriorated in rounds; the second was one of those disasters for the courageous challenger as everything went awry.

Perhaps hubris, or maybe it was hippopotomonstrosesquippedaliophobia, got in Sick Boy's way, as after a beer each, Harley merited an excellent comeback. Game three saw Patrick crumble in rounds, unable to pot all game; the fourth was a squopping whitewash in Harley's favour, and the contestants came to the finale with little between them. Harley trailed by just one point. Harley didn't try to do anything silly, but lost quite comfortably.

The weather was delightful so we sat around and drank some more beer.

Driscoll	6	4 $\frac{2}{3}$	1 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	5 $\frac{1}{2}$	18$\frac{2}{3}$
Jones	1	3 $\frac{1}{3}$	5 $\frac{1}{2}$	6	1 $\frac{1}{2}$	16$\frac{1}{3}$

Occasional Articles

On Geoff

Andrew Garrard

He will, of course, be sorely missed; I had the honour of partnering him in the team The Late, which in retrospect was unfortunate, in winning the 2018 Teams of Four (we also won in 2013, for which I recall the challenge of staging a photogenic image of the winners for a press release). I was pleased to nominate him for CUTwC's "Uri Gellar Spoon for bending the rules" at the AGM, after the observation that he managed to rise two places in the World Rankings over the weekend of the 2022 Cambridge Open despite having passed away in April 2019; I'm sure he would have been proud to have won it.

My most infamous recollection involved a tournament in Kidlington (likely a Wessex Trophy, although it might have been the 2013 Fours) in which Geoff had to blow a large pile, which he attempted to do with a tiny squidger despite my protestations that he should use a large one. It didn't work, and I perhaps foolishly suggested that he take my advice next time, to which he responded by punching me on the chin. Admittedly very lightly - I was much more offended than hurt, and clearly he'd reconsidered mid-swing. (It may have been the same event that chipped my - currently missing - original 1992 squidger, so it was not a good day.) Despite this, I remained fond of him, and treated it as a great gift of an anecdote (possibly matched only by Anne's one about being gifted a second-hand dildo).

The first time I really remember Geoff was in a game in the Bowett room, after a very heavy lunchtime (which may have meant it was a Cambridge Open, but possibly not). He and his partner (possibly Bacony Jim?) were visibly sozzled, and I assumed this gave me a chance to do better than my rating would suggest and beat them. It did not.

I should also pass on, since he can no longer do so himself, that Charles had many good things to say about Geoff and his donations to charity at London Opens. Geoff was tolerant, except on that one occasion, good-humoured, funny, and an institution whose loss will be felt for a long time. He remains a Famous Winker, and I hope future generations will learn of him.



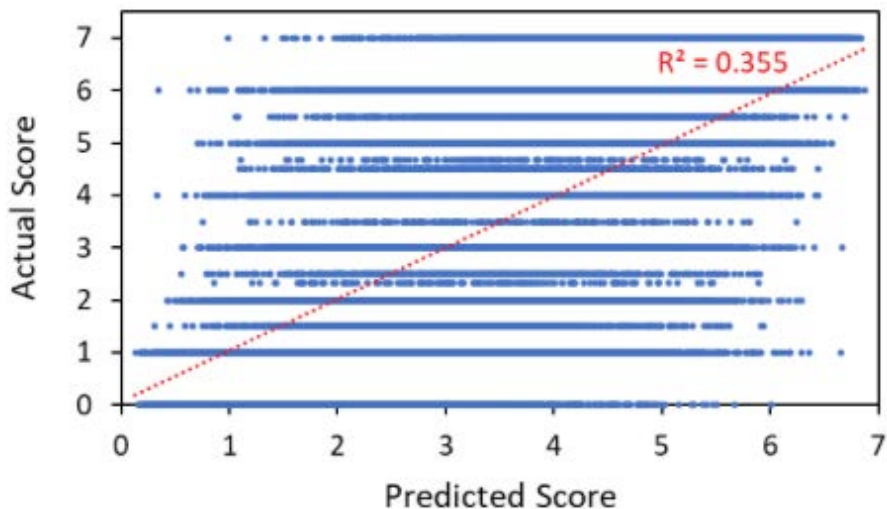
Predictive Capability of Ratings

Patrick Barrie

Ratings can help encourage people to practise and improve their standard of play. They can help encourage newcomers to play in a national tournament. They can help encourage people to play at least once a year. They can be useful in seeding players and setting handicaps for tournaments. People find them interesting as an objective measure of winks ability, albeit I am well aware of the limitations in the calculation method.

The program uses the difference in rating between players for singles, or the difference in average rating for pairs, to predict the game score. How well does it do?

The Figure shows a plot of actual score against predicted score using the current ratings algorithm for 21503 games that go back to 1985. The coefficient of determination is 0.355. The average absolute deviation between actual and predicted game score is 1.452, and the root mean square error is 1.762. Without a predictive model, the distribution of game scores would give an average absolute deviation of 1.996 and a root mean square error of 2.194.



The current ratings algorithm uses the arithmetic mean for the average rating of a pair. But is this the best average to use? Would you expect a partnership with player ratings of 1800 & 1800 to perform the same over the course of many games as a partnership with player ratings of 2100 & 1500? Some people have suggested that a partnership of two medium-strength players might outplay a strong-weak pairing because they can strategically gang up on the stronger player.

For that reason I have considered using the geometric mean (the square root of the product) as the average rating for a pair. In that case the predicted average game score would be 3.63 – 3.37 for the scenario described in the previous paragraph. Comparing predicted scores using a geometric mean with actual scores for the 21503 games gave an average absolute deviation of 1.453, and a root mean square error of 1.763. Put simply, it did very slightly worse than the arithmetic mean. Therefore I won't be changing that part of the calculation method when I get around to updating the ratings program (which is now more than 20 years old...).

Note: for interest, the biggest ever game upset according to the ratings program was in the National Pairs in 2005: Patrick Driscoll & Anthony Horton (ratings 1844 & 1367) got a 7-0 win against Charles Relle & Alan Dean (ratings 2222 & 2181).

Poetry Corner

Despite me explicitly stating that I would be furious if I received poetic submissions in response to my essay competition prompts, two degenerates have decided to deliberately antagonise me. If anyone else dares to submit poetry in lieu of an essay then I will become so enraged that I will publish your poem in Winking World 105. Grrrr.

Andrew Garrard

T'was just last year my Ranting reached
The highest it's ever known.
Since then a precipitous fall has occurred
And my smugness has dropped like a stone.

I can't take a squop and I brundle my snooves,
My bring ins all land on the floor,
My Bristols are flat (though I never could gromp)
And now I can't pot any more.

Is it lack of sleep? Have I practiced too much?
Have my skills just fallen flat?
Has everyone's COVID-born rust fallen off?
Me? I blame the new CUTwC mat.

Sophie Brawn

There once was a winker named Sophie
Who wanted to win her first trophy.
But alas, the last hurdle
Was a wink that was nurdled
And it all ended in catastrophe.

Sophie and the Amazing Tripleton: A CUTwC Murder Mystery, by Sophie Brawn: Part 2

Katherine Drew

Four years later

“Hey, has anyone seen Ed lately?”

It was lunchtime at the Cambridge Open. We had just settled down at the Red Bull for some pizzas and drinking games when Molly had raised a very good question.

“Which one?” replied Stew. There was a pause.

“Either I suppose. I don’t think I’ve seen them in months.”

“Wait, don’t you guys remember?” Tash said. “They were both murdered four years ago after a CUTwC meeting!”

We looked at each other blankly.

“Seriously? Ed Brown was bludgeoned with the Paul Thorpe trophy in the Kathleen Lyttleton room and Ed Green was poisoned in the bar later that evening.”

“That explains why we’ve all been running around like Ed-less chickens!” exclaimed Rupert. Everyone else groaned. The memories were fuzzy, but they were starting to come back to me.

“Oh yeah, that was the same day I killed Charlotte to give my Cuppers team a better chance of winning!” I exclaimed. A sudden realisation dawned on the rest of the group and there were some exclamations of ‘of course’, ‘I remember now’ and ‘how on earth did we manage to forget about that’.

“How come you’re the only one who remembered all of that, Tash?” asked James.

“Well after the second Ed died you all got absolutely wasted, even Zach. He vomited so spectacularly that they had to completely refurbish Selwyn bar. He still gets nominated for the Anne Austin Memorial Scarf because of it.”

“I thought that was just a joke!” muttered Zach.

“I still couldn’t stand the taste of alcohol though, so I stayed sober,” continued Tash. “I kind of just assumed that we’d all agreed to never say anything about that night ever again.”

“Well why aren’t we getting on with it? Might as well solve those murders now that the exact same group is all conveniently right here,” said Harley.

My brain started to whirl and fill with detectively thoughts.

“Right then, what can you all remember from that night?”

There was a brief silence as everyone tried (and failed) to remember any kind of detail from that night. It looked like Tash was our only hope.

“Just before the second Ed died, he looked right at Patrick and said ‘you’. Actually, I think he choked it rather than said it, but that seems pretty significant right?”

Aha! I was overcome by a wave of detectivity. It was all coming together.

“Ok, so that seems pretty conclusive. Patrick killed the Eds. Can we play liar dice now?” Kat’s inane chatter interrupted my state of detectivation and I groaned inwardly and outwardly.

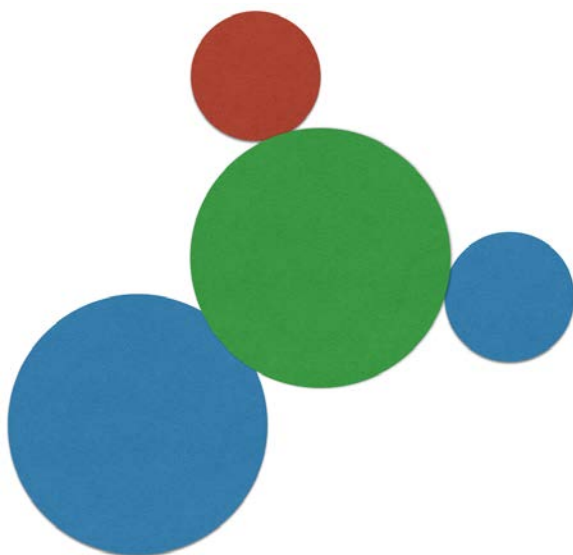
“For God’s sake Kat, have you never read a murder mystery before? Obviously it isn’t Patrick because he’s clearly the most obvious suspect, and the most obvious suspect is never the murderer.” My logic was flawless. I was left with just eight suspects, but I knew that narrowing it down further wouldn’t be as easy. I needed evidence. Or failing that, more infallible logic.

We need to get back to the scene of the crime,” I said. Unfortunately Patrick had just bought twelve pints, so we downed them as quickly as possible before heading towards Selwyn. The bar wasn’t open yet, but we managed to get the keys to let us into the Kathleen Lyttleton room. Thankfully the dead bodies had been removed, but otherwise everything had conveniently and unexplainedly been left untouched since that fateful night.

“Gosh, isn’t that an amazing tripleton?” gushed Molly.

Ah yes. The tripleton. For the past four years I had been plagued day and night by inexplicable visions of four circles, barely overlapping, and now it was clear why. Though alcohol had managed to rid me of most of my memories of that night, the image of that amazing tripleton had been burnt into my brain forever. Now, finally, I had the chance to solve the greatest mystery that had ever involved CUTwC: who had squopped that tripleton?

“Right then, let’s get down to business. We all need to line up and see who can squop that tripleton from three inches.” Everyone looked at me blankly.



The eponymous tripleton

Kat broke the silence. “Umm, what about the murder though?”

I rolled my eyes. “I was in the kitchen when Ed was murdered. When I went in there to kill Charlotte, the tripleton was unsquopped. When I came out, Ed was dead and the tripleton was squopped, so clearly whoever killed Ed must have squopped the tripleton at the same time, and not everyone here has the ability to make that shot.” I looked at Kat pointedly.

“But your plan doesn’t even make any sense! It’s been four years since this happened and our winking abilities have dramatically changed since then! And also getting a shot once doesn’t mean that you’ll get it every time! Plus, the murderer could just deliberately miss the squop to look innocent!”

“Oh shut up Kat, my plan is flawless and everyone else agrees.” Everyone nodded vigorously. “But if you want some reassurance, why don’t you go first? You were the only one to actually attempt the shot last time so if you miss in exactly the same way then we’ll know that my plan is brilliant.” Fool proof. “As for the murderer deliberately missing their shot, we’re clearly all a very honourable group of people and though one of us is a murderer, I’m confident that that person wouldn’t stoop so low as to downplay their winking ability.”

Kat shrugged. “I can’t argue with that I suppose. Alright, I’ll go first.”

With careful precision, Zach picked up the large green wink and placed it three inches away from the tripleton. Kat picked up her squidger. She sized up the task in front of her, bent over the table, and started to line up the shot. Tensions were running high. She confidently stroked her squidger down the length of the wink, and released. No one was surprised when she missed the shot, but we all gasped when we saw where the wink landed. No one could doubt the logic in my plan, for the wink had landed in the precise spot it had done the last time Kat had attempted the shot.

“Well I’m convinced, Sophie’s plan is clearly genius. Let’s go!” said Patrick enthusiastically.

Once more, we set up the green wink. Molly was the next one to give it a go. She was close, squopping the two blue winks, but the little red wink evaded her. One by one, Stew, Tash, Rupert, James, and Zach took their turn at the shot, but all failed. Zach's shot was particularly spectacular; somehow he managed to bounce off the potential tripleton and into the pot. But now just Harley and Patrick were left.

"After you," said Patrick.

Harley spent some time looking at the shot. He inspected his squidger, then gave it a quick polish on his shirt. Everyone was watching with bated breath. Finally, after what felt like an eternity, he put his squidger in position, and then lined up the shot. The green wink released. We all gathered round, desperate to see if he had done it. It looked good. Could it be?

"I'm not sure he's on the little blue," James said.

"It looks like he is from this angle," responded Stew.

"We're going to need some light. And an umpire," said Zach. "I think it should be you, Sophie."

Three phones with their torches on were thrust at me. I took one and shone it over the pile. There! Clearly the green wink was just over the small blue. Confidently I strode round to where James had been standing to take a cursory glance from the other side of the mat. What I saw made my heart sink. A gap so large you could drive a bus through it. I knelt down and adjusted the torch. I examined that tripleton from every possible angle, and eventually came to a conclusion. I stood up and turned the torch off. Everyone else looked at me expectantly.

"The little blue is free." I sighed. It was close, but not good enough. Harley managed to look both relieved and disappointed simultaneously.

That just left Patrick then. He spent no time faffing around, and played the shot as swiftly as he would've played a one-millimetre squop. There was a stunned silence. No umpire was needed. The tripleton was squopped.

To be continued

*Thanks to Alex Fairclough for the cover photo
(technically taken at one of last year's
tournaments, but oh well) Harley Jones for the
pictures from World Singles 74, and to Andrew
Garrard for the rest of the photos*

