



# Winking World 90

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This issue of Winking World was edited by Matt Fayers. Please send him any articles and pictures for the next issue.

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Cover photo (courtesy of Andrew Garrard): Competitive 'winks in Australia! Timmy finds it all a bit confusing, but in the background Steph is underwhelmed.
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## Editorial

*Matt Fayers*

Welcome to Winking World. As some of you have noticed, I'm now back in the UK, so I don't have to thank Andrew for printing and distributing WW. However, Andrew's freedom has resulted in his taking lots of exciting photos and writing lots of articles. Thanks, Andrew.

Since the last issue of WW, 'winks has been played in some new places (or at least, places where it hasn't been played for a very long time): Perth, Redondo Beach and York. In between Andrew's navel-gazing articles, you can find out about these events, as well as the more usual tournaments. And, as if that weren't exciting enough, there's a competition! Enjoy.



## Jubilee Trophy I

5th February 2008, Birmingham

*Tim Hunt*

Tim Hunt	6	6	6	18
Ben Fairbairn	1	1	1	3

I happened to be in Birmingham to meet a mathematician called Chris Sangwin who had written some cool software called STACK (<http://stack.bham.ac.uk/>) which the Open University wanted to use. Since Ben works in the same department as Chris, it seemed silly not to arrange a Jubilee match, so I talked Ben into challenging me.

I must compliment Ben on his hospitality. Not only had he found a bar to play in with nice beer and an interested audience. He also took me out afterwards for a curry with a group of maths Ph.D. students. That is an experience I have not had for several years now, and I found it both nostalgic, and faintly scary.

The scores do not really do Ben credit. He made me work very hard, and was unfortunate to finish with only three points. We adjourned between Games 1 and 2 to play a pairs game including two of the spectators.



## Competition: name the shot

*The Editor*

It's competition time in WW! You could win an as yet unspecified prize! Read on.

There is a strong heritage in tiddlywinks of having peculiar names for particular shots: the Good shot, the Bristol, the John Lennon Memorial Shot, and so on. And the lexicon was expanded fairly recently, with the shot previously referred to as a 'knock-off and squop' being Christened the Cracker. I hope we're all using this name (or at least, those of us capable of playing one). But there is a very common shot (more common than the Cracker, anyway) which is apparently unnamed: specifically, the inadvertent potting of a wink when you're trying to send it over the pot. I'm grateful to Bob Henninge for remarking on the anonymity of this shot (just after playing it during our NATwA Singles semi-final) and inspiring this competition.

Can you think of a name for this shot? Is there an old name for it which has fallen into disuse? I'll be giving a prize to the person who comes up with the best name for this shot. Then the name will fail to catch on, and we'll all forget about it. Send your entries to me by some sensible means before some suitable deadline.

## The Nizzle Pizzles

26th–27th April 2008, Cambridge

*Bizzle Fizzle*

The 2008 National Pairs were held in the now traditional venue of the Selwyn Diamond on the 'winkend of April 26th and 27th.

The first day began unusually early. The Bury St. Edmunds beer festival had forced the Tournament Organiser, an early bird at the best of times, to stay with a friend on the other side of town, ensuring that he was up even earlier than usual. Consequently Dr Boondock signed out the key and was setting up the room as early as 8:30 in the morning. After an hour and a half of wrestling with the window blinds and a Varsity Sudoku, a second winker finally arrived. It turned out that several pairings had already been agreed upon and that we might even have enough for a tournament.

Eventually an even number of loners arrived, producing a pleasing outcome of seven pairs. It was initially agreed to play eight rounds on the first day and six on the second, to give drivers ample get away time. Like all the best laid 'winking plans, of course, this completely went to pot. The weather on the Saturday was gorgeous and so Rupert, Ed and Sarah spent much of the day sitting on the grass outside providing winkers who had byes with much-needed conversation. This was largely concerned with the contents of WW89's crossword and its analysis of Radio Four's take on the vernacular of the youth of today. (It's amazing how entertaining a word becomes when you put 'izzle' on the end of it.) The ample supply of Rosé wine wasn't exactly unpopular either. Naturally this encouraged others to enjoy the sunshine too, leading to an abandoning of the day's play after just seven rounds.

What about the tiddlywinks? Well, the games I personally played in included an undeserved 7–0 against Steve Phillips and Bob Wilkinson, though I got my come-uppance when Charles Relle and Alan Dean engineered a beautiful pot-out against myself and Andrew Garrard. Elsewhere, Patrick Barrie failed to follow Matty Rose in after squopping up and potting out against John Haslegrave and DBW. Meanwhile, the training of future stars began in earnest with CJ Barrie and Christine Barrie playing a friendly game of proper winks against Steve Phillips playing singles and losing 5–2.

By the end of the day the score sheet looked somewhat different from the previous day's seeding: not a single pair remained in the same position.

Having enjoyed lunch in the Hat & Feathers earlier that day, it was decided that ETwA congress, beer and food was to be taken outside the Red Bull. A fun evening was had by all.

The following day's play began at 9:30 in the traditional manner, with Andrew Garrard arriving late forcing me to play much of my first game as a singles game.

	Pair	Opponent							Total						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
1	Patrick Barrie & Matthew Rose	—	3	6	5½	6	5	4	5	6	6	5	6	3	60½
2	Alan Dean & Charles Relle	4	1	—	7	0	2	4	4	7	5	6	7	5	54
3	Patrick Driscoll & Alan Harper	1½	1	0	7	—	6	4	4	3	2	4	4	6	42½
4	Stew Sage & Geoff Thorpe	2	3	5	3	1	3	—	2½	3½	4	2	4	5	38½
5	David Bradley-W. & John Haslegrave	2	1	0	2	4	5	4½	3½	—	3	4½	3	1	33⅓
6	Ben Fairbairn & Andrew Garrard	1	2	1	0	3	3	3	5	4	2½	—	7	1	32½
7	Steve Phillips & Bob Wilkinson	1	4	2	1	1	3	2	2	4	6	0	6	—	32

*Andrew Garrard*

Sunday's tiddlywinks saw Alan Harper's and Patrick Driscoll's 'all or nothing' philosophy in their games against Charles Relle and Alan Dean bearing fruit. This had backfired on the first day with Doccy H missing his sixth pot attempt. This time, however, they got all their winks in, even when Harper the Phatter missed his sixth pot attempt. Indeed, Sick Boy casually potted five of his winks before Hard Alan completed the pot-out.

Later that day the Tournament Organiser, in an extraordinary abuse of power, had managed to engineer a pot-out against Stew in the round before his bye, enabling him to dash to the Hat & Feathers for a few rounds of the Lisa Bendall Game. Well, I didn't vote for him . . . .

Despite the previous day's play permuting all the pairs' positions, the 2007 winners rose to the top of the score sheet to retain the trophy. In a (sadly) increasingly novel turn of events, the actual trophy had actually been brought to the actual tournament and was actually presented to the actual winners. Not that I'm bitter about the singles plate or anything . . . .



## Jubilee Trophy II

26th May 2008, Milton Keynes

*Tim Hunt*

Tim Hunt	6	3	4	4	6	23
Andrew Garrard	1	4	3	3	1	12

Andrew arrived stunningly late as usual. To be fair, this was mostly a result of the bank holiday weather disrupting the M25 beyond any reasonable expectation. However, he arrived eventually and a very nice chilli was eaten for lunch, if I do say so myself.

So then we got down to business. I think we were both playing quite well, although Andrew was suffering with a headache.

I felt that in the first game, Andrew came to me, and I just had to squop him, although it required luck in rounds for me to get the full 6. It was my turn to squander points in rounds in the second game by being unable to pot. The next two games had tricky play in rounds too, and I was very lucky to win them both due to late swings.

After four games it was 17–11, and Andrew was in the nightmare ‘must win 7–0’ situation, at which point you cannot play sensible winks, and so normally end up losing 6–1. Therefore, the final score is not a true reflection. He did prevent me from potting out after I had got the squop-up though.

Being a sad man, I also tracked the scores for the squidge-off winner in each game (me for all except the first game) and dominant corners (me for the first game, then alternating). So I can report that dominant corners won 23–12, and the squidge-off winner won 18–17.



## The Pirbright Scarecrow Festival

14th June 2008, Pirbright

*Alan Dean*

Early in June an unusual request arrived to ETwA in an email from Alex Freeman, a resident of the village of Pirbright in Surrey. She explained that their annual village Scarecrow Festival was to be held in a little over a week’s time, that the theme this year was to be ‘sports personalities’; she and her family had decided to do something ‘a little unusual’, and she wondered whether we would be so kind as to provide



Andrew Garrard

tiddlywinks T-shirts and counters for the occasion. Intrigued by this, after sending off the requested materials, I made a search on the net and found a Surrey County Council site advertising the event, containing the sentence 'Climb on army tanks, craft stalls, cream teas and BBQ'. I sent that off to *The News Quiz*, but don't think it was used.

Andrew Garrard lives ten miles north of Pirbright, so I called him to see if he was free on the day of the event. He was, so we arranged with Alex that we would attend the festival and use the 'winking scarecrow as an excuse to publicise the game. Most of the thirty leaflets we produced for the day were taken away by visitors, so something may come of it.

The tug-of-war competition took place alongside the scarecrow location and, when it was over, I persuaded the victorious army team to pose for photos flicking winks with me and the scarecrow. Apart from Andrew, quite a number of others took pictures, including a photographer from a local paper.

Afterwards I had dinner with Andrew and Steph and played 'winks with Andrew, until shortly before 9pm. Then I went home to get some sleep before the 5:30 am departure from work the next morning of the minibus which transported myself and twelve fellow cyclists to Clapham Common to join the other 27,000 for the start of the London to Brighton Bike Ride, in aid of the British Heart Foundation. Altogether, it was a rather unusual weekend!

## The Wessex Trophy

5th–6th July 2008, York

*Ben Fairbairn*

As part of DBW's ongoing efforts to establish 'winks in the University of York, the Wessex trophy was contested for the first time in a long while as part of an open tournament.

This was an extremely jolly winkend enjoyed by everyone who attended. The night before had seen mass confusion about which pub with the word 'Swan' in its name we were actually meeting in (it turned out to be 'The Swan') followed by gallons of melted salt in a curry house.

The following day the 'winks began in earnest with a ludicrously early start time of 11 a.m. and the setting-up of the somewhat cumbersome room.

A few words on the room: having seen a wide variety of 'winks venues now I have to say that this room was among the worst I've ever encountered. There was very little electric lighting, meaning that we had to rely largely on poor natural lighting in overcast weather. There was limited space for the actual tables, which was not helped by pillars in the middle of the room and beams which several people banged their heads on. We even had a table in a corner where the floor in no way resembled a level surface (there must be a rules rant about uphill winking somewhere).

To be fair, the venue as a whole was outstanding. Large quantities of reasonably-priced high quality beer, tea, cake and even paninis were all readily available on site. Whilst the tables were not so good for the 'winks they were almost perfect



*Rick Tucker*



Rick Tucker

for lunchtime Pigs sessions. The extremely generous staff were more than happy to accommodate our every need ('we've never opened this early on a Sunday before'), even to the point of promising that additional lighting will be provided for next year's tournament. The parsnip-flavoured crisps weren't bad either. Not to mention the prime location with respect to high-quality local pubs. If you're ever in York I highly recommend a having a pint or two in the Pivo café bar.

So, with Sarah Knight and DBW nominated captains of the two teams, the 'winks commenced. DBW's team took an early lead, which varied in size but nonetheless remained throughout the weekend. Despite the threat of a SEPTIC 7-0 in one of the first games there was no champagne until the very end with a pot-out from Stew (I think). Saturday evening saw the mass confusion continue with a general inability to recognise the figure in the painting in the beer garden of the Guy Fawkes Hotel (hint: the building at the back of the garden was Guy Fawkes Cottage). Despite Rick Tucker's wonderful photographic record of the weekend an image of the painting appears to have slipped through.

I should probably say something about the excellent Cornish pasty shop that provided Sunday lunch at this point. It was good.

The Cambridge-Open-style drop-in-drop-out format saw a variety of winkers at a various stages throughout the winking. This enabled interested parties to see York Minster, catch trains, have lie-ins etc, and so was unsurprisingly attractive to novices. Consequently there was a pleasing turnout of several Yorkists, some increasingly familiar, some new, making me think that the future of York winks is actually quite healthy. Three cheers for DBW!

## Tales of the unexpected (tish-boom)

or

### Seeing it coming

*Andrew Garrard*

When I was a novice (counting by experience rather than ability, before anyone raises the issue of my continued bunnyhood), I was often surprised by the shots that my opponents would see to play. Most freshers would be surprised by the first Bristols they see (thank you, mind out of the gutter please) and I remember a major factor in the first thrashing Larry gave me being that he had a lot more shots in his repertoire. Of course, he may have been toying with me.

The first instinct when seeing new shots is to learn how to play them, to gain the same advantage one's opponent did. While this approach has its benefits, I've recently realised that my game has improved far more as a consequence of knowing what shots to defend against than it has from learning to play these shots.

Many games against Charles, when I lived in Abbey Wood, taught me to Bristol more effectively – but more than that, they taught me to be very wary of any two winks that were stacked up in an innocent way. With more experience, I got to learn which winks Charles actually could Bristol (and which piles he could Bristol over), and the much smaller set of situations in which I could replicate the shot. I will probably never be as good at Bristols as Charles is, but knowing to be wary of them gives me an advantage, and seeing Bristols where others don't can also be a good thing. (Again, gutter . . .)

Alan Dean, meanwhile, has taught me to be nervous of any combination of winks that have colour-order possibilities. Novices quickly learn the order in which to take flat shots, but Alan is good at spotting a rearrangement of winks that produces defenders for an otherwise undefended pile – and particularly in chipping one colour of opponent onto another in order to produce a colour-order doubleton with a guard. I may occasionally use the same tactics myself (in my game in the Singles against Larry, I surprised him both with an obscure colour-order rearrangement and a long strategic Bristol – not that they did me much good), but looking carefully before making assumptions about a pile means I don't get quite so many games suddenly turn against me.

I flatter myself by thinking that I can occasionally have the same unpredictability with my specialisation in manoeuvring piles – I would sooner move four winks a couple of millimetres than go for a five-centimetre squop, and I think I'm unusual in this respect. Of course, it's related to my tendency to run out of guards, so there may be a very good reason that other people don't do this.

The corollary to knowing which shots are possible is knowing how easy shots may

be to play. Knowing that a shot is easy for you doesn't necessarily mean it will be easy for an opponent, or vice-versa. Once I first saw Charles pot a wink of a squop facing away from the pot, from two feet, I realised that it was no longer safe to assume that such things were as impossible as I would find them. Phil Carmody had been practising a reverse pot-off a pile; I find phone-card shots much easier than some experienced opponents seem to, and some opponents are much better at long shots than others (Phil Scarrott springs inexorably to mind).

The flip side of the argument of being ready to see shots coming is that there are benefits in surprising your opponent. Even when there are easier or tactically better shots to play, it can sometimes be better to play something unexpected just to disturb your opponent's strategy. The simplest example of this is attacking a less-important pile that's relatively undefended because all the defenders are concentrating on a more valuable pile.

Even when one is an expert in one style of unusual shot, this leads to its own style of predictability – everyone knows to be wary of Charles's scary Bristols (oh no, not again. . .) – so it's worth having multiple tricks up one's sleeve. Having it known that you can do these means they become less necessary – opponents who are worrying about you playing a Bristol over a pile can pay less attention to a nearby simple squop. There's a psychological side to this too: even if you don't always get preposterous shots, the fact that you're going for them may seed the feeling in your opponent that you would expect a high success rate. If you're sufficiently wary of the failure modes, getting a few long shots can throw your opponent off his stride. It's a reason (beyond the obvious one) why starting a pot-out with the one on the edge of the mat can be advantageous.

While unusual shots make the game more interesting, they have the disadvantage that they'll slow the game down. Accounting for more obscure possibilities means that the thinking time for each shot inherently has to increase – and in the tight games than Alan and I have had recently, it's been noticeable that some decisions have taken a while. As we each get used to the possibilities, familiarity will speed things up again – but since I'm arguing here that one should keep one's opponent out of his comfort zone, there's always going to be some thinking time required. One reason I've always felt that I inspire slow play in others (as well as being a slow player myself) is that when I'm being unpredictable, it means you can't plan several shots ahead, and each shot decision can only be made after the previous shot has been played. Even if more obscure shots – and more interesting games – are kept out of national tournaments, just knowing that the possibility is there and having to compensate for it will delay the making of shot choices.

I'm not known for my reliability at simple shots. I simply don't get the experience

on enough different kinds of mat, which means that – at least under the influence of winks fatigue – I’ll always be able to miss the trivial one-inch squop. So I’d like to see games containing more weirdness – and see people trialling more new shots. I’m personally trying to get the hang of the click-Good (using the lower wink of a squop next to the pile to blow the pile, preferably without sending the upper wink off – one benefit being that you can Good harder, because it doesn’t matter so much if you send your opponent’s wink off). I’ve mention Phil Carmody’s backwards potting. I keep seeing the chance for what’s probably best described as an indirect John Lennon (have we had a Yoko yet?) – playing two winks which start under a third in such a way that they travel in opposite directions and both take a squop; I may need to learn to play this with a squidger rotating around its vertical axis. The game needs more experts in lunching and in pile flips (now we’re in the new millennium) – valuable shots that I suspect would be played more if someone has a higher level of reliability with them.

The skill that I’m really waiting for someone to master is the control of rolling winks, so that winks can be positioned like lawn bowls. Even a limited amount of control would be very useful in getting a blinded wink to a position on the far side of the pot. I suggest a ‘dey see me rollin’, dey hatin’ victory dance for whoever gets the hang of this first.

Let’s get away from simple pots and squops. The weird stuff is far more interesting for spectators, and if we move to playing shots that everyone’s bad at, I’ll have much more of chance. The trick is plausible deniability – going for something preposterous and missing nearby can always be passed off as a snoove (then your opponents think you always get the weird shots); what I like to call the ‘never say anything more specific than “watch this!”’ school of shot announcement. Or you could just accept that sometimes you’re going to look a bit of a muppet.



## **NATwA Singles**

2nd–3rd August 2008, Washington

*Alan Dean, using contributions from Larry Kahn and Matt Fayers*

The NATwA Singles took place on August 2nd and 3rd at the home of Cathy Furlong and Larry Kahn in the suburbs of Washington DC. The venue was ideal, with good lighting, sturdy full-sized tables without cracks, robust air conditioning and de-humidifying systems, and excellent lasagne pre-prepared by Cathy for those of us in residence. Beforehand there was much discussion of the tournament format to be employed, and it was finally decided to be two divisions with the top two from

each division playing three-game semi-finals leading to a three-game final. Everyone initially played those from the other group, then the top four from each group played amongst themselves, with points carried over from the first phase. At this point all previous scores were to be discounted, and a random draw made for the semi-final pairings. There were two Britons this time: Matt was already in the States, and Alan crossed the Pond again for the event. With Larry, Dave and Bob playing, this meant there were five strong contenders, and then a significant ratings gap between the fifth and sixth seeds. With very little difference in strength between Dave, Alan and Bob, it was decided to place the fifth seed, Bob, on the toss of a coin. He was placed in Group A with Larry and Alan, ensuring an easy first day for Matt and Dave, and a tough one for Alan and Bob, and also, as it turned out, for Larry.

## Qualifying

Bob and Matt played in the first round. Having gone off with red, and facing a green pot-out threat, Bob was coerced into a pot-five-and-bring-in strategy with blue. The pots went in, but Matt managed to squop the sixth wink, and was able to convert for 7-0. A couple of rounds later Matt went for an early pot-out against Alan, and missed the sixth twice, but Alan failed to take the squop, and Matt completed the pot-out at the third attempt. Aaron played a really good game against Matt, which was close throughout, but a tactical error in rounds by Aaron left him with too much to do, and Matt was able to capitalise on this to get a 6. Larry v Matt was a tight squopping game, and in the end the result was determined by potting in round five, which Matt achieved but Larry didn't. Both Bob and Alan got good solid 5s in their matches against Dave. In fact Bob played very solidly throughout. His approach shots were particularly good, and he commented that perhaps he ought to not practise more often: he had not played since the previous NATwA Singles and had consequently dropped out of the published ratings. Alan had one bad game: playing Greg, he put his first bring-in on the floor and followed up with a rare display of incompetence. Greg played carefully to take full advantage of his good fortune, and would have won 6-1 but for Alan's excellent round five potting.

The order of play was somewhat fragmented, due to the fact that Jon was returning from a summer camp and Dave needed to collect him mid-morning. Also, Larry needed a time-out to take Cathy to a metro station. A consequence of this was that Matt played his Phase 2 match against Greg before it was certain that Greg would qualify. They play each other a lot but, as Greg commented, he still hasn't grasped that Matt can Bristol; as a consequence, an even game slipped away from him. Matt's game against Rick was played about two hours later because of other games being caught up, and that's Matt's excuse for what happened. In a reasonably even game,





he gave away a doubleton by straying too close to a mushroom, and, annoyed with himself, attacked the doubleton rather recklessly. Rick squopped very competently to finish him off. The Matt v Dave game was irrelevant, with both players certain to qualify for the semi-finals.

In Group B qualification was settled early, when Dave beat Rick. The order of play for phase two in Group A was determined by the toss of a coin. Alan played Larry first and defeated him 5–2, whilst Bob won 6–1 against Jon. In the next round Alan had to work hard against Jon, who squopped very well. It was a fast and furious game in which all the fighting was going on some distance from the pot. Going into rounds, Alan had the sense to get some of his winks into potting positions, and Jon didn't, so Alan won 6–1. Bob put up another solid performance against Larry and beat him 5½–1½.

Going into the final round Larry was now in third place in the group, three points behind Alan and three and a half behind Bob, so if he 'only' beat Jon 6–1 it would open up the possibility of a close result between Alan and Bob putting them both through at Larry's expense. The match between Bob and Alan was fairly close, but Bob always had the advantage following some really accurate approach shots. Alan was presented with a tough choice: to take an easy doubleton deep behind enemy lines and try to fight it out from a distance, or to run away to keep one colour free, but with Bob having a better position for a counter pot-out threat. Alan opted to stay and fight, and it almost worked. He re-mobilised his troops quickly, and was closing the gap as the game progressed. When news arrived from the other table that Larry had managed to pull off an audacious 7–0 against Jon, it looked most unlikely that Alan would get more than three, which was now not enough for a play-off game with Larry. The only way he could achieve first place involved making two ridiculous pots off piles in round five, and hoping that Bob then missed his pot. Alan considered just playing to maximise his score, but decided to try for the unlikely win and missed the first pot to give Bob a 5½–1½ win. Alan was thus out, despite having much better results than Dave. Of course, Dave might have performed better had there been any pressure on him to do so. There was no question that Bob was a worthy qualifier: he played superbly throughout the day.

The draw for the semi-finals was made on the Saturday evening; in the interests of causing a really dull discussion, Matt posed the question of who would be deemed top national in the event that he won; it was decided that this should be the losing finalist, but Matt suggested that this was very unfair on Bob (Matt's semi-final opponent), who would then miss out on being top national despite not having played any of his compatriots. Matt's comments fell on (sensibly) deaf ears, but perhaps the days of knockout tournaments are numbered. We can hope. . . .

## Semi-final 1

Matt Fayers	5	4	3	12
Bob Henninge	2	3	4	9

Matt was drawn to play Bob, and this is how Matt recalled the match:

The match was interesting, because of what I learnt about Bob's tactics. He is a player who grinds out points without worrying about winning games. Accordingly, he got 2, 3 and 4. One tactical aspect which surprised me more than once: he was behind but threatening to squop the largest pile; I attacked his wink, reasoning that if I missed he would squop the pile rather than the attacker, but in fact he took the attacker. This constipated the game and kept him a little behind, but somehow with sufficient winks to threaten. In Game 1 I played better, and had a shot for a squop-up at one point. But I missed this, and Bob, having already accidentally potted a blue, was able to extricate another. Poor potting by yellow made the game a two-colour race, and if green had missed a round five pot-off then Bob would have stolen the game.

In Game 2, some small-to-medium piles developed with me in charge, but Bob played very passively in the second half of the game; he had some pottable greens, and decided that he would pot them and do nothing else; one of these pots had to be in round five, since it was a pot-off. Neither red nor blue was able to do enough to get ahead of green if he succeeded with the potting (he did), but blue had enough to get level. In Game 3, the pile play was more involved. Again I had reasonable control, but Bob made a good pile break. I tried to keep my yellows uninvolved, knowing that both red and blue would need to equal or beat yellow for Bob to save the match. Red had quite a supply of pottable winks, but blue was struggling, especially when hassled by green. In round three I potted all the free yellows except one, which I brought closer to the pot, trying also to get it close enough to squop a blue-on-yellow. In the event I got it very close, and blue had the chance to Bristol onto it. Fortunately for me blue missed this shot, and meanwhile green got a tough tripleton to prevent red rescuing more winks. Ending round five with red, Bob had decided to play for pride rather than the match, although there was a not-completely-ludicrous (i.e. I would have gone for it) pot-out available.

## Semi-final 2

Larry Kahn	5	1	4½	4	14½
Dave Lockwood	2	6	2½	3	13½

The Larry v Dave semi-final was very close. It was level after three games, so an additional one was required. Larry provided these notes:

I took the first game 5–2 mostly by playing somewhat better in general. Then in the second game (double-pot type), I took the risk of letting Dave try a reasonable, though not certain, pot-out. It seemed like it was worth it given how inconsistently he was playing, but he ran six, and I had to pot well to get 1. The third game was a fairly even squopping game, but I was a bit ahead going into rounds. I could probably get a 4, and in the third round both of us saw that I might squeak a 4½ if I got everything to go my way. It did. Then the fourth game was also quite even going into rounds. Dave freed some of his winks to pot, but missed a rather easy one in the fifth so that I didn't myself have to make a fifth round pot for the 4. I remember making a number of really great shots during this match, but Dave also made some.

## The Final

Larry Kahn	1	6	4	11
Matt Fayers	6	1	3	10

This was the one most of us were expecting. Larry Kahn, the most successful player of all time, hoping to secure his twentieth US Singles title (not counting the times when the event was won by a foreigner and he was top national) against Matt Fayers, the UK number two rated player, and by a mile the strongest player never to have won a national singles title. A good match was expected, but what ensued was truly bizarre.

Those not involved in the match were still completing games in the Plate competition during the first game, so Matt's recollections are used to describe this one: 'It was a tight squopping game. Larry had the big pile, but it was never quite secure. When I got on, Larry missed the squop. Larry also came off a squop by attempting a too-ambitious Bristol, and then played a disastrous shot: with green I had chipped a blue onto another blue ready for yellow to mop up; Larry then chipped a red onto these blues, and yellow gratefully squopped. In short, Larry missed four shots in the

game, but they were the four most important shots.’ Matt was obviously relieved to come out of this first game so well, as he commented shortly afterwards that he though he got five more points from it than he deserved.

The next game will be remembered for a very long time, by both players and spectators. Early on Matt found himself with six very pottable winks of one colour, and went for the pot-out. The first three went in very cleanly. As the winning line drew closer Matt became rather tense and he slowed right down. The fourth went in. He asked if anyone had a beer to calm his nerves before the next shot. This was not forthcoming but he gritted his teeth and potted the fifth. Now just one ‘easy’ half-inch pot stood between him and his first national singles title, but he took a very long time over it. Watching it, one felt that the longer he took the less likely was he to get it. When he eventually played it hit the side of the cup, but Larry had no easy squop on it, and he missed it narrowly with both colours. Matt’s next pot attempt, from about five inches, hit the rim and rolled far, coming to rest close to the near edge of the mat. Larry quickly got down and played a superb squop on it with a large wink from a distance of around fourteen inches. It was assumed that Larry would pot out easily after this, but it took him some time to get set up. Going into round two, Larry had all six yellows in a circle round the pot at a perfect potting distance of about a couple of inches, with no enemy winks remotely near them, and his greens solidly defending the pile containing the sixth red. Larry missed the pot in round two, then again in round three, and again in round four! Two of the misses had hit the rim and rolled away to distances of about sixteen inches from the pot. In the final round Larry potted all five! Matt went a little paler and very quiet. Larry also managed to take third place in the game, for a 6–1 win to level the match with one game remaining. Larry’s notes on this one, written a few days later, included ‘If I had been watching that game, going into round five, I would have probably bet at least 100–1 that it wouldn’t end in a pot-out. Sometimes I think the Great White Wink pre-ordains these games and I’m just a puppet on a string. I’ve had more of this type of thing happen than I can count. Mostly I get the miraculous stuff to go my way, but there are certainly examples of total payback, like ETwA 2003.’

Game three was a close squopping match in which Larry appeared to have a slight lead for most of the time, and he held on for a 4–3 win to take the tournament. One really weird thing in this game was the pot attempt from Matt in rounds, which looked like it might settle on the rim: it wobbled both ways before falling into the cup, landing on edge, and bouncing straight out again! It seemed unlikely that this made any difference to the final result, but it added another bizarre twist to an amazing match.

Overall, it was a most exciting tournament. Congratulations to Larry on his

historic 20th NATwA Singles title, and commiserations to Matt for getting so close. He is much younger than all his serious rivals at the moment, so his time will surely come. Congratulations are also due to a player who was not present: Andy Purvis regained the number one position in the World Ratings due to the fact that Larry's rating plummeted after just scraping through the latter stages against Dave and Matt, following on from his low scores against Matt, Bob and Alan in the preliminaries.

Final thoughts from Larry: 'Overall, I think I saw way more bizarre and lucky shots in this tournament that you'd normally get. Mostly the quality of play was pretty high, but there were short stretches by both me and my opponents of utter feebleness. It was probably the hardest I've ever had to work to win our singles, and maybe either singles.'

## The Plate

The non-qualifiers for the Singles, plus a few other players who attended only for the Sunday, took part in the plate competition. The pairings were drawn fairly randomly, but with constraints applied: no two of Alan, Jon and Greg were to play together, and as far as possible no pairings were to be used more than once. Once the Singles semi-finals were over it was also rigged that Alan and Bob could play together against Dave and Rick.

Jon Lockwood & Aaron McAvoy	4	3	Alan Dean & Erin Bland
Sahil Shah & Greg Durrett	7	0	Alex Hyder & Ben Lockwood
Alex Hyder & Aaron McAvoy	1	6	Jon Lockwood & Ben Lockwood
Alan Dean & Sahil Shah	6	1	Greg Durrett & Erin Bland
Alex Hyder & Jon Lockwood	2½	4½	Alan Dean & Ben Lockwood
Sahil Shah & Greg Durrett	5	2	Aaron McAvoy & Erin Bland
Alan Dean & Bob Henninge	4	3	Dave Lockwood & Rick Tucker
Sahil Shah	4	3	Greg Durrett & Ben Lockwood
Jon Lockwood & Erin Bland	5	2	Alex Hyder & Aaron McAvoy

Congratulations to Sahil Shah, the clear winner with 22 points from his four games. Jon and Alan tied for second place with 17½ each, and Greg Durrett came fourth with 16.

## Andrew Garrard's World Tour Part One

16th–17th August 2008, Redondo Beach

*Ben Deane*

Andrew Garrard	1	6	3	10
Ben Deane	6	1	4	11

Earlier in the year, Andrew emailed me to say that he would be attending SIG-GRAPH 2008, and that he had vague plans for a brief world tour of 'winks. So naturally I offered him my spare room and dusted off the old mat.

After a week of the conference downtown, he arrived at my house mid-morning on a Saturday, and immediately started to unpack some new camera gear all over my dining room table. He packed it up again in time for lunch, but Saturday afternoon family time kept us from getting around to the 'winks until lateish that evening. We decided to make the first game a practice. Andrew had forgotten his squidgers, and I'd not played in years, so we both had something to get used to.

The first game was predictably scrappy. I won the squidge-off and brought in fairly competently. Andrew rolled off at least once, maybe twice on a bring-in. I was unable to dominate though, and the game developed into several small piles around the pot with both players fairly evenly matched. As rounds approached, it was looking like a 4–3 to me, and uneven potting by both players seemed to confirm that scoreline; however, with the last shot of the game, I decided to eschew the safe 4–3 in favour of a risky shot for 5–2. Unfortunately a miss meant a final score of Andrew 4, Ben 3.

So much for the practice game. We returned to the mat early on Sunday afternoon for the match proper.

### Game 1

I won the squidge-off and brought in well. Andrew, still warming up, rolled off twice on bring-ins and never really managed to make an impact on the game. Several impressive subs from Andrew helped me get a squop-up, but by rounds Andrew had attacked well enough to get a couple of winks free and threatening to go into the pot, so I had to pot in rounds to keep ahead. Luckily I rediscovered some potting ability and three good six-to-eight-inch pots saw the game safely out of Andrew's reach.

### Game 2

Andrew won the squidge-off and found some form, while I played some weak bring-ins, leaving the mid-game firmly under Andrew's control. One of my colours

was taken out fairly early on, and good guarding from Andrew meant that I never really recovered. I'm fairly sure a squop-up occurred at some point, and Andrew managed to merge some small piles but not enough to convert into a pot-out. During the course of the game, several winks were found on the floor without explanation (or quite a few turns after pile blowups), and after the game ended, we discovered a small green on the carpet!

### Game 3

With the scores tied, there was all to play for. Both players brought in competently, and for a while it looked pretty even, with perhaps me having the upper hand slightly. Several smaller piles coalesced into a large pile, and good attack and defence from both sides eventually left the pile precarious, with both players wanting to keep parts of it and blow up other parts. Over the course of the mid-to-end game, parts of the pile did get blown up, but never scattered, and the pile re-formed a couple of times. In rounds, I managed to get one in the pot and ensure that one of my colours took first place, and Andrew also potted one, taking second and third.



## Around the world in 80 winks

3rd September 2008, Perth

*Andrew Garrard*

Andrew Garrard	6	6	4	2	18
Tim Hunt	1	1	3	5	10

For slightly complicated reasons, I recently found myself circumnavigating the globe, with an opportunity to play winks on a couple of continents on which I'd not played it before.

First up was a visit to Los Angeles, where I had the chance to play a few games with Ben Deane (for those young'uns who don't know him, a famous winker and fellow compsci from my year, and past secreaty of CUTwC) – who, for those who haven't been keeping up, has fairly recently proven that he still has what Rupert would call the 'wrong attitude' by reproducing.

Ben also proved that not practising is the only winning move, at least compared with forgetting one's squidgers (my approach). We had a friendly game when I first



got there, which I won 4–3, and which caused some entertainment for Henry (Deane Jr), although he was somewhat frustrated at not being able to reach the table. We resumed the next day with what we decided would be serious games. While I'd remembered that I couldn't play for toffee on my own mat, I'd forgotten that Ben's is essentially identical, being of exactly the same vintage. Still, Ben reminded me that he retains some basic natural talent at the game, which I've always found sorely lacking in myself. Perhaps he could be encouraged into attending a NATwA event or two, should any occur in his locality. Congratulations to him on his performance, and my thanks to him and Becky for their hospitality.

Sadly, my failure to bring my own winks and a practice mat with me meant that I was unable to do any demonstrations in my other travels around the States – but since the amount of free time available was strictly limited (barring any attempts to play tiddlywinks in the back of a moving minibus), I suspect all I would have achieved would have been to train people in my habit of playing winks off the back of four hours' sleep. Nevertheless, I must apologise for failing to do my duties as Publicity Ossifer.

A couple of weeks later, I'd made it as far as Australia – and so had my mat and squidgers (thanks to Steph). Specifically, I'd made it to Perth, which meant that I could visit Tim Hunt and play him. Since he'd not managed to arrange a Jubilee game with Alan (next in line) before leaving the UK, it was decided that this should be a Jubilee match so long as Alan didn't object. If Tim won, he'd forfeit his title and leave it for Alan and me to have a play-off for the vacancy – but obviously it would be less of a constitutional crisis if I contrived to win. Steph and I had a dinner engagement, so we decided on a first-past-seventeen-and-a-half match – which, following the tradition that Tim and I have of playing very tactical games, still made us late back.

With us set up, and with Steph duly supplied from the self-aware coffee machine, the games started.

### **Game 1**

I won the squidge-off, with red. Tim started friskily, going for the pot early in the game. He potted reasonably well, and then scrambled well when I eventually got the threat colour under. Realising that I was running out of time to overtake his first place, I started potting early in rounds – and to my surprise ran six, including a couple of pot-offs that I was expecting to miss.

### **Game 2**

Tim won the squidge-off, from the same corner as I had in the previous game, with green. Much more conventional a squopping game, I got quite a few squops early in the game, leaving Tim depleted. He hassled well, especially in rounds, and had a chance to turn the game around with some last-minute potting; after getting some

hard pot-offs that I'd relied on him missing, he fortunately (for me) missed with the easy flat winks. 6–1 to me, although Tim probably deserved more.

### Game 3

I won the squidge-off, again from the same corner, with blue. Sadly I rapidly ended up under three doubletons, some by my own subbing. These were finally merged, and broke up at the end of time. Tim tried to keep my blues under, but – while being a little greedy – left a blue on a pile where it could free enough reds for red to come first. 4–3 to me, and Tim needed a lot of points from the remaining games.

### Game 4

I again won the squidge-off with blue, therefore for the first time not from the same corner. Tim appeared to make a run for the pot, with two greens in early. I spent most of the game almost, but never quite, squopped up. I believe this was also the first game in which anyone rolled off, surprisingly (although once the duck was broken, Tim did it repeatedly). Although well ahead in the game, Tim failed to pot as many yellows as he needed in rounds, and I passed to leave blue, red and yellow tied. 5–2 to Tim, but 18–10 and the title to me (although the games were far closer than the final scoreline suggested).

Thanks, as ever, to Tim for his hospitality and some very entertaining games. He claims my win was born of practice, but given that I was rather dependent on some hero squops I'm sticking with my theory that luck is far more important. Both of us played pretty well (in my opinion), which is always what I feel is the important thing.

### Things of note

1. I was playing injured. Not only was I limping on a recently-dislocated (slightly) knee, and had a sprained squidging thumb from trying to get a winks mat into a postal tube (still stiff a month later), I had a bleeding sore on my squidging pinkie caused by defective air hockey equipment. The distractions may have done me some good. I hope so, since as I write this I'm heading to the London Open with a sprained ankle.
2. My (predicted) flight time from Los Angeles to Sydney was exactly thirteen hours twenty minutes. I was due to take a flight from Dubbo to Lightning Ridge at 13:20, but – since I got a lift rather than taking that flight – I was at least amused to be charged \$AU 13.20 for over-weight baggage. (Camera kit, not Steph.)
3. Tim's flat warming (a very swish place, by the way) resulted in his colleagues – or at least family thereof – expressing an interest in winks. I left my mat with Tim in the expectation that Perth will be a new international centre of the sport.

## Auntie Gertie's problem page

Dear Auntie Gertie,

I am on the horns of a dilemma. I'd like to play some Marchant Trophy games, in part so as to encourage new winkers into the game. However, since these games are rated, my world ranting will take a hit if I don't get a lot of 7-0 games.

Is there a way to stuff a novice several games in a row without putting them off the game?

Yours with a conscience,

Silly Ranker.

*Dear Silly,*

*I don't think you need to worry about putting people off; many of us have been trying to shake some winkers off for years, and they still hang around. Stuff away.*

*Love,*

G.



## Playing with a significantly weaker partner

*Alan Dean*

There is no doubt that games are rather different when one member of a partnership is significantly weaker than the other. This article attempts to provide some guidance on playing such games. Please note that referring to the weaker partner as 'he' is shorthand for 'he or she', and is not intended to imply that the weakest players are always male.

Very weak players are generally quite new to the game, so teaching and encouragement are the most important aspects of playing games with them. This means not expecting too much from them, but setting realistic objectives such as 'try to get that wink somewhere near here' rather than 'try to squop that' unless the distance between the winks is very small. Give regular encouragement when a wink ends up approximately in the intended area, and avoid making negative comments if things go badly awry. If your partner thinks you expect too much, and he is constantly letting you down, it will not help him to relax, enjoy the game more, and improve.

Try to help the weaker partner to improve his techniques, but without slowing down the game unduly whilst doing so, although most opponents will make allowances for this and not expect the game to progress quite as quickly as it should

when all the participants are experienced players. The question of how much to involve your partner in the tactical decisions is a tricky one. Most beginners would have little idea. Tactical skill comes from experience, and it might slow the game down rather too much if you expect your partner to consider the finer points of strategy. Some quite experienced players are still not very good at this. It is probably best to dictate the tactics, but to explain to your partner why you are doing what you are doing, and what the alternatives are, but take advice from your partner on the relative likelihood of his making selected alternative shots, such as a pot and a squop.

If you are a much stronger player than your partner the chances are that your opponents will be well aware of the fact, and they will wish to attack your winks in preference to those of your partner. The best help you can get from your partner is if he can get his winks into the fighting zone(s) somewhere near the pot as quickly as possible. The earlier they can do this the greater the chances of an enemy wink landing so close that they may be able to squop it. Even if he misses the squops it is far better that your partner's winks get captured rather than your own, as you will be the one much more likely to be able to attack the enemy-controlled pile from a safe distance and turn it to your advantage, whether that be by squeezing out the friendly wink from the bottom of the pile, turning the pile over to leave your partner on top, or just boondocking the middle wink to gain a time advantage.

It will help considerably if the weaker partner has a modicum of potting ability, because he is quite likely to find himself with free winks towards the end of the game, either through inability to get his winks into the fighting areas quickly enough, or by being ignored by the opposition intent on catching your winks instead. So, if you are planning to introduce a new player to a tournament, and he wishes to do some practising first, the initial preparation should concentrate on bring-ins, close potting and very close squopping, probably in that order.

Squopping your partner is often a useful tactic, either as a prelude to potting the squopped wink, or in order to shoot it towards a wink of the colour which plays after him in the hope of giving him an easy squop. If your partner can also get one close enough under his own steam this can be done to enable you to provide a double attack on one of the opponents without risking one of your own winks. Don't try this, though, if the opposition have winks nearby that may sit on the doubleton before you play again, at least not unless you also have other winks in the area and are actively trying to encourage a local fight to begin.

Deception may work with an unknown partner, at least for a while. In the mid-1970s at Southampton University, a common ploy to get new players was to ask someone a day or two before a match if they would play for us as we were short of a player. This is how Vic Press first played. On the way to the match we devised a

plan to make our opponents concentrate more on him and less on me, his partner. Beforehand and between games we quietly discussed amongst ourselves, but not so quietly that we were not overheard by the opposition, some of the match winning pots that Vic had made on various occasions. It was all completely fictitious, of course. During the first game I asked Vic to estimate his probability of making various pots and he calmly replied with a figure that we both knew to be wildly optimistic. It worked, and they attacked him more than his ability justified, and I was left with enough pottable winks at the end of the game to win. However, the plan came unstuck in the second game, when the only way we could win was if Vic actually did make a fairly simple pot in rounds. His attempts to pot were so far off that it became obvious we had been bluffing, and we had a rather harder time in the subsequent games.

*Andrew Garrard*

## World Singles 61

7th September 2008, London

*Andy Purvis, slightly unwittingly*

Andy Purvis	3	1	6	6	1	2	2	21
Matthew Rose	4	6	1	1	6	5	5	28

Matty played more solidly than I did (he didn't, for instance, miss two sixth winks), except straight after the lunchtime beer.



## London Open

13th September 2008, London

*Alan Harper*

So after last year's event at University College London, the winkers this year returned to the Crosse Keys. With this change of venue we left behind our fascination with the preserved remains of old academics, and renewed our vigour for pickling our own (young/old/horribly disfigured) bodies. It was therefore no surprise that within a couple of minutes of arriving at the venue, I was drinking a particularly 'interesting' cherry Kriek-styled real ale at the higher end of the ABV scale. So having all warmed up, and with the preposterous blue mat-substitutes having been appropriately chided by Charles for not being conducive to Bristolling, we began the tournament.

Now the London Open is a pairs event, or at least it's supposed to be, but I'd arrived partnerless hoping that somebody decent would also turn up stag and save me from myself. The lack of partner was not through lack of effort, though, as I'd asked some promising youngsters such as Ben Fairbairn and DBW to be my partner. Alas, my boyish good looks and amazing scrunging abilities weren't enough to lure either of them away from the tropical climes they were visiting. So I got to partner myself instead, which I found an unencouraging start to the day. The omens looked worse as I faced my first game against Patrick Barrie and Andrew Garrard, who were being hotly-tipped (by me at least) as the favourites. After the bring-ins, the game wasn't looking particularly good for me with both of my opponents threatening a pot-out. Luckily some decent long squops managed to create some piles, and left most of my blues free in the latter part of the game whilst the other colours got tied down in a battle for pile supremacy. Five blues in the pot later and the game was won 4-3. In a

	Pair	Opponent						Total
		1	2	3	4	5	6	
1	Alan Harper	—	4	1	6	7	5	23
2	Patrick Barrie Andrew Garrard	3	—	5½	5	3	2½	19
3	Ed Wynn Stew Sage	6	1½	—	2	6	3	18½
4	Bob Wilkinson Alan Dean	1	2	5	—	3	5	16
5	Charles Relle Steve Phillips	0	4	1	4	—	5½	14½
6	Patrick Driscoll Sarah Knight	2	4½	4	2	1½	—	14

slightly odd turn of events, this was exactly how all the other games in the first round finished. Round two saw me play in the most Alan-rich match of the day against Alan Dean and Bob Wilkinson. Unfortunately the team deficit in the mystical and potent ‘Alan’ force on their team seemed to rattle our glorious ETwA chairperson who got squopped up half-way through, and although Bob valiantly battled to dig him out, a squop-up eventually happened and hence a 6–1 win. Notably in this round, the defending champions, Charles Relle and Steve Phillips, took a 6–1 pounding from Drs Sage and Wynn, to put a dampener on their hopes of defending their title. Lunch soon followed, pigs were tossed, beer was drunk and Andrew Garrard ate what basically amounted to a cow.

In round three, I played Stew Sage and Ed Wynn. This was the typical game where both sides bring in well to their tight, densely guarded area and either a pot-out happens or you commit suicide by squopping in their area. Well, my pot-out failed early and so instead I committed suicide, with the obvious result that Ed and Stew squopped me up perfectly to win 6–1. I had a huge sulk and they took over the lead of the tournament. Elsewhere Charles and Steve, and Andrew and Patrick Barrie were both making up for a slow start by heavily beating respectively Patrick Driscoll and Sarah Knight, and Alan and Bob. Round four saw me take on Steve and Charles. Steve displayed amazing long potting skills by Penhaligoning two winks early on and so I scrambled round to tie Steve up, somehow creating a big, precarious pile with all my opponents’ winks in it. A couple of squop-ups later and I nervously converted

*Andrew Garrard*

the pot-out and ran my other six winks to complete a 7–0 win, which sounds far more competent than it was in reality and wasn't a fair reflection on how my opponents played. Elsewhere Patrick and Andrew beat Ed and Stew in a topsy-turvy encounter, and left the tournament tightly balanced going into the last round, with two points separating three teams both at the top and bottom of the standings. A quick 5–2 win over Sarah and Patrick Driscoll in round five therefore might not have been enough to secure the win. So I dealt with the tension the only way I know, my opponents and myself headed to the bar and bought ridiculous raspberry Sambuca cocktails and played drinking games whilst both of my nearest rivals lost in the last round to leave me the slightly bemused winner of the London Open. Now all I have to do is persuade ETwA that I have a multiple personality disorder so that I can partner myself in the national pairs . . .



## Player profile: Larry Kahn



Andrew Garrard

Larry was born in the fine city of Cleveland, Ohio, but at the age of two had the good sense to get the heck out of there and move to Miami. His early years were typical of budding young nerdlings – he started reading by the age of four (favourite books were *Robin Hood*, *World Book Encyclopædia* and *Goren's Contract Bridge Complete*) and usually got stuck with the 'smartest kid in the class' label. Growing up in Florida did have its advantages, such as being able to play

outdoor sports all year round and having two huge mango trees in the back yard.

By the age of seventeen, Larry was chomping at the bit to get away from home and head off to MIT. In the summer of 1971, all MIT prospective freshmen were mailed information packets about the school. One of these was an activities booklet that, among other things, listed something called a tiddlywinks team. As soon as Larry read the description of the club he decided that he had found his calling, and at the activities midway he signed up on the spot, bought a mat and set, and started practising. The technical part of the game came very easily to him although it wasn't until several years later that he started to develop consistently good strategy.

Meanwhile, there was the matter of figuring out what to major in. After some thought, including the consideration of not having to take course 8.03 (Physics 3 Electromagnetics), he settled on a major in Ocean Engineering. Larry spent four and a half years at MIT to get his B.S. and M.S. in that field and then moved to the Washington, DC area where he has lived ever since.

While at MIT, Larry rounded out his education with three other activities besides 'winks and studying – ultimate frisbee, bridge, and chasing women. Larry estimates that bridge took up an average of one hour a day and chasing women took up at least that much. Ultimate frisbee was in its very early years back then and one of the highlights of Larry's MIT days was Heywood Hale Broun (TV sportscaster) filming parts of an MIT–Tufts ultimate match that were later shown during the half-time report of a televised NFL game.

Larry's 'winks career started to take off when for some unknown reason Severin Drix decided to partner him in the 1976 pairs. After winning that (this is where the 'horsemeat' quote comes from), they went on to win the next two, and then the

first World Pairs during the 1978 tour of England. It took Larry several more years to break through in singles play, and he has remained a major force since the early '80s. Larry is probably best known for coming up with more outrageously lucky (or is it skill?) shots than anyone else. Up until recently the quintessential example was the 1984 ETwA Singles play-off against Dave Lockwood, although Matt Fayers may now disagree. There are also the occasional spectacular flameouts, although to date the balance sheet is still far to the positive side and Larry hopes to keep it that way. Of his many records and achievements, the one he values the most is winning the World Pairs with the highest number of different partners (in order Severin Drix, Arye Gittelman, Charles Relle, Dave Lockwood, and Matt Fayers).

Career-wise, Larry spent the first sixteen years actually doing something related to his education; software programming for naval vehicle simulations and writing data collection programs for various oceanic research studies. In the early '90s, defense work went bust after the end of the Cold War, and Larry moved on to the company where he works now. Still somewhat in the IT domain, but far less programming and a lot more analysis, program management, and systems engineering in support of various government agencies.

Larry put his engineering skills to good use in the matter of finding a life partner in 1994 (see [www.geocities.com/madsquopper/sypaper.html](http://www.geocities.com/madsquopper/sypaper.html) for a full description). He and Cathy Furlong were legally attached in May 1996, and have spent the past fourteen years turning their yard into a colourful habitat for wildlife, including (unfortunately) the not-so-occasional deer. Anyone who visits them during warm-weather months is treated to a constant supply of butterflies, regular birds, and hummingbirds. Larry and Cathy are official Fairfax County Master Gardeners; among other things they go to farmer's markets or libraries and answer gardening questions from the public. Larry also works in the diagnostic lab where the particularly difficult plant samples are sent.

In addition to gardening and nature, the other main common interest Larry and Cathy have is dancing. Larry was pretty much dragged into partner-dancing when he met Cathy. She told him that she was going out dancing every Saturday night and he could either join her or else he'd have to find something to do on his own. Larry felt this was a good trade-off for receiving regular great home-cooked meals along with regular great other stuff. They usually go out swing, waltz, or slow blues dancing two or three times every weekend, depending on how good the bands are.

Ultimate frisbee, bridge, and 'winks remain solely in Larry's domain, although Cathy does enjoy hosting winkers and 'winks tournaments (and cooking huge amounts of lasagna or chili). Larry's competitive 'league play' days of ultimate are far in the past but he still goes out many Sunday mornings to play in a pick-up game and kick

some ass while hoping not to sprain anything. He is still very active in tournament bridge, and has had many successes including some high finishes in national events. He hopes to eventually achieve an outright national win; closest so far was a second place finish in the 1990 National Non-Life Master Teams and a third place finish in the 1996 Flight B National Open Pairs.

As far as winks, Larry isn't quite ready to pack it in yet, and hopes to stay near or at the top as long as he can. Over the past seven or eight years his results have dropped off a bit and it's unclear if this is due to other players getting better, fewer NATwA tournaments resulting in less 'real world' games, or simply general old-age feebleness setting in. Maybe a combination of all three. Larry's main winks goal remains the same as it has been for the past twenty-five years: to continue to torment Dave and stay ahead of him in the ratings. Anything beyond that is gravy.



### Jubilee Trophy III

19th October 2008, Sandy

*Andrew Garrard*

Andrew Garrard	5	2½	4	1	5	4	21½
Alan Dean	2	4½	3	6	2	3	20½

At the London Open, after my return from my round-the-world trip and after Timmy had been kind enough to let me win the Jubilee from him, Alan Dean asked that we arrange to play his challenge. It took me a few weeks to get around to this, but the weekend before the Singles it seemed like a good opportunity for both of us to get some practice. Alan kindly offered to host the match, so – when I'd recovered from my caffeine intake at Stew's pre-birthday pub walk around London – I made my way to Sandy.

We started with a gentle practice game. At least that was the plan – the game was highly tactical, and, while not the intended gentle interaction, turned out to be a better preparation for the style of the games which ensued. After a fraught contest, Alan prevailed 5–2. Having warmed up, we decided to play a best of five match.

On to the match proper. Alan began a four-game streak of squidge-off wins. I started by subbing a lot early in the game, which boded poorly. However, Alan missed a few important shots, giving me a chance to tie up the game in rounds. Alan still had a chance to pot for the win, but failed to do so. Foretelling the rest of the games, rounds (if not the rest of the game) were very intellectual. 5–2 to me.

In the second game, it was Alan's turn to have a number of interesting subs – and I missed a number of important and easy shots. Rounds were very close and exciting. I was particularly smug about a baseline squop onto a wink of Alan's – on the far side of the pot – which was about to take three of mine from close range (I had no nearby winks with a reasonable chance of getting it). A fairly spectacular gromp that I surprised myself by getting left Alan only able to tie for third by potting off in round five.  $4\frac{1}{2}$ – $2\frac{1}{2}$  to Alan,  $7\frac{1}{2}$ – $6\frac{1}{2}$  to me cumulative.

In the third game, things boded poorly for me: I was squopped up for much of the time. Alan finally missed a wink of mine onto the pile, and I Gooded to open up the game again. Various misses marred the end – notably, after Alan had potted three blues, I missed a three-inch squop onto the fourth, and Alan subsequently missed the pot with it from a similar distance. 4–3 to me,  $11\frac{1}{2}$ – $9\frac{1}{2}$  cumulative.

After keeping the lead, much to my surprise, for this long, I resumed my subbing activities at the start of the next game, giving Alan the chance to get a squop-up. Eventually a complicated Good shot to rearrange a pile meant that it looked like I'd get first place, but this relied on my ability to pot. Sadly, while my potting so far had been competent, my ability deserted me at this point – a pretty competent pot of a wink off the top of the middle of a pile (which had to be played with a small squidger so as not to hit the winks on either side) scrunged, and the flat winks that I expected to pot remained flat. Some good shots by Alan turned a likely loss into a 6–1 win, much to my annoyance with myself. I took a few minutes to restore my confidence in my potting after this game with some practice pots. Cumulative score  $15\frac{1}{2}$ – $12\frac{1}{2}$  to Alan, with his lead for the first time. I'd started the game thinking of parallels to Lewis Hamilton and the number of points he needed to win the Formula One championship, and I appear to have learnt from him the ability to throw away a decent lead.

At this point Barbie kindly provided a food break – including some interesting bread that had half failed to rise, but remained very tasty (if slightly denser than usual). I also indulged my fondness for crumpets.

So to the deciding game – and I had some satisfaction that at least I'd taken Alan this far. Alan joked that a 5–2 would get us an extra game; it was after 8pm by this point, and we were both feeling winks fatigue from the intellectual nature of the games. This time, for the first time, I won the squidge off (with yellow) – and brought in especially competently with that colour. Sadly, this competence was shown by grouping three of the five winks within triptonable distance, about three inches from one of Alan's blues. Using green to keep the red and blue pot-out threats under (one squop on each, deliberately on the winks which were most threatening if I missed long), I bravely ran away by running five. I brought the last yellow in safely, to my

surprise, and potted it in one. Unfortunately, holding red and blue down had blown the tempo of green, which was left to follow in with two winks behind the baseline. Alan missed one wink, but still had time to follow in, so – as predicted – 5\*-2\* it was (to me). That made it 17<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>-17<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>, and we needed the extra game.

After a quick fruit break, we got down to it again – now after 9pm, and with Alan approaching his bed time. He joked about the 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>-3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> result, which neither of us was feeling up to at that point. I won the squidge-off again, with red this time, and got some singletons that grew into piles with several of my winks in near the pot. Some non-trivial squop

It was a particularly intellectual match – neither of us got all the easy shots that we might have liked, but both of us got some spectacular shots. There was a full complement of lunging of opponents, Bristols over piles, Good shots, baseline squops and other exotica, and both of us often had long thinking periods in rounds (which would have been problematic for the tournament in the Singles). Several times we ended up with an enormous and tenuous pile which could change the game either way, and often games went from being clearly in one player's control to being in the others (and back). In every case, rounds were close. Alan looked every bit as winks-fatigued at the end as I did, and commented that six intellectual games could be very draining; I'm reassured, since I always feel I've achieved something if I've made my opponents think, even if I lose. Alan and I both tend to go for fairly unorthodox shots, which meant that the games were interesting and unpredictable. I suspect the mutual subbing and missing of easy shots bothered Alan more than me, though – I'm far more used to it.

Thanks again to Alan (and Barbie) for hosting; if I still hold the title in the new year, I'm sure he'll give me the drubbing that would more accurately reflect our relative levels of ability at that point. For now, we're most definitely in practice for the Singles, even if what we've practised is winks fatigue.

## Non adsumus nos oblectandi causa

or

## The disadvantages of enjoyable games

*Andrew Garrard*

My recent Jubilee match against Alan was a very tight match, with every game involving a great deal of thought, and the advantage swinging from player to player depending on the outcome of each shot. This is fairly common in the games I have against Alan (except the ones in which I miss lots of shots) due to our respective playing styles, although it's unusual not to have one game in which tactics were more obvious.

In many games of winks, one can make a minor error and not lose out too much. Often, there is an obvious shot to play next and the outcome of that portion of the game is decided by who gets the shots rather than who makes the right decision. In some positions, one cannot counter what the opponent is likely to do next – particularly, there is limited effective defence against someone squopping or bombing the pile from the baseline. There is no doubt that tactics – and strategy – play a significant role in tiddlywinks (it wouldn't be a game with such appeal to graduates were this not the case) but in most games the intellectual decisions are intermittent. The brain has time to rest between tactical choices, and many shots can be played on autopilot.

At least, this is the case for people with some experience at the game: in common situations, it is obvious what to do, and the player has seen it many times before. This is the reason many novices play relatively slowly – each shot decision has to be made from first principles.

It's also often the case that a significant difference in competence between players can hide the intellectual side of a game. Working out how to attack and defend in a near-squop-up situation is rarely difficult (even when trying to attack in an unexpected place to get myself out of a squop-up) – the outcome is more down to luck and shot-playing skill than strategic nous. Very good players may benefit from their strategic competence – getting their winks into position so that they only need to play simple shots, or turning around a game incrementally – but single shots are rarely so critical as to require a lot of thought.

Now, I'm sure the pressure of defending the Jubilee title – and being in a position where there was a chance of my doing so successfully – contributed a lot. I've never played in a world match, so I'm unused to extended play where both players are of similar calibre (and something is riding on the result). Nonetheless, there was something different about my match against Alan.

I think it was this: we were controlling each others' winks to such an extent that there were few available winks, but many shots that could be played with them, and

the exact outcome of each mattered hugely. The urgency and lack of free winks meant that many shots involved subtle pile nudges or squops with very limited margin for error (onto tripletons, or onto the top of a pile several winks high). There were few easy shots, and the decisions put one difficult play ahead of several others – and this meant looking for the obscure shot which was subtly better than obvious.

It reminded me a little of how I used to play: planning each shot to compensate for everything my opponent could possibly do. I have since learnt not to do this: the chances of my getting a shot are worth balancing against the chances of an opponent getting theirs, so I now know that playing the difficult shot that would leave the opponent severely disadvantaged is often less valuable than playing the shot that I know I can get – and watching the opponent miss. This is why I used to be such a slow player: I'd be looking for everything that the opponent could possibly do. (Of course, I'm still prone to making this kind of decision, but I like to think I'm not *as* slow.)

Nonetheless, such a tight game, with its intellectual challenge, can be very enjoyable – winning a struggle like this can feel more of an achievement than a quick pot-out, no matter the stress on the sixth wink. I love to have games like this – they're one of the great attractions of the game.

However, they have their disadvantages. The most obvious ones have been raised in the great rants about slow play: if you take several minutes to decide on a shot, it's distracting to your opponent and it means the game lasts longer. Some of Alan's shots in rounds were approaching five minutes, in some games (and, while I was relatively unaware of them, I'm sure some of my shots were slow too – even though I've had years of being ranted at to cure my slow play). This would obviously have been frowned upon in a tournament with more players. While I've said in the past that it's a bad thing that the attempts to control slow play might remove strategic games from tournaments, there's a balance to be found.

There's another problem: spending a lot of brain power on shot choice is exhausting. Alan claimed to be heavily winks-fatigued after our match, and I felt the same. I have a history of getting very tired at the ends of tournaments – probably because I always used to over-think in this way – and I remember my first Nick Ashley Trophy match against Tim in which I beat him in the first (highly strategic) game and was then so wiped out that he slaughtered me in the second.

In a national tournament, maybe there's a benefit to not trying too hard – especially in games in which one player is heavily favoured – and saving one's energy for the matches against players of similar seedings (which, after all, usually come at the end of the day).

Maybe, in order to save oneself for the end of the tournament, one has to avoid applying perfect strategy earlier on. Maybe we have to choose not to play our best, and do better as a consequence. This may mean that we deliberately choose not to have the most 'fun' games in a tournament scenario, at least if we want to do well and if the tournament is not to be delayed.

I greatly enjoyed the match against Alan, but I desperately hope that the Singles will be less intellectual – and less stressful. Losing heavily is depressing, but at least it's not tiring. A whole weekend of games like the ones in the Jubilee would leave me an exhausted nervous wreck, and it'd stop me from enjoying them so much.

Of course, it may just be that I need to work on my stamina.



## World Pairs 36

24th October 2008, Cambridge

*John Haslegrave*

Larry Kahn & Matt Fayers	3	4	5	7	6	25
Matthew Rose & Patrick Barrie	4	3	2	0	1	10

WP36 was played on Matt's mat in Dr Barrie's office in Emma, with an audience of me plus occasional Charles and Stew. Yellow and green were in dominant corners throughout, in case you think that's important, and the players rotated clockwise between games.

### Game 1

It didn't feel like many shots were played in the first game, and most of them were faff shots. Patrick (green) won the squidge-off, and brought in very consistently, as he did all day. Once he had five in bunched together at his favourite potting distance, Matt (red) felt he had to bring in at them; he landed half an inch away from one, and Matthew and Patrick squopped two different reds, then a blue. Red and blue edged in on green's area, and finally a proper pile was created when Matt got on top of an enemy squop while sliding under another. A yellow was squopped at some stage, but with two and a half minutes left yellow had six free again – temporarily, as one had landed right next to a red.

Larry got a doubleton of greens in round zero and then pulled a red and blue out of the pile to leave red and blue slightly ahead. Yellow and blue were the two potting colours and both potted twice in round two. In round three, yellow potted two more



and docked a red, but blue subbed disastrously under a flat green; green potted the other flat one. In round four, red, yellow and blue all potted, leaving it safe for green to dock a red, freeing a green while keeping a blue. Yellow was safely first, but with red potting another in round five and squeezing a red out of a precarious pile, Patrick needed a pot and a pot-off for third place; he missed the latter.

### Game 2

We debated whether Matt was half as old as Charles, but decided we didn't know. Matt (yellow) won the squidge-off. Matt's innovative mat markings came in handy when Larry rolled off near Matthew's baseline. Matthew (blue) squopped a yellow, and yellow squopped a red. Red and green followed on to the latter; meanwhile, yellow got on the former and freed. Blue and red chased the single squopped blue; Matthew: 'I don't know why we're all attacking this poxy singleton.'

When Patrick got on, yellow and green followed. Patrick had a chance to flip the big blue, but only got one yellow. More winks piled in, with Larry eventually blowing the pile, leaving six yellows momentarily free.

Time expired with only five single squops on the mat. Blue had six free, but two on greens and not set up for potting off. Yellow potted one early, and blue missed a long pot. In round one, green freed the last yellow, but Patrick bridged a different yellow and a green-on-red with a big red. Matt potted three more yellows, then got a similar bridge, leaving himself on top of a six-wink pile. Blue potted three and docked in round two; yellow needed to blow the pile to beat blue, and he did so perfectly, leaving both yellows near the pot and one on top of a red attacker. Green just had to squop the other red to save yellow, but he got the yellow instead, giving red an easy doubleton. Yellow potted his last free wink to take us into round five. At this point, green and red were on five tiddlies, each with only one pottable wink; blue needed to pot two to equal yellow, but chose to squop the pottable green for a probable 3-4. With no other shots on, Larry tried to pot from 2'6", only to glance off the rim.

Someone commented that the two 4-3 wins to yellow and green showed 'the marginal advantage of dominant corners'. Patrick couldn't back this up with statistics.

### Game 3

Matt (blue) won the squidge-off. Patrick (yellow) landed near a blue and red early – blue got the squop. Green rolled off. After turn six, Larry had five reds together close to the pot and a long one. Green missed a four-inch squop, and red took him. A stray green bring-in nudged that more pottable; Larry brundled. Matt: 'Now if I were Larry Kahn, I would do a chicken impersonation at this point.' Red got on top of two yellows and a blue to leave red and blue in control. For much of the rest of the

game winks moved slowly towards this pile, with a few winks actually getting on in the last couple of minutes.

As time expired, Matthew was considering whether to dock, piddle or pile-flip; he went for the dock, which left two of his winks under friendly winks. Patrick tried to send a green over the pot, lunch-style, to help out, and scrunged. In round one a missed squop by red forced blue to bridge in order to prevent green taking a doubleton. Red potted early, giving him three in and one on a green, but green potted three in round four to also have three in, one free. Yellow had one in and one free, blue five free but all on squops. In round five, three colours had nothing to do. Matt, ending, was ahead of yellow and could pass for 4-3 or try a longish squop off a yellow onto a green for 5-2, risking a  $3\frac{1}{2}$ - $3\frac{1}{2}$  if he missed. Instead, he spotted an easy pot-off which would risk  $3\frac{1}{2}$ - $3\frac{1}{2}$  but give him a free chance at the squop if successful. Both shots came off for 5-2.

#### Game 4

Larry (yellow) won the squidge-off thanks to Matt's shot butting Patrick (blue) further away. Early bring-ins left green and yellow clustered tightly around the pot; red had six free, but mostly at about six inches; blue also had six free, but one on a totalled little yellow. Blue potted one, then missed. A couple of squops later, yellow knocked blue off the little yellow, and blue took the doubleton. Red had to come to the rescue when blue tried a Bristol to bridge a tripleton, which went horribly wrong. Stew made a timely arrival at this point. Red and blue were still in a good position, but yellow had got into a position to free the last green; red tried to squop a different green, but missed. The green came out and blue also missed a green. Matt now ran six, one off a squop, and Larry followed in for 7\*-0\*.

The players took a dinner break at this point, and we headed to the Free Press. Matt complained about the difficulties of finding A4 paper in the States; Matthew offered to fax some to him.

#### Game 5

Matthew and Patrick really needed a win to keep the match alive. Patrick (green) won the squidge-off, and the pairs developed areas on opposite sides of the pot. Matthew was delayed by having to deal with two of his bring-ins landing on a green. Green had an early pot-out threat, with one green on another. Patrick missed the lunch, but left both pottable so Matt (red) squopped one. Some squops were taken for both sides, but Larry and Matt had a stronger area. Yellow tried to Bristol a yellow-on-red onto a blue; red went on blue, but yellow slid off the top and onto another red; colour-order allowed green to take the doubleton. All colours attacked that area, and a big pile developed which neither side really controlled.



John Haslegrave

By time there were fifteen winks in the pile, with a little yellow high on top but with no obvious shot. Matthew managed to dig a couple of greens out, but they didn't move much and blue got the doubleton. In round two, yellow had an edge of a blue, which he docked through the pile. Blue still had the green doubleton, and when green missed a long squop and landed on a yellow, Matt took a quadruplet with a big red. Yellow got an edge of that, but blue got a bridge to take it under, giving Larry and Matt almost total control. Yellow got a vital knock-off in round four, allowing green to fire another little green through the pile. He did so violently, and the bottom green went off, but four yellows were free. In round five, red took a yellow doubleton to ensure five points and yellow missed the pot to leave it 6-1.



## The Zen of winks

*Andrew Garrard*

I like to think that, if I've not become a better player over the last few years, I've at least compensated for being somewhat less in-practice by gaining a bit of technique. While I'm probably a bit less good at getting six-inch squops than I used to be (and, because they're hard to defend against, being even vaguely capable at them is a very valuable skill – as Steve Phillips proved to me with a distant squop onto a triplet on a year or so ago), I'm probably a bit more reliable. Some who played me at the Singles this year may disagree, of course.

So what have I changed? Well, I've categorised some of my more embarrassing misses into the following categories, which I present for others – at least novices – to ridicule and possibly take to heart:

### **Shots which should have been easy**

I was once particularly prone to missing very easy squops. It's still embarrassing when it happens, but I've got much better once I realised that the main thing I was doing wrong was thinking of them as easy. I was once pretty capable at the four-to-six inch range, because I knew they were missable and they had my undivided attention. A squop of a wink an inch away ought to be much easier, but this only applies if you give it as much attention as the distant shots. Playing the shot as I might in practice, without lining up on it properly and in haste, makes it missable.

This has the slightly awkward result that it can now take me several seconds to play a one-inch squop as I get the feel right. Still, I'm getting a lot more of them – and some of my misses at the Singles were because I forgot to take these 'reliable' shots seriously. I also used to be terrible at getting on squops squarely-enough that the result can be Bristolled, and taking extra time over them has made me much better.

### **Pressure shots**

Often I know a shot is easy, but there's some pressure on it. I plan my strategy assuming that it'll be hard to miss, but the moment I line it up I realise that I feel it's much harder than it should be. I actively psyche myself out of being able to play shots – be they two-millimetre squops or pots from my favourite potting distance.

My solution to this is meditative. If I'm watching a scary horror film that actually gets to me, I can take a moment to analyse my reaction, and from that point on enjoy it. Steph got me onto some roller coasters in EuroDisney (these not being my thing in any way), and by blotting out the experience I was not too bothered by it. With

winks, just knowing that I'm psyched out of a shot, taking a moment, and lining it up again is often enough to return it to being easy.

Others deal with this in their own way. Andy Purvis told me that he observed that good snooker players have a habitual way to prepare for a shot that puts them in a zone of reliability – so Andy decided to get into a similar habit for winks, and it seems to have helped him. Alan Harper, when he's nervous, shakes his arm violently to burn up the adrenaline.

## **Environmental distractions**

When stressed or winks-fatigued, particularly at the end of a tournament, I'm prone to lose focus. Particularly, this means that features of the environment start to impact on my game. At the start of the day, I can usually cope much better with bright light falling on part of the mat and the rest being in shade. I'm not put off by noises from an adjacent room or from other tables, nor by CJ running around (and I should stress I'm fond of CJ, who's a sweet kid, and he put me off not a jot when he came to hug Patrick while I was playing him), nor Charles shushing people.

Sadly, the same is not true after a few tight games, when my mood and energies are at a low point. I need to work on being able to tune these problems out, in the way that I've learnt to tune out stressful shots – I'm better at doing this than I used to be, but I certainly have a way to go. Perhaps I should consider headphones.

## **Fatigue**

I am, undoubtedly, more prone to making mistakes at the end of a tournament than earlier on. My world rating would probably be appreciably higher if tournaments ended a couple of rounds earlier, and the Jubilee that Tim won off Alan should have been mine but for fatigue.

It's hard to know how to deal with this. Getting fitter would probably help. Pacing myself helps a bit, too. Finally, becoming a slightly faster player has helped, because I'm now a bit more likely to have a gap between games – even if I do use it taking photographs.

## **Underestimating the difficulty**

Some of the shots I'd miss were down to tactical experience. A squop on a flat wink on a pile is much easier than a squop onto one sloping away. Knock-offs from range require a lot more accuracy than the size of the target wink would suggest. I still go for silly shots in order to be unpredictable, and I'm less prone than most to

creating a solid position before I engage (particularly against a stronger player, I like to attack with a limited number of winks before an opponent can get guards in), but I'm better than I once was at relying on the distant squop to keep opponents under control.

## **Failure mode compensation**

When I've not got better at playing shots, I have got a little better at having them go wrong less catastrophically. If you really don't expect to miss then it's possible to get careless about this – but a slight reduction in the chance of getting a shot is worth it for significant damage limitation. This means aiming for the distant end of a squopping wink, avoiding piles with missed pots (something which hurt Jon Mapley badly against me on the Sunday of the Singles), not giving up easy doubletons and playing to leave guards behind. Particularly, I'm very wary of the 'if in doubt, bring in' strategy when it would be catastrophic for me to roll off and miss the next turn – although I also have several styles of bring-in that I can use if I'm worried about the accuracy of one of them.

Sometimes the failure mode is hard to avoid; my knack for subbing under a flat wink is one skill I'd like to un-learn, unless I get so good at it that I can start subbing under my own on purpose. Sadly, although it may be ill fortune, I'm quite good at putting a wink exactly where I've been concentrating on making sure it doesn't end up – it may be a unique failing of mine (when learning to ride a bike, I once managed to ride into a basketball pole in an otherwise empty playground because I was concentrating so hard on avoiding it).

## **Everything else**

Shots will always be missed in a game. Some shots are just going to be bad luck: in several games at the Singles my opponents agreed (at least to my face) that much of my ill fortune seemed to have been piles falling in an unpredictable manner that happened to disadvantage me – although how many of these were me failing to take full account of failure modes, or another weakness that I've yet to identify, I don't know (and I'd be happier if I knew what I was doing wrong).

Statistical clustering, magnified by psychological effects, mean that an opponent will often get many good shots in a row and then go to pieces. I can still let bad shots get to me, but I try to be more accepting of fate than I used to be, and wait for my form to return. This might mean I'm better at remaining dangerous after being squopped up for most of the game. Or it may just be that years of practice at being in a losing position are finally doing me some good.

## The ETwA Singles

24th–25th October 2008, Cambridge

*Matt Fayers*

What better way to celebrate one's return to England than by playing twenty-five games of competitive 'winks in two and a half days? I returned to Cambridge having not been there for a year and a half, my longest absence since my first visit there in 1993. After a satisfying win in the World Pairs (see p.38), I was ready for my first ETwA Singles in three years.

There had been a great deal of debate concerning the format for the Singles; about as much, in fact, as that which had preceded the NATwA Singles. Our great but confidence-deprived leader, Ben Fairbairn, had issued a document detailing with great precision the anticipated format for the competition. Being the contrary individual that I am, I sent a reply pointing out its shortcomings. Several revised editions were published, and the format was finally settled on. The most important outcome of all this ranting was some new terminology for tournament formats. The tried-and-tested format known to English winkers as the all-play-all (and to Americans and people in all other sports as the round-robin) was, in Ben's notation, *apa1in*. (This derives from *all-play-all once*, against those *in* your league.) Larry Kahn helpfully pointed out that at a glance this looks like Palin, which is apparently the name of a female Alaskan light entertainer. So a new item of terminology was born, if only to make Larry 'barf all over his keyboard'. This reporter predicts that the terminology will long outlast our memories of the aforementioned hockey mom.

In the end, the qualifying section of the Singles wasn't a Palin; instead, it was the format (also used in the first stage of the NATwA Singles) denoted *apa1out* in Ben's cipher. (This is where you play against everyone *not* in your league; this can be sensible for some numbers, because it helps to avoid byes, or to equalise the number of rounds taken for different leagues. If you don't understand but wish to, then consult a mathematician, ideally not at the end of an evening's drinking.) The terminology to be used for this format has not yet settled down; it's either a Biden, or a bail-out.

On to the winks, then. The venue was the now-traditional Selwyn Diamond, with its slightly short tables, its over-reliance on summer sunlight, and its otherwise perfect conditions. We were sorted into two divisions with the aid of out-of-date ratings; had the ratings from WP36 been available at that stage, Larry and I might have enjoyed higher seedings than we did. But never mind.

As is usual with these things, I have negligible knowledge of other people's games, so I'll bore you with recollections of my own. John Haslegrave played too well for his own good; if he's not careful, he'll find himself winning tournaments. I tried to issue him a warning by letting him score two points against me. Chris Abram played

	Larry Kahn	Matt Fayers	Jon Mapley	Andrew Garrard	Charles Relle	Paul Moss	Stew Sage	Bob Wilkinson	Total
Patrick Barrie	6 1	1 6	5 2	1 6	0 7	2 5	1 6	1 6	39
Alan Dean	6 1	1 6	1 6	6 1	3 4	1 6	1½ 5½	2 5	34½
Matthew Rose	5 2	6 1	5 2	2 5	2 5	1 6	1 6	0 7	34
Alan Harper	6 1	6 1	1½ 5½	3 4	3½ 3½	4 3	2 5	2½ 4½	27½
Steve Phillips	4 3	6 1	2 5	1 6	2 5	5 2	5 2	5½ 1½	25½
John Haslegrave	6 1	5 2	7 0	1 6	6 1	5 2	1½ 5½	1½ 5½	23
Chris Abram	6 1	4 3	6 1	5½ 1½	5 2	2 5	6 1	6 1	15½
Richard Ackland	6 1	6 1	6 1	7 0	6 1	6 1	6 1	4 3	9
Ben Fairbairn	6 1	6 1	6 1	7 0	6 1	5½ 1½	6 1	5 2	8½
Total	51	41	39½	33½	33½	31½	30	27½	

### Qualifying

less badly than I did, until it became obvious that he would win 6–1, at which point I recovered and he went to pieces, playing out of turn and missing a crucial squop, and allowed me to squeak a 4.

Lunch was taken in the now-traditional Hat and Feathers. The beer was more than adequate for the tiny lunchtime permitted by the tournament organiser, but the five-pound lunches were found wanting, particularly the very elastic cottage pie.



*Andrew Garrard**Andrew Garrard*

My game against Steve Phillips was enjoyable for the fact that it was very fast; we must have played at least a hundred shots. Against Alan Harper, I worked hard to stay on top of a very awkward pile, which led to one of the most promising Plan 47 situations I have seen; only by very gingerly extricating winks from the pile and potting well was I able to hold on. My games against Ben, Richard and Alan Dean were straightforward ones determined by who got a higher percentage of their shots. A glance at the scores will tell you who that was in each case. Top tip: don't play Alan on his own mat.

Against Matthew (whom I seem to beat surprisingly often, but perhaps I'll revise that opinion after the World Singles), I achieved an easy squop-up. Matthew got fed up after a few minutes with repeated bouts of free turns and no attempt to convert the game into a pot-out, and offered me a handshake and a 6-1 win. I gratefully accepted and began to put my squidgers away, but he then changed his mind, insisting that we should continue out of fairness to the other players. So we did so until the start of rounds, at which point he offered a second and final handshake.

The only pot-out game I participated in was against Patrick. He brought in well, but I decided to set up a counter-threat rather than dive in. He ran six, and I was

forced to retire to Rupert's rooms (happily only a few feet away) for tea and cake.

I should add a note (for which read 'further rant') about the qualification format. The question of how to choose qualifiers in the case where the leagues are of unequal sizes is a long-discussed one, especially between Nick Inglis and me; my views are summarised in my article in WW79. In this tournament, Ben declared his devotion to the Inglis cause by deciding that there would be six qualifiers from each league. My view is that this was unfair on the people in the larger league. What would I have done instead, then? The simple answer is to say that I would have taken the top twelve players overall, in terms of p.p.g.; in this tournament, this would have enabled Stew Sage to qualify at the expense of John Haslegrave. But there's an argument that says that this is unfair on the weaker league (irrespective of the sizes of the leagues). But here's the thing: with the Biden/bailout format, *we have a direct comparison of the strengths of the two leagues, because one league has played against the other*. In fact, the league headed by Larry (called the lower case league, because of the typography used in Julian's Biden format) defeated the Capital League by an aggregate score of  $287\frac{1}{2}-216\frac{1}{2}$ , for an average game score very close to 4–3. So what we could have done here is to introduce a 'compensation factor', adding a certain amount to the scores of the players in the weaker league in order to equalise the average ppg of the two leagues. In this case, this would mean increasing the ppg of each player in the Capital League by just less than a point (in fact  $\frac{71}{72}$  of a point<sup>1</sup>). What effect would this have had in the current tournament? In fact, the twelve finalists would have been exactly as they were (but we would have had a nice warm feeling about it).

It had been decided that one round of the final would be played on the Saturday evening, to make a total of ten rounds on each day (the format for the final being a twelve-player Palin, like we used to do in the old days). As the qualifying was drawing to a close, scoresheets were filled in, and the identities of the twelve players who had failed to qualify for the plate became apparent. When there were only six finalists determined, sufficient was known about the seedings to enable one game to get under way – this was the all-Matthew affair. I got 7–0 in this game in fairly short order, after which Matty grudgingly shook my hand before complaining that he had been pointlessly rushed into the game and wasn't ready. I'm not sure what level of preparation he felt he needed; he had just played eight games of competitive 'winks (in addition to five the previous day). I am strongly of the view that if the format dictates that two people are due to play each other, and those two players are both available, then they should get on with it. I admit that in this instance (the last round of the day) there was nothing to be achieved in terms of speeding up the rest of the

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<sup>1</sup>See *Pricing money: a beginner's guide to money, bonds, futures and swaps* by J.D.A. Wiseman, for some ideas on how not to pronounce this fraction.



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	Player	Opponent												Total
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
1	Matt Fayers	—	1	7	3	1	5½	6	6	6	6	6	6	53½
2	Patrick Barrie	6	—	2	5½	5	2	3	4	6	6	6	6	51½
3	Matthew Rose	0	5	—	5	6	5	4	5	3	7	4	6	50
4	Jon Mapley	4	1½	2	—	3	6	7	6	4	3	6	6	48½
5	Alan Dean	6	2	1	4	—	4	1	3	6	5	6	6	44
6	Larry Kahn	1½	5	2	1	3	—	7	1	5	6	6	6	43½
7	Alan Harper	1	4	3	0	6	0	—	5	3	7	6	6	41
8	Charles Relle	1	3	2	1	4	6	2	—	4	4	6	6	39
9	Paul Moss	1	1	4	3	1	2	4	3	—	0	6	7	32
10	Andrew Garrard	1	1	0	4	2	1	0	3	7	—	4½	7	30½
11	John Haslegrave	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	2½	—	6	19½
12	Steve Phillips	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	—	9

### The Final

tournament, but that's not the point.

The evening's fun, for the CUTwC contingent, was had in the Castle. This was very jolly, especially after the people on the next table who talked about orcs had left. Thanks to Andrew's transport facilities, we ended the evening with a curry in the Kohinoor; this was very poor indeed.

On to the Sunday, and the rest of the final. The most notable thing about the final was the speed of play; we actually played five rounds of winks before lunch, which is surely an all-time record. As Larry said, whatever we did that speeded up play ought to be bottled and used next year.

Again, I have only my own games to report on. It is probably fair to say that I won this tournament by bashing bunnies – I was the only player to beat all of the bottom six seeds, and in fact I got six points against each of them. I don't remember a great deal about any of these games, apart from Charles Relle taking the Mickey after I mis-played a pile-flip, and John Haslegrave (who again played very well) being unlucky with close umpiring decisions.

My most interesting game was against Jon Mapley. I was a little way ahead in a complicated game; Jon was outnumbered, having inadvertently potted himself while trying to lunch me. Part-way through, he decided that his best bet was to try to get red into first place, and potted his two free reds. He was able to dig out two more reds, and I was left to try to find four pottable greens. I managed three of these, and



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then thought about the fourth; this was half-covering a blue, which was half-covering a yellow, which was solidly covering a red. Playing in round four, I had the option of potting the green from where it was (with a large yellow ready to pounce on the blue), or chipping the blue next to yellow and potting the green in round five. I went for the pot-off, reasoning that the blue was fairly likely to come off the pile anyway. I got the pot, and the blue came off the yellow, but unfortunately the yellow came off the red too! Green didn't have a chance to re-take this red, so Jon was able to get a 4.

Going into the last three rounds, I had a lead of seven and a half points, with Patrick, Larry and Alan Dean to play against. Patrick beat me 6-1 fairly easily, while Larry lost by the same score to Jon, leaving the tournament a two-horse race. Against Larry I had an awkward game, during which I was mostly winning. Towards the end of rounds, it looked as though it might be a three-way tie, but I potted very well with red (a large wink touching the base of the pot, and a small wink from a foot) to grab a  $5\frac{1}{2}$ - $1\frac{1}{2}$ . This was a slightly disappointing result in that it brought to an end my run of thirty-two consecutive tournament games with integer scorelines; curiously, the game preceding this run was also a  $5\frac{1}{2}$ - $1\frac{1}{2}$  result against Larry.

Going into the last round, I had a three-point lead; I was playing Alan, and Patrick was playing Larry. I capitulated very poorly against Alan, which left the tournament



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out of my hands. Larry had commented earlier that if he wasn't going to win the tournament, then he wanted me to win it, and perhaps this inspired him to get a 5–2 against Patrick which sealed it. So I was forced to yield my title of 'best player never to have won a national singles title'; this can be fought over by Alan Harper and Ferd.

Tradition was restored in the Plate, with the Tournament Organiser winning even after Patrick's recalculation of the scores.

Dan Babar & Stew Sage	5	2	Ben Fairbairn & Christine Barrie
Dan Babar & Andy Blackburn	1½	5½	Ben Fairbairn
Bob Wilkinson	4⅔	2⅓	Stew Sage
Ed Wynn & Ben Fairbairn	5	2	Sarah Knight
Dan Babar & Stew Sage	0	7	Bob Wilkinson
Dan Babar & Ben Fairbairn	1	6	Ed Wynn
Bob Wilkinson	2	5	Stew Sage & Sarah Knight
Dan Babar & Ben Fairbairn	4	3	Bob Wilkinson & Stew Sage

### The Plate

