Winking World 93

Act of God edition

Cover photo credit: Tim Hunt (sign in the Somerset Wagon)

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Editorial

Andrew Garrard

Welcome to Winking World 93. It's more-or-less on time, which is about the best I can hope for, and all I can promise for it. To everyone who has contributed, thank you for your efforts: you saved me from writing at least two tedious articles. To those who haven't contributed, you still get a couple of my articles, and you have only yourselves to blame.

There are rumours of fresh blood having an interest in taking over the editorship. Should this be so, I wish the best of luck to my successor, and look forward to inundating him or her with an excess of unprintable nonsense.

SUPER-SEXY WINKS: COMMENTS AND IDEAS

Charles Relle

My first comment is that I wish I had thought of it: Alan Harper's idea is brilliant and simple. Much space and time would have been saved if anyone had come up with it before.

First thought: I would give the squidge-off winner the last shot, as in the original game, so he would get 21 shots. So the name of the game should be 21/20/20/20/20 winks, but 20/20 winks might be simpler. I, who prefer words to numbers in all situations, would call it TwentyWinks. This has the advantage that, while it is derived from the name of a cricket tournament, it is not a direct copy. Of course, once the concept is established, there is no reason why any length should not be specified, 24, 25, 30, the age of one of the players, the combined ages of all the players, or something even more bizarre. But let us stay with 20/20 (plus the one shot).

Next, the limited number of shots means that except in tournament games, there is no need for a time limit. If I (as Publicity Officer) am giving a demonstration in a youth club or school, I do not have to carry timepieces around; I can just say that in a tournament there is a time limit, and that is one thing fewer to worry about. The fact that 20 is the normal number does not preclude other numbers is a big advantage when there are beginners. Suppose after 20 rounds nobody has potted anything; I can say, "have 5 more shots each" without spoiling the character of the game. Beginners play quickly, so that would not add seriously to the length of the game. At the same time, giving instruction during a game, on shot-making for instance, would be much easier. This is a very important point for those of us who interested in making the game more popular.

Would the character of the game change? In TwentyWinks, it might. The fact is, however, that in the Rose & Myers v. Fayers & Kahn World Pairs encounter of February 2006, only once in the seven games were 20 rounds played in regulation, in one game the total was 13, and the average was 17.07. So, for tournament games, Alan's time limit would be necessary. I suspect that the game would change, that opening moves would be played quickly, and that both sides would keep one eye on the clock, and that there would be more potting. If the game does change, it might be for the better.

Do draws matter? Let us get away from the term "draw", which reminds us of the all too frequent result of that most tedious of all games, cricket. The only thing that Tiddlywinks has in common with cricket is that most people go to cricket for the sake of the beer tent, even if they do not admit it. Let us call it a tie. A 3½–3½ result is rare, and it does not matter, unless, Heaven forbid, we are playing a knockout tournament. If we are, Alan's solution is a good one. My feeling is that if two sides tie, they deserve to share the points.

I think the boundary rule would have to change; losing a shot in a limited-shots game would be too large a disadvantage. I have long been an advocate of a change to this rule. Obscurantists have opposed change and even ruled discussion of it out of order at an ETwA Congress. The simplest change is that if you put any wink off the mat, the opponents decide where on the edge it is replaced. If you put more than one wink off the mat at any one turn, you lose your next shot.

Problems: chess clocks are expensive, and this is one reason why no solution proposed earlier that uses them has been adopted. Also, pressing the button on a chess clock takes up some of the time one would spend lining up a shot. This means that the clock has to be on or very near the table, or too much time is wasted. Alan Dean and I tested this once, with a conventional timer, and concluded that going to and fro took up too much time, especially if we had to use more than one keypress. I suspect, nevertheless, that we would eventually get into a routine, and there is less of a problem in pairs, when the non-playing partner can press the clock. Another problem is counting rounds; the simplest solution would be to write 1 to 20 on a piece of paper, and cross the numbers off as rounds elapsed.

I very much welcome Alan's idea, and would like to participate in any event in which it were tried.

The Shrewsbury Open/NHIPer 2009

Shrewsbury School
29th November 2009
Sarah Knight

Bright and early on the morning of Sunday 29th November, a group of Cambridge winkers descended on Kingsland Hall in Shrewsbury School. Having spent the previous day exploring and enjoying the finest cake purveyors, comic-book shops and, most importantly, hostelries that Shrewsbury had to offer, they were very pleased to find that Charlie Oakley, the tournament's organiser (though not, of course, the Tournament Organiser), had laid on as tasty a spread of tea, coffee, coca cola and biscuits as in previous years.

After a restorative cuppa, as much of a crowd as was expected had arrived and the Tournament Organiser, Matt Fayers, had created a handicapping system (of which more later) and a draw for the first game. Suffice it to say that the morning's play passed enjoyably enough, although, disappointingly, none of the School's pupils were in evidence.

After a delicious, greasy and strength-giving lunchtime fry-up courtesy of the School, plus a couple of relaxing beverages, play resumed in the afternoon. By this time, the low levels of heating in the Hall were beginning to take their toll. Alan Harper, in particular, was rarely seen without a hot beverage clasped between his hands, and was also spied indulging in a certain amount of jiggling about. A warm glow no doubt counteracted the chill for many winkers, however, when a handful of eager schoolboys turned up to play some afternoon games. They were, by and large, enthusiastic, cheerful and, in some cases, worryingly competent. Although they didn't stay for many rounds, one can only hope that the game captured enough of their interest to encourage them to revisit it.

Unfortunately, I can't speak for any games other than those I was involved in. But for me at least, the tournament (if not the Hall) was hotting up towards the end of the afternoon, as Stew Sage and I jostled for first place. Having never so much as sniffed victory in any kind of individuals-based tournament before, I was excited, very surprised

and above all grateful to the handicapping system. In the last game of the day, with first place still theoretically up for grabs, I partnered Alan Dean. Alan heroically ensured that we played to maximise my points, with the result that I managed to walk home with the trophy.

In conclusion, then, it can safely be said that Shrewsbury was, as ever, a well-organised and jolly tournament enjoyed by all, for which big thanks must go to Charlie Oakley. Let's hope the boys we met thought the same.

And for a lucky few, the day even ended with an exciting journey home in Patrick Driscoll's near-death-mobile.

Pos^n	Player	Played	P.P.G.
-	Edward Lloyd	1	6
1	**Sarah Knight**	**7**	**$4^7/_8$**
2	**Stew Sage**	**7**	**$4^3/_{14}$**
3	**Charlie Oakley**	**7**	**$4^1/_8$**
-	Liz Ackland	4	$4^1/_{16}$
-	Charlie Robinson	1	$3^7/_8$
4	**Alan Dean**	**7**	**$3^5/_7$**
5	**Alan Harper**	**7**	**$3^{25}/_{56}$**
5	**Patrick Driscoll**	**7**	**$3^{25}/_{56}$**
7	**Matt Fayers**	**7**	**$3^5/_{14}$**
8	**Dan Babar**	**7**	**$3^1/_4$**
-	Charlie Marques	1	$3^1/_8$
9	**Steve Phillips**	**7**	**$3^5/_{56}$**
10	**Richard Ackland**	**7**	**$2^{45}/_{56}$**
10	**Charles Relle**	**7**	**$2^{45}/_{56}$**
12	**Ben Fairbairn**	**7**	**$2^3/_7$**
-	Arthur Scott	1	$1^1/_2$
-	George Ellis	3	$1^7/_{24}$

Postscript to the London Open 2009

Richard Ackland

This article may contain material which those with the purest of sporting sensibilities are likely to find offensive. They are advised to look away now and to turn the page. In particular those of a Corinthian disposition, who hold dear the principles of "le fairplay" "play up, play up", "the game's the thing" along with all that stuff about "those twin imposters" etc. etc. are likely to be particularly vulnerable to an assault upon their traditions and values. And should there be puritans amongst the readership, let them be advised to secure forthwith their passage on the next available sailing of the Mayflower.

For it will be a widely held belief amongst that community that it is NEVER correct to criticise the sporting opposition, still less one's own side. This convention is very widely observed except amongst the managers of professional football clubs and perhaps those describing themselves as the "axis of evil", who may nonetheless read this with alarm, fearing that their position, which they no doubt consider unassailable, might be challenged by the appallingly deviant tendencies and practices to be exhibited by the author of this article. Indeed, even they might quail upon violent exposure to the unsavoury details which follow.

But for those with strong stomachs and sturdy constitutions and perhaps a protective veneer of amorality, the horrible truth is that I feel compelled to "come out" and indulge in a criticism of my partner at the 2009 London Open. Indeed, not just a criticism, rather a wholesale condemnation.

To be frank, partner was rubbish.

There, I've said it.

The fact is that partner's contribution to our joint venture consisted of indifferent squopping, woeful potting and worst of all a total lack of strategic and tactical advice, such that for much of the tournament I felt "on my own", bereft of the support, both moral and practical, which I feel one is entitled to expect in any doubles match, regardless of the sport. So strongly do I feel that I take a considerable risk in expressing these sentiments publicly (on the assumption that you, Mr Editor, see fit to print this rather than suppress it in the interests of good taste and the maintenance of the undisputedly fine reputation of your august journal) since the whole matter is technically *sub judice*, acrimonious correspondence having passed between partner and me, via the good offices of our respective legal advisors.

But I can contain myself no longer.

I have made it plain to partner, that should dates and diaries enable me to take part in the London Open 2010, we shall each need to seek a new partner. At this point I seek the assistance of Auntie Gertie and her agony column in appealing for a new partner who should be EITHER an "expert" player, prepared to take up the challenge of playing with one of "moderate" abilities and aspirations, OR, another "moderate" player (and I accept there are degrees of "moderatedness") who would otherwise be in difficulties in finding a suitable partner.

Readers requiring details of further developments are referred to the Law Reports.

Photo credit: Andrew Garrard

Richard, still with the same partner, at the 2010 Cambridge Open

The 2009 NATwA Pairs

Ithaca
12th-13th December 2009
Larry Kahn

NATwA headed north to Ithaca (a questionable decision in December) to hold the 2009 pairs. Initially we envisioned a fairly large turnout; 8-10 from the rejuvenated IHS team plus a number of out-of-towners that would have hopefully gotten us to 12 or so "unstacked" pairs. However, a rash of last minute out of town no-shows led to a major reshuffle of the expected pairings. The IHS players were asked if they wanted to split up their pairings to be able to play with experienced partners, but they said they'd rather keep their original pairings. The resulting field of eight (four novice, four experienced) sent Dave into an orgasmic frenzy as this was perfect for a straight knockout tournament. Since this was knockout finals year format, and Dave's idea actually made sense, we went for it. Prior to the actual pairs, we did play two "warm-up" rounds where all the experienced players partnered novices to help get them going.

The first round went as expected, with the four top seeds Larry and Severin (reunited after 28 years), Dave and Ferd, Bob and Mac, and Alan playing singles advancing. One of the IHS pairs (don't remember which at this point) did take their match to three games. In the semifinals, Larry and Severin had an easy two-game win, but Dave/Ferd and Bob/Mac were close going into game three.

Then all of a sudden we heard Dave yelling, "Sixth round pot-out, sixth round pot-out." None of us could figure out why he cared so much about potting out after the game was over. But what he was actually saying was, "SIX round pot-out." Ferd had brought five winks in, Carnovskied his sixth, and then ran the other five! So he had potted out in only six total rounds to take them in to the finals.

Finals started the next morning at 9:30. The first game quickly developed into a double pot threat; both Larry (squidge-off winner) and Dave had brought in well. Larry had taken the time to make one semi-totalled squop, big on little. Starting round 8, Larry took quite a while (egged on a bit by Dave) to decide to go for the theoretically fairly

easy pot-out other than the totalled squop. That went in first via an air shot, followed quickly by the other five.

Imagine you have a bowl of colourful tropical fish, you dump them out on a winks mat, and then watch them flop about randomly. That pretty much describes the subsequent potting. After what I swear had to be ten minutes, Severin finally managed to secure third place ahead of Ferd.

Game two was nearly identical to game one, although this time there were zero squops after six rounds and it was Larry to play. One wink at about 12 inches, one at eight, and the rest close. Dave was to go next with a similarly-placed pot-out threat. So, decision time again. Larry decided to go for it again, possibly influenced by Dave's "you have it in the palm of your hand" gestures plus not wanting to get involved in a squop game given Severin's play in the first game. The long one went in, then the close four, and the eight-incher curls around a bit but goes in also, guaranteeing the tournament win. So the last three rounds of the tournament had pot-outs in six, eight, and then seven rounds.

Perhaps the most disappointed person of the weekend was MP, who stopped by around 10:15 on her way to work, expecting to see some of the finals. Oops.

Letter to the Editor

I quote from the article of page 57 of WW92, "He has a tendency to (in true Keevash style) to cheat". This remark should not have been published, and certainly not without a disclaimer. I played several times against Pete Keevash, and he always played very honestly.

Yours faithfully, Charles Relle

The Editor would like to apologise to Mr Keevash. For the record, Pete Keevash acquired the suffix "cheating bastard" in the typical CUTwC manner of honorific acquisition: he was accused of cheating on one occasion, and the appellation has henceforth been traditional. That I believe he takes no more offence at his moniker than does, for example, SLU, does not give Winking World a licence to sully his good name among strangers.

Peterhouse Pot –
The Intellectual Game

Andrew Garrard

As those winkers of a CUTwC extraction will know, the Peterhouse Pot is a tournament held in CUTwC. The rules vary from the standard rules of tiddlywinks in that all squoops taken on opposing winks are un-squooped, in the way that such squoops are flattened after a pot-out. However, squoops on friendly winks are left standing.

Some would suggest that this makes Peterhouse Pot a non-tactical game of pure skill at bringing-in and potting, and that squopping has no part in the game. I humbly submit that these people are missing out on a game which has its own range of tactical options.

Conventional play in Peterhouse Pot consists of throwing both colours in the bucket as quickly as possible. This is perfectly valid if you've brought in well with both colours – at any given moment, the best chance of winning is to try to run the six winks which you've got next to the pot in your current turn, since you can expect to get all the winks in. This tactic is valid only so long as your current colour is the more likely of your colours to pot out, allowing for it playing before your other colour. Bringing in provides more difficulties for most players than potting does, meaning that there's a good chance of at least one wink in twelve being left distant and hard-to-pot. If you've tried to pot and missed, there's also a good chance of a wink being nurdled.

If one colour has four pottable winks and the other only three, the weaker colour's tempo could be better spent improving its partner's position than by trying to pot itself. The possibilities afforded by squopping yourself are numerous. Since Peterhouse Pot tournaments are traditionally a knock-out format, there is no benefit in following in.

For the purpose of this article, I'll assume that yellow is about to play, and is in a poor position (either at the edges of the mat or nurdled) such that green presents the side's best chance of winning.

Lunching

Scenario: Green has one distant wink to bring in. A green near the pot is next to a yellow.

Conventional play: Either green pots, then brings in, then pots, or green brings in then pots twice.

Suggestion: Yellow should squoop green. Green brings in, while yellow tries to lunch green. If the green goes in, green then only has one wink to pot. If yellow misses with the green, no harm is done. Even if the lunch is unlikely, yellow may be able to place the squooped wink at green's favourite potting distance, unhampered by nearby winks. Note that this should not be done if green is likely to need to risk potting directly from range.

Denurdling

Scenario: Green has a nurdled wink near a yellow.

Conventional play: Green either pots then brings out, or brings out and threatens to run the remaining winks.

Suggestion: Yellow should squoop green. Green pots as many winks as possible, yellow chips the green to a pottable position, and green pots it in the next turn. This way green can afford to miss a pot in green's first turn, since all the greens will be pottable anyway in green's second turn. This should not be done if green is likely to need to risk potting the nurdled wink directly. If the position permits it, yellow might consider potting off the green, relying on the green to move advantageously in the process; this gives a tempo advantage and allows another yellow to assist green in a different way (or, if green's position is bad enough, helps to promote yellow as the new potting colour in a noncommittal way).

Snooving

Scenario: Green has a distant wink next to a yellow. Green has other winks to pot.

Conventional play: Green would pot, then bring in, or bring in and then pot.

Suggestion: As with the denurdling argument, yellow should squoop green so that – should all the other greens not go in during green's next turn – the squooped green can be brought in by yellow.

This strategy is especially useful if there are multiple distant greens to bring in, although if green's position is bad enough then it can be better to spend tempo making yellow into a viable threat.

Creating friendly piles

Scenario: Two greens are adjacent, awkward to pot. Green has other winks to pot.

Conventional play: Green takes multiple turns to reposition the winks.

Suggestion: Yellow squoops greens. A single dock can place multiple greens in a good potting position. If there's a green on a yellow, there's a chance of double-lunching.

Some winkers know the trick of potting stacks of winks; arranging for such a trick shot allows for a lot of tempo to become available. Stacking the greens may allow for a double-pot and two more shots when green needs it most.

Destroying friendly piles

Scenario: A green is covering a friendly wink, such that it is awkward to pot.

Suggestion: Yellow bombs the pile, flattening the green and making it easier to pot. Bombing from the side is safer, in that the green is less likely to remain covered. If the free yellow is near the pile, it may be better to squoop it and try to lunch in the next turn, if green has other things to do.

Chinese snooker

Scenario: A blue is near the yellow.

Suggestion: Yellow should aim to be behind the blue. Many players are put off by a wink in the follow-through position. (Winks in front of a wink that is due to be potted are less likely to be a problem, due to the lifting of the front of the wink.)

Wall of winks

Scenario: A blue is behind a yellow, near the pot.

Suggestion: Squoop the yellow. While potting from behind a flat wink is usually no problem, potting behind a pile can be tricky, since the wink can hit the pile on the way past. The taller the pile, the more effective the block will be. There is an argument for leaving yellows stacked up where they can be bristled into a blocking position. There is an ambiguity in the rules of Peterhouse Pot regarding how an enemy wink should be unsquopped if the wink that is squopping it is also squopping a friendly wink: I don't know that anyone playing Peterhouse Pot has ever deliberately bristled onto someone.

Ring of death

Scenario: Friendly winks surround the pot. A blue lands very close.

Suggestion: Yellow deliberately subs under blue. The blue wink is moved so that yellow is no longer squopped (note that after a pot-out it is the squopping wink that is moved). If yellows form a ring around the pot, the blue – which would otherwise have to maintain its distance from the pot – may be moved to be nurdled.

Lining the pot

Scenario: Yellow's position is hopeless, but the pot is empty.

Suggestion: Although there is little point in yellow trying to get first place, it can be useful to line the pot to make green's potting easier and avoid scrunging. It's rare for this to be useful, since it assumes that blue is unlikely to try to pot.

It's also an argument for bringing in all your winks before you start potting, so as not to assist the opposition.

Click-off/back stop

Scenario: Green is on a yellow, far from the pot. (This may have happened if yellow tried to squop the green in order to help with green's bring-in, and the squop subbed.)

Suggestion: Bringing in a small wink off a large wink can be done with a phone-card, in the style of a click shot. This can be very accurate in direction and makes rolling unlikely (which is why the rules of tiddlywinks insist that winks behind the baseline be played off the mat rather than any other surface). The difficulty comes with distance. Providing a "wall" of yellow winks can be useful, as a way to stop the green from travelling too far (and if the green subs under the yellows, yellow will have the chance to free it before green's next shot).

Knocking opponents' winks

Scenario: There are blues close together, pottable.

Suggestion: While yellow cannot squop blue, this does not mean that yellow cannot be used to move blue winks. Blues can be knocked to be nurdled, or be knocked far from the pot (although this is usually only viable if yellow does this from the baseline). On lively mats, it's possible to Good a flat wink from a significant range.

Enemy winks can be knocked onto each other, or at least close together, hampering their pot-ability. Knocking a blue under a red (or a red onto a blue) can give green a tempo advantage. If all the other enemy winks are potted, it is possible to gain squop-up turns in this way by arranging some of the enemy's winks into a Thorpe Ring. It is possible for a game of Peterhouse Pot to end with two Thorpe Rings; if this ever happens, I expect to read about it in Winking World.

Selling a dummy

Scenario: Green has been threatening to win, and opposing winks are arranged to get in the way of green's remaining few shots.

Suggestion: This is the time to take the pile of yellows which you've been bristolling around near the pot, get them all in with one shot, and use the tempo to get all six yellows in. Even if this doesn't work, you may rattle your opponents enough that green's threat becomes easier.

The Somerset Invitation

The Somerset Wagon, Chilcompton
3rd and 4th January 2010
Ed Wynn

It was a strange experience, walking back into the Somerset Wagon after almost a decade: the same old faces scowled out from the same old portraits, but familiarity was constantly confronted by minor changes. Where was the birdcage hanging over the table, on which every winker eventually knocked his head? Is there no pub left in Christendom with a moose's head and a wall-mounted man-trap? Stew Sage was especially unsettled by this: for example, when someone casually wondered when the kitchens stopped serving lunch, he answered "2:30" with great confidence, which was then shaken: "Well, it used to be 2:30."

In contrast to the old days of bedding down beside grandfather clocks and tortoises, we stayed at a very acceptable hotel down the road. This gave us head-clearing walks in the frosty landscape, and well-defined breakfasts. Nick Inglis arrived a day later than expected, bringing tales of car trouble. Andrew Garrard arrived a day late as expected, bringing camera equipment (Stew: "I've never spent that much on a car!"). We were worried by the start of his request, "I have a KFC box, would it be possible…" – surely he's not about to ask for the microwave? – but he only wanted a suitable bin.

Many traditions were maintained. The favourite beer was Henry's IPA, which mysteriously ran out every day. The food was excellent and plentiful (though lacking Double Cod and Chocolate Magic). I was obliged to seek a constitutional in the carpark, overcome by similar faggots to those that Sarah Knight and others later overcame. Timmy Hunt brought his Christmas quiz. Alan Harper drank his fines. I don't remember which game was invented, though, and French tickler sales were up.

Winks was played. In the last round, Alan had the chance to snatch equal second place with Andrew, if he could somehow take 7 points from him. Instead, he chose to help his partner (me), who desperately wanted at least 1 point to achieve his long-standing ambition to win the Somerset. He helped via a cunning late pot-out threat, which materialised into 7 points. Dan Babar also ended in the top half; a sign of things to come? Even the lowliest PPG was above 2. Astonishingly, there were only three pots-out; also astonishingly, Stew was not involved in any of them. I feel almost bashful pointing out that I was involved in all of them; however, the fault is not in my stars, but in the lack of them elsewhere.

The last words can go to Vincent Webb, the "new" landlord, who (along with the lovely bar-staff) made us so welcome, and suggested that we could return. "Next time, I'll get the drinks order right. You drank more than I thought," he said, wonderingly.

Why Bother With Tiddlywinks Nowadays?

Charles Relle

I read with dismay the article in WW92 entitled Bunnies Please, but I was not entirely surprised by its contents, nor by the fact that it was written by a mathematician. The article might have been subtitled How to Keep as Many People as Possible out of the Game, and it is the latest manifestation of a campaign by mathematicians to do just that. This campaign is conducted in several ways.

In national tournaments, the first stage is to have a protracted email discussion of possible formats, and to make the formats themselves as complicated as possible. This means that anyone who misses an email finds the discussion hard to follow, and anyone who has been away for more than a few days has a discouraging amount of material to absorb, with increasing boredom and incomprehension. The intention, and possibly the result, is to reduce, as far as possible, the entry from non-mathematicians.

The second stage is to call tournament formats by the names of people who have no connection with Tiddlywinks, are scarcely well known in themselves, and are destined for oblivion in the near future. This neatly divorces the format from reality, and make it difficult for potential entrants to a tournament to know what to expect. Naturally, this discourages them from entering.

The third stage is to fix on a format that is quite hard to follow, and makes it difficult for players to see from the scoresheet how they are getting on. A secondary intention is to inhibit the less confident players from entering their scores on the scoresheet, and to complain at them for not doing so. This weakens their resolve to come to subsequent tournaments.

The fourth stage, as illustrated by the article I have quoted, is so to arrange the format as to exclude from the tournament as many people as possible as soon as possible. This neatly deals with those who have had the hardihood to come to the tournament and have braved the scoresheet, but may not have filled it in. If they can be eliminated quickly, they can cause no further trouble.

National tournaments are taken seriously, but they used to be fun as well. Those days are past, for the reasons I have set out above. However, inroads have recently been made into tournaments that are regarded, at least by some people, as specifically fun tournaments. How is this done?

Handicapped tournaments have proved an easy target. The first step has been to give players fractional handicaps. Fractional handicaps have been instituted with no prior discussion. This produces discomfort, because people are unused to fractional handicaps, and because an element of tyranny has been introduced into a moderately democratic game.

The second step is that tried weapon, the scoresheet. With fractional handicaps, the score, especially in a pairs game, is much more difficult to calculate, and players are left not knowing whether their raw score represents a win or a loss. Added to this, the fractions in the handicapped scores that result are not easy to understand at a glance, and a player cannot readily tell how well he or she is doing in the tournament, unless he is a mathematician. The question poses itself; why travel for this kind of obscurity?

Mathematicians will argue that what they have done is in pursuit of greater accuracy, but I believe that there is a hidden agenda. Some years ago, a book was published entitled Mathematicians Delight. In what do mathematicians delight? As far as tiddlywinks is concerned, it is in making as discouraging as possible a game that is meant to be fun for as many people as possible. To put it more succinctly, mathematicians believe, with Sartre, that Hell is other people.

[Editorial note: I've noticed the deep divide between the mathematically-inclined and those with an artistic bent before; notably, my discussion on possible solutions to slow play was met with "too trivial to be worth explaining" by mathematicians and "too complex to understand" by artists. This isn't just ETwA: Radio 4 presenters take pride in not being able to understand the Fibonacci sequence or the concept of putting votes in order of preference. Can't we all just get along?]

The Cambridge Open

Selwyn Diamond, Cambridge
30th-31st January 2010
Patrick Barrrie

It is good to know that in times of trouble and distress, global warming and financial melt-down, that there will be still be a Cambridge Open, there will still be lunch-times in the Red Bull, and there will still be a Club Dinner.

27 people played at least one game of tiddlywinks at this year's event, with four beginners making their tournament debut: Ellen Jordan and Andrew Swan (brought by DBW), Deborah Fisher (CUTwC) and James Devenny (reporter). An additional beginner was playing in only his second tournament: Christian Gowers (CUTwC). Whilst the occasional game involving beginners against experts was one-sided, the majority of games were competitive.

Matt Fayers' computer programme, complete with user-friendly interface, randomly allocated partners and opponents each round, subject to various non-random constraints. Luck gradually evened itself out for most players, though the fickle finger of fate handed Bob Wilkinson a difficult game in almost every round.

Photo credit: Andrew Garrard

*The secretary, in formal wear
(The Club Dinner: Oh no, not again)*

Photo credit: Andrew Garrard

The Club Dinner took place at the end of the first day, and all reports are that it was a remarkably civilised occasion. Several unanswered questions remain. Is a joke still a joke if the punch-line is told first? Can the location and velocity of the President's Vice be known at the same time? Why is that strange man called Stephanie?

At the start of the second day, Matt Fayers had a useful lead in the tiddlywinks, but had yet to partner any of the beginners. When he did so, the usual suspects caught up with him. With two rounds to go, only one point separated the top four players. However, Patrick Barrie hadn't yet partnered Alan Dean or Matt Fayers. Destiny decreed that he would do so in the final two games, finish with two 7*s, and win the tournament for the third year in succession. A special commendation goes to Richard Ackland for winning 8 of his first 10 games even though he did not trouble the scorers in his final two games.

		Pld	Tot	PPG
	Patrick Driscoll	1	7	7
1	**Patrick Barrie**	**11**	**55**	**5**
	Ben Fairbairn	4	20	5
2	**Matthew Fayers**	**11**	**52½**	$\mathbf{4^{17}/_{22}}$
3	**Alan Dean**	**12**	**56½**	$\mathbf{4^{17}/_{24}}$
	Ed Wynn	5	23	$5^3/_5$
4	**Charles Relle**	**12**	**55**	$\mathbf{4^7/_{12}}$
5	**Timmy Hunt**	**11**	**44**	**4**
	Stew Sage	8	32	4
	Phil Buckham-Bonnett	3	12	4
	Chris Abram	1	4	4
6	**Andrew Garrard**	**10**	**37**	$\mathbf{3^7/_{10}}$
7	**Richard Ackland**	**12**	**43**	$\mathbf{3^7/_{12}}$
	John Haslegrave	9	31½	$3^1/_2$
	Geoff Thorpe	7	21½	$3^1/_{14}$
	Dan Babar	6	18	3
	Ellen Jordan	5	14½	$2^9/_{10}$
	Deborah Fisher	4	11½	$2^7/_8$
	Alan Harper	7	19½	$2^{11}/_{14}$
	David Bradley-Williams	3	8	$2^2/_3$
	James Devenny	6	13½	$2^1/_4$
8	**Bob Wilkinson**	**12**	**24½**	$\mathbf{2^1/_{24}}$
	Paul Moss	2	4	2
	Christian Gowers	4	7	$1^3/_4$
	Liz Ackland	5	8	$1^3/_5$
	Andrew Swan	8	12½	$1^9/_{16}$
	Sarah Knight	3	3½	$1^1/_6$

Photo credit: Andrew Garrard

"The Little Book of Soups and Stews" compiled & edited by Cyril Edwards

Book Review by Patrick Barrie

The editor of this small cook book is well known for his tiddlywinks exploits and his canny ability to say things that induce a response from Charles. Away from the winks mat, he has dedicated some of his lifetime to gastronomy: good beer, decent whisky, and food. This book is a collection of recipes, both his and those solicited from his friends. Many of the dishes have a German flavour, perhaps gleaned from Cyril's translations of medieval German literature. Some of the recipes are established classics from around the world, while others are more original, such as the Consommé of Goat contributed by former Oxford winker Naveed Chaudhri. In all, the book contains about 100 eclectic recipes, livened up by occasional figures drawn by Cyril's sister (whom I remember partnering to a 6-1 win in the 1992 Teams of Four). Perhaps Cyril's greatest achievement in this publication is to answer the question: "How do you fit one Stew, let alone more than one, into a little book?".

The Little Book of Soups and Stews is available, while the stock lasts, at a price of £7.99 excluding postage from the author (contactable via ETwA).

Letter to the Editor

Sir,

I wish to make two points arising out of articles in WW92. On page 44, in Potting for Novices, I find, "Charles will talk at great length about how to pot off winks at various angles". I shall not. I had my say in WW57. Jon Mapley had written an article entitled "Nowink's Impottible" in WW55, and my piece was a review of it. It was a long as the original article, and I have no more to add.

On page 57, we are introduced to Pat Sobason. Maybe he does play winks, but as one who has kept cats all his life, I am sure that at the present rate of tournament play, he would sleep through the lot.

Yours faithfully, Charles Relle

National Teams of Four

Selwyn Diamond, Cambridge
27th-28th February 2010
Matthew Fayers

The Fours returned to Cambridge this year, thanks to the organisational capabilities of Dr Sage. I drove up to Cambridge on the Saturday morning, and was forced to park on the M11 for fifteen minutes by an accident ahead of me, which very nearly necessitated a Garrard-style phone call. Fortunately the blockage cleared, and I made it to the Diamond just in time for the 10:30 start.

Ten players played to begin with, making three teams. I once more used my unofficial variant of the official ETwA handicap formula; with a very strong field, the average rating of the players was very nearly 2000, so that even the double world champion had a handicap of 6½. We adopted the usual format for three teams of all playing all three times.

SiBo, taking a different route to Buddha than that followed by the editor

The early games went mostly to form, with the highly-handicapped Lake of Parvenus getting strong enough raw scores in the first all-play-all to maintain a lead after transfer. Sarah and I had several close games, and more than once agreed a 4-3 result with our opponents early in rounds.

As is usual with tournaments in Selwyn, we lunched in the Red Bull. With only four games to play in the afternoon, we were able to be somewhat leisurely, which made the choice of Chemin de Fer as the early drinking game a little odd. However, we safely negotiated a quadruple rollover, and moved on to pizza and, in my case, sausages. Dan, our resident semi-professional comedian, assured us that saying the same things that funny people say does not make one funny.

We returned to the winks shortly after two. Midway through the afternoon two strangers arrived, keen to play, and were added to the short-handed teams. They were assisted in their first winks experience by playing against each other in their first game, and partnering Patrick and me, the two strongest players on paper. Unfortunately for Johnny and me, we were playing on felt rather than paper, and we slid to a 5-2 defeat. However, the newcomers seemed to enjoy their winks experience, and were sufficiently unhorrified by winkers that they even came to the pub with us in the evening. We chose the County, in the hope that Dr Sage would be able to join us after his dinner at Magdalene. Curry was had in the Maharajah, and was very nice.

We returned on the Sunday morning to find that the newcomers had abandoned us, leaving Patrick and me to play singles, and necessitating a slightly complicated handicap computation. The scores in the second all-play-all followed much the same pattern as in the first, with the Parvenus extending their lead over Dyspeptic to $5^5/_{12}$.

Lunch was again taken in the Red Bull, although the beer was not admired as much as usual. Andrew (aided by a surprise appearance from Steph) managed to drink the pub out of Diet Coke; but despite a concerted team effort, we failed to eat them out of calzones. Lunch dragged slightly because I bought a little bit too much beer, but again we only had four games to play in the afternoon, so there was no great hurry.
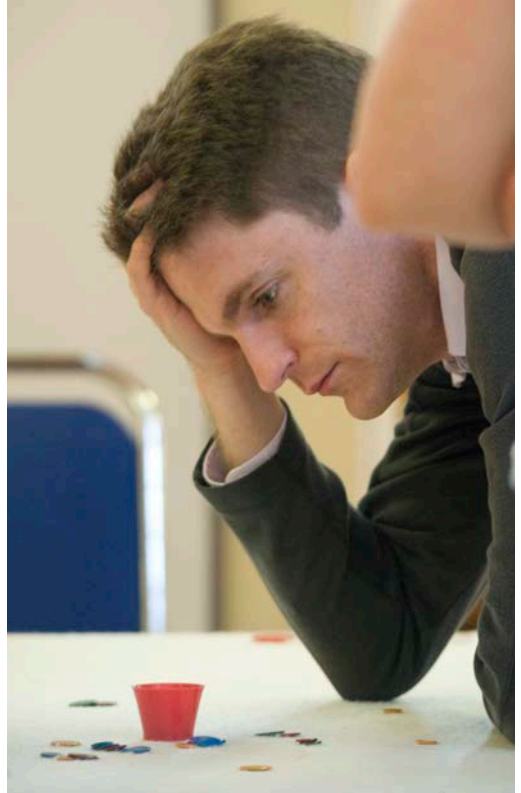
At this point, Sarah stepped up as captain and whipped her team into shape. Unlike the other teams, we decided to return to our partnerships from the first round, rather than completing the cycle of partners. This paid dividends, as Sarah and I had a storming afternoon, and Slu did well, too. In the first round of the afternoon, he began potting out with blue, only to realise once he had potted several winks that a blue was squopped. But somehow he managed to pot out eventually. The highlight for Sarah and me was our game against Alan and Patrick. This took the form of an Ing-

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lis game, in which Alan cracked first. A twenty-one-wink pile developed, largely controlled by us, though Alan was able to break it. Then Alan and Patrick took control, until an excellent Lennon by Sarah made the game close again. Missed pots by our opponents gave us the win, $4^2/_3$-$2^1/_3$. This helpfully cancelled out the reverse scoreline between the two teams from the first day (in which Alan had had the option to pass in round five to win $5\frac{1}{2}$-$1\frac{1}{2}$, but instead had gone for a pot with disastrous consequences), to remove the thirds from the final totals.

After the final game, a session of serious sums, mostly performed by Dr Harper, revealed that EFBT had done enough to climb into first place. The trophy was presented, and people departed. A checking of the scores the next day revealed that all handicap transfers had been calculated correctly, which doesn't always happen.

Handicaps:

Patrick Barrie	7
Matt Fayers	6½
Alan Dean	5½
Alan Harper	4
Patrick Driscoll	4
Andrew Garrard	3
Stew Sage	2½
Chris Abram	2
Dan Babar	½
Sarah Knight	0
Chris Watling	-1
Johnny Howorth	-1

Final scores:

EFBT Sarah Knight Chris Abram Matt Fayers Johnny Howorth	89¾
Lake of Parvenus Patrick Barrie Andrew Garrard Alan Dean Chris Watling	87⅝
Dyspeptic Patrick Driscoll Stew Sage Alan Harper Dan Babar	74⅝

Matt & Sarah			3	4	4	1
Slu			1	3	1	2⅓
Stew & SiBo	4	6			0*	1
AlanH & Dan	3	4			5*	1
Patrick & Andrew	3	6	7*	2*		
AlanD	6	4⅔	6	6		
Sarah & Slu			3	5*	1	0*
Matt & Johnny			3	6*	2	*5*
SiBo & Dan	4	4			1	1
Stew & AlanH	2*	1*			2	6*
Patrick & Chris	6	5	*6*	*5*		
AlanD & Andrew	7*	2	6	1*		
Slu			1	7*	4	1
Matt & Sarah			5*	5*	6	4⅔
AlanH & SiBo	6	2*			3	1*
Stew & Dan	0*	*2*			0*	2
Andrew	3	1	4	7*		
Patrick & AlanD	6	2⅓	6*	5		

For scores in italics, Patrick, Matt or Stew played singles.

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Photo credit: Andrew Garrard

Invisible squops

Matt X. Amin-Eir

I feel sure that everyone read Andrew's article in WW87 on umpiring. This contains some excellent advice. Occasionally, however, it presents geometrical arguments whose real-world validity I would like to explore.

The important statement is this: "if the winks are on a slope, the higher wink must be squopping the lower one – albeit by such a small amount that it's likely to be impossible to see the overlap". The implication is that, if you can be sure that the winks are touching, you can look for the slope and deduce the overlap. I question the reliability of this implication.

An immediate point: if an umpire who trusts in geometry declares two winks "touching but side-by-side", he is admitting that he can't discern the slope. If the umpire is sure that they are touching, then non-overlap would be vanishingly improbable – is he then duty bound to declare one wink or the other as squopped? It would be freakish if their tangent were truly vertical. Here, all sensible umpires would defy geometry and apply the benefit of the doubt.

Let's estimate the amount of overlap involved. Suppose a large wink is precariously resting on a flat wink, and two small winks are resting flat on the large wink. If an umpire is sure that the two small winks are touching, then geometry tells him that there is an overlap of roughly 0.004m[*]. This

is 25 times smaller than the thickness of some notional human hair, and several times smaller than the proverbial Rizla. Certainly, "it's likely to be impossible to see the overlap". If you can see imperfections in a wink, they are considerably larger than this overlap. If you can see a shallow scratch on a wink, its width is comparable.

As we all know, winks frequently perch halfway up sloping winks, even steeply sloping ones. This must be even more frequent if there is a lower wink, so that the upper wink can slide down, rebound very slightly and then stop. So, how can the umpire be sure that the two winks are touching? In cases like this, where the arrangement could be touching or perching, he must detect the contact, presumably by optical inspection. This brings very little benefit compared to looking for overlap.

If two winks are leaning on each other, contact seems certain. Andrew provides a diagram of an example, confidently labelled "squopped". The overlap here, if you believe in geometry, is less than 0.001mm. You can't see it. You can't see it with a magnifying glass. You couldn't see it with a microscope, because it's similar to the wavelength of visible light. An invisible speck of cigarette smoke could change the status significantly, without even considering bobbles on the mat. Is this a sufficient basis for a confident decision, when that decision could ruin a pot-out threat?

[Editorial reply: I stand by my argument, because you take "the benefit of the doubt" here to mean "free if not clearly squopped". This seems unfair to the player trying to <u>stop</u> the pot-out threat. Invisible imperfections in the equipment are as likely to cause as to negate a squop; winks on a slope at least affect the mean tendency to be squopped, even ignoring those winks with cylindrical edges. I maintain that it's more justifiable to declare whether two winks touch, based on trying to shine light between them, than to establish the tangent.]

radians), this is approximately $r \times \alpha^2$. If a large wink rests precariously on another wink, this is a height difference of 1.5mm at a horizontal separation of approximately 20mm, so α is approximately (1.5/20). Two small winks leaning on each other might have a height difference of half a radius, 0.38mm, at a horizontal separation of 15mm, so α is approximately (0.38/15). The horizontal overlaps for these values are 4.2µm and 0.48µm respectively.

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[*] I've assumed that the thickness of a wink is 1.5mm, as the rules say, and that the curvature at their edges has a circular cross-section. If the radius of this circle is r, which is 0.75mm, and the winks are at an angle α to the horizontal, then the overlap is $2r \times (1 - \cos \alpha)$. When α is small (and in

World Singles 63

Cambridge
20th March 2010
Matthew Fayers

Photo credit: Matthew Fayers

Matt Fayers	4½	6	1	4	4½	6	26
Patrick Barrie	2½	1	6	3	2½	1	16
Dominant Corners	4½	1	1	3	4½	1	15
Recessive Corners	2½	6	6	4	2½	6	27
Squidge-off winner	4½	6	1	4	4½	1	21
Squidge-off loser	2½	1	6	3	2½	6	21

Patrick very kindly hosted us in his office in Emmanuel. Alan Dean very kindly came to umpire, and John Haslegrave was there for much of the time, too. We played two games before lunch, and four after. Lunch happened in the Free Press, and was very good: Matt and Alan had meatloaf, while Patrick had breakfast (with his egg sunny-side-up).

The winks was closer than the scores suggest, and of moderate quality. Matt probably had the better of the close umpiring decisions, which were sufficiently numerous that Alan complained of eye strain at the end. In the first few games, both players brought in well enough that pot-out threats needed to be snuffed out. Matt actually went for the pot in game 2 (with one wink at the baseline), but the second wink missed long and rolled a long way from the pot. The crucial moment was in round 5 of game 4, when Patrick looked to be heading towards an easy 6-1, but Matt was able to break the pile with green; this pile break worked surprisingly well, freeing all the yellows, and Matt potted enough of these to steal the game. Game 5 was similar, though less dramatic. Overall, a big determining factor was that Patrick missed several easy pots; he blamed the mat, which was brand new. Matt had less trouble with the mat: he missed two pots in the first two games, but none thereafter.

The results suggest that dominant corners are rubbish, and winning the squidge-off is itsy-bitsy.

Photo credit: Matthew Fayers

Player Profile:
Dr. "Anthony Horton" Hotdog

Hotdog

G'day! News having reached me down under, as it were, that ETwA is running profiles of famous winkers, I thought it might be a good idea for the moral edification of a younger generation if I submitted unbidden (an oversight I'm sure) a profile of myself, surely one of the most famous – if not most successful – winkers of recent times.

I first took up the noble sport along with the now-famous former Junior Treasurer and dried fruit enthusiast, Tim Winchcomb, in 1998, at the beginning of my second year at Cambridge – after my college, Trinity Hall, ran out of eligible women-folk for us to pursue. I remember being very attracted to CUTwC by the beautiful long red hair of then-president James Murray, and such was the confusion engendered at the squash and early meetings of my first term that it was not until much later that I realised I should have been focusing my attention on Jessica Babbage.

In the early stages of my winking career, I was among the most talented of the undergraduates then playing the game in Cambridge (if I do say so myself), and I also distinguished myself by strong social skills and drinking games abilities, displayed after winks in Queens' Bar. I believe that all these skills were central to my success in securing the Presidency of the Club in the summer of 1999, and it was that presidency that underpinned my finest hour in the sport, captaining my team to victory over Oxford in the Varsity match of 2000, by a singable score of 88-24. In fact, it

was at the critical moment – climax, if you will – of this match that my earlier error concerning James' sex became apparent to me when, seeing Matt Fayers sink the winning pot on a neighbouring table, I gave my partner a congratulatory peck on the cheek.

Since those heady days of 2000, my career in tiddlywinks has undergone a disturbing downhill spiral: it is as though the world had turned on its head. Who among those present will forget the tragic events of the 2001 Somerset Invitational held in Brussels? Who could blank from their mind the 2003 Somerset Invitational tournament held in Bylaugh? (I take this opportunity to own up for the boxer shorts incident and to apologise to Matt Fayers for pretending all this time that they were his). *[Ed note: Ohhh...]*

But I do want to use this forum to set the record straight on one thing: some people have claimed that I was the worst drinking games player of all time (worse, even, than Peter Corbett), but I have always maintained, and still do maintain, that my sporty and unpredictable play is justified by the fact that I always drink my fines, even here in Australia, where I effectively have to brew them myself to keep up with those I incur most evenings playing a version of Red Hand of Ulster I wrote in PASCAL (it can simulate anywhere between 2 and 48 players and can be played in novice, NARG, or SEPTIC mode, depending on how much time and liver you have to kill).

I hope that writing this profile will inspire youngsters should they still exist, to follow as far in my footsteps as they can, seizing life (and any eligible

women they may find) by the horns and enjoying the good things that lie before them. Surely if in any field of human endeavour there is a group of people who do this well, it is the tiddlywinkers.

Photo credit: Anthony Horton

All together now: Other Nations Are Before Us...

Jubilee Trophy X
Alan Dean's house
Sunday 4th April
Tim Hunt

| Alan | 5 | 5 | 6 | 6 |
| Tim | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 |

Tim travelled from Milton Keynes to Sandy by bus, passing many fine spring flowers, and being rather perplexed by the route the bus took into Sandy. Was it following a space-filling curve?

The match started with two very tough games, but in both cases Alan came good in rounds to get the points. For example, the shot of the match probably came in game two, when, in round four, Alan Bristolled two winks a long way to break a pile. Therefore, the only thing Tim won all day was the first two squidge-offs, and a friendly game of Go after the match.

The third game was also played before lunch, but Tim was starting to fade while Alan was getting stronger. It was still close, and took some missed pots to give Alan the 6-1.

Lunch was excellent roast lamb, but even that was not enough to revive Tim's play. Indeed, with the score at 16-5, Alan only needed two points from the last two matches, and got them comfortably.

What's in the box?
Andrew Garrard

Chris Abram suggested that novices might be interested in the squidger box contents of experienced players. Here goes...

My squidger box is the same pot that my first winks set came in. (In fact, it's an identical replacement, since the original sacrificed itself for its contents when a Sun workstation fell on it, but symbolically it's the same.) It still holds my original pot and set – although the latter have been transferred to a film canister since the plastic bag wrapped around the originals got used to suspend a torch for beer illumination at a Somerset Invitation.

As for the squidgers, for most potting and squopping shots I still use a mid-sized CUTwC blank (presumably once a poker chip) that I filed down in my first year; this is my equivalent of "Salmon Pink". It's not, visually, perfectly smooth, but it doesn't stick. There's a small chip out of it where it fell on the concrete floor in Kidlington.

Since the edge of my main squidger is very sharp, I don't use it for docking or bringing in. For bring-ins, I have an unfiled Larry Kahn blank, although I've also been known to use an unfiled version of my main squidger, especially for Carnovskies.

I have a full-sized squidger made with Timmy's assistance from the side of a floppy disk storage box. Filed to a moderate edge, I use this when docking. I also use it for grip when playing near the pot, or when a lot of flick is needed (such as when potting large nurdled winks).

I have a phone card squidger, actually made out of a phone card (none of this credit card nonsense), for the traditional potting of small winks next to the pot. I used to have a smaller version as well, but seem to have lost it.

I have a few small squidgers of varying quality; I've never got around to filing one down. I usually use my main squidger for bristols, so these are mostly for playing near the pot.

I carry a few unfinished squidger fragments, for no good reason. Finally, I still carry a paper squidger from a recent Relle. I've yet to find a use for it.