

# THE WINKING WORLD

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## In Praise of Winks

We must all at some time or another question our continued involvement in Winks, if only to explain our interest to a friend or to our psychiatrist. Reasons abound. Is it because it is a game with a fair amount of comic potential? A glance at those playing reveals that winks does attract those with a humour delighting in the absurd. Is it because it is the only game that we're good at? That was certainly the way that modern winks began, but if our prowess at darts, chess, Go, rugby or table tennis is anything to go by (not to mention Jon's badminton...so I won't), it may be less true of modern winkers. Is it because of the beer? Liquid and winks go together, back to the probable origin of the word tiddlywink...but even if we need drinks to wink, do we need winks to drink? Is the appeal of winks to be found, rather like cricket, in the meeting of friends, the exchange of memories in a haze of nostalgia, the game almost incidental to the day's enjoyment? Is it the statistical potential of the game? Perhaps true in America, and seemingly confirmed by the high proportion of statisticians and computer personnel and abattoir sanitary inspectors who play the game...but does anyone beyond the deviant record their results. Isn't it true that your average would be as embarrassing as mine, and so we don't bother?

What then is the appeal of winks. For me it is something in the game itself...that magnificent combination of tactical sense, skill, nerve, bluff, luck, appreciation of the absurd and the local brew... a kind of all-weather croquet and beer festical combined. Whatever it is in the game it has kept me interested since I first played at school, at the Hare Hall Tiddlywink Club in the early '60's, in the days of the London League first time round. I've been involved in three tournaments or matches so far this year, all of a good standard, all closely competitive, and I've ended all emotionally and physically drained, much to the amusement of those of my friends who don't play. Is this combination peculiar to winks, or present in all sports? It may be, but for me the need for a game which forces me to use my head, which is absorbing in itself, which tests my physical skill, and doesn't involve me in kicking the hell out of the opponent's supporters, is met in winks. If E.Tw.A. were reduced to only four players active in England, it would still be worth us meeting round the mat! Roll on the next match!

Geoff Cornell - Editor.

## 1977 E.Tw.A. Congress and National Singles Championships.

This is to take place at Brunel University, West London over the weekend of November . It is hoped to have two divisions in the Singles event, with an all-play-all competition within each division. Competitors enter which Division they wish, and the winner of Division I is the English Champion...so everyone, of whatever standard has a chance for some good games and keen competition. To enter and to receive the necessary further details, write to Dennis Opposs.

## Change of Address

E.Tw.A. Chairman: Jon Mapley: 2 Jansmead, Wickham, Essex.

## 1977 National Pairs Championships

The 1977 National Pairs Competition was the first to be held over one weekend, and took place from 30th April to the 1st May at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge. A rather disappointing entry of only ten pairs was enhanced by the legendary Dave Lockwood who flew over from New York especially for the occasion - at considerably less expense than people travelling from such exotic places as Manchester and Southampton. From the start all efforts were directed towards ensuring that he could not win (well he is foreign, after all!)

The Competition was played as an all-play-all match, with the top two pairs playing a final decided on the best of three games. The time limit was set at 25 minutes in line with the ideas expressed at the last Congress. Throughout Saturday, when each pair played 6 or 7 games, it was clear that Alan Dean and Geoff Cornell were playing as well as expected of the favourites. During the day they were closely followed by Paul Light and Dennis Opposs and it seemed likely that these would be the two pairs to reach the final. However, both Jon Mapley and Dave Rose, and Cyril Edwards and Dave Lockwood were threatening, and when Paul and Dennis rather surprisingly lost their last game of the day 6 - 1 to a pair who hadn't done better than 2-5 before then, the scramble for places was on.

On the Sunday Morning Paul and Dennis lost the crucial match to Cyril and Dave, but Dave then had to catch his plane back to the States, leaving Cyril to contend with the transfer of points rule which ensured that he couldn't get any further (after all, it was a pairs championship!). When Paul and Dennis lost yet again and Jon and David beat Geoff Rawlings and Keith Seaman  $5\frac{1}{2} - 1\frac{1}{2}$  they qualified to meet Alan and Geoff in the final....they had collected 49 points from their 9 games.

	D/P	G/F	A/G	J/D	A/GP	K/G	M/E	C/D	P/J	D/C	Pts.	Pos.
Dennis & Paul	-	6	1	3	1	$5\frac{1}{2}$	6	6	5	$1\frac{1}{2}$	35	3rd
Geoff T & Fred	1	-	1	6	5	1	$4\frac{1}{2}$	6	7	1	$32\frac{1}{2}$	7th
Alan D & Geoff C	6	6	-	6	6	$3\frac{1}{2}$	6	$3\frac{1}{2}$	6	6	49	1st
Jon & Dave	4	1	1	-	6	$5\frac{1}{2}$	3	4	7	5	$36\frac{1}{2}$	2nd
Alan S & Geoff P	6	2	1	1	-	2	0*	0*	0*	1	13	10th
Keith & Geoff R	$1\frac{1}{2}$	6	$3\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{1}{2}$	5	-	$1\frac{1}{2}$	6	6	3	34	5th=
Martin & Eddie	1	$2\frac{1}{2}$	1	4	7*	$5\frac{1}{2}$	-	1	6	6	34	5th=
Colin & Dave T	1	1	$3\frac{1}{2}$	3	7*	1	6	-	$4\frac{1}{2}$	$4\frac{1}{2}$	$31\frac{1}{4}$	8th
Pete & Jeremy	2	0	1	0	7*	1	1	$2\frac{1}{2}$	-	1	$15\frac{1}{2}$	9th
Dave L & Cyril	$5\frac{1}{2}$	6	1	2	6	4	1	$2\frac{3}{4}$	6	-	$34\frac{1}{2}$	4th

Soon after 3 p.m. the final started. The colours throughout were as follows : Jon (Blue), & Dave (Red), Alan (Green) & Geoff (Yellow).

In the first game Geoff placed five of his winks near the pot from the baseline and with David firing off the mat the yellow pot-out looked very much on the cards. Jon and David scurried in to prevent the pot-out, and with their opponents making one or two simple errors they gained the upper hand. However by round three yellow had four free winks, and with blue missing two consecutive pot-shots whilst green potted three Alan and Geoff cleaned up  $5\frac{1}{2} - 1\frac{1}{2}$ .

The start of the second game didn't give Jon and David much hope of recovery. Geoff squopped two reds from the baseline and after a poor pile smash halfway through time, Alan began a pot-out. Two small greens went straight in, but despite their presence Alan managed to land a large wink straight on top of them, and it bounced straight out of the pot. This was a distinct turning point in the game, although the situation was by no means clear.

After twenty minutes three greens were in the pot, and three were squopped, although blue s till had three winks at the baseline. With their superior number of winks Jon and David soon neutralised Geoff's counter-attack, but even with good potting from Jon in rounds three and four they could only contrive a 4-3 win - Alan and Geoff's first loss of the weekend. This made a total score of  $0\frac{1}{2} - 2\frac{1}{2}$ , with Alan and Geoff needing more than 2 points from the third game to lift the trophy.

The third game started in fine style - a green and a blue off the mat from the baseline. However Jon and David gained a grip early on, holding four of the five little piles. After further, even development, the second piece of Dean magic was produced. Trying to desquop a pile whilst still in a respectable general position, Alan squopped all the greens (himself) and left only one free yellow. From this point on a horrified Umpire realised what would happen - 5-2 to Jon and David,  $10\frac{1}{2}$  all after three games.

After three extremely close games, all of which were decided in the last round of play, the fourth game was started at 6.15. As Alan and Geoff had already scored two  $3\frac{1}{2}$ 's during the league, the odds on a definite result were long. A pile very quickly developed at the base of the pot, containing mostly large winks belonging to Alan and Jon. Throughout the game this pile was the centre of attention, with all the subsidiary action being of a one on one nature. Jon and David maintained a tenuous advantage until some good counter-attacking gave Alan the opportunity to control the pile once and for all. It was a difficult shot, a small green high up on to a large blue, and it just failed, sliding under a yellow into the bargain. The next important shot had to be played by Jon, with the large blue. It was a choice of pile-splitting some reds and blues out, hopefully onto opponents, or attempting to pot the large blue off the pile, freeing other blues in the process. Jon went for the pot, missed, but came out of it very well indeed with a red falling onto two greens (covering both by less than 1 mm), and these bridgeable onto a yellow. Alan could do nothing, but Dave's bridge shot failed to squop yellow. Geoff was thus left to pot two easy yellows to win the game with his last shot. He missed the first one (It still haunts me...Ed) and Jon potted the large blue, which was still free for a total of nine points, leaving Alan with too many miracles for even he to perform. The final score was  $4\frac{1}{2} - 2\frac{1}{2}$ , and Jon and David, after coming back on the Sunday for the formality of two games in the league, found themselves champions.

Looking back the weekend was quite a success. The use of the linger time-limit will need discussion at the next Congress in the light of our experience, and the use of the floor for such a lengthy match must be questioned. The all-play-all system didn't entirely work because when certain teams realised that any chance of success had vanished, they wanted to leave which created problems for the organiser. The competition had been intended to be run along World Cup lines but the low entry made that impossible). However I consider that the playing of the competition over one weekend is better than the protracted postal battles of the past (the 1976 Competition has yet to be finished). With a slight change in format, a bigger entry, and more commitment from the players, the 1978 National Pairs Championships should be even better.

Dennis Oppos.

#### Some thoughts on the Pairs - Geoff Cornell

Two physical sensations : missing the vital pot, and numb knees. Both made prayer difficult for days afterwards...One of these days we must arrange a winks weekend so that the final isn't played when everyone else has gone home, and the four players are watched only by an umpire and a caretaker... The All-play-all system allowed for comebacks after a poor start : Jon & David the case in point, but also Martin and Eddie who had a disastrous first day...The problem of playing for points, which means percentage winks, and taking advantage of the weaker pairs...the general lack of weaker pairs in the Competition, every match being tough in prospect, even the less-experienced capable of playing well and upsetting the form books...the relief as we saw jet-lag take its toll...the difference a pint or two makes...the final this year was the only one I know of actually to live up to its promise.....

## OPEN FORUM

### 1. The Hampshire Open

This competition was held in February at Southampton, and thanks are due to S.U.Tw.C. for once again providing excellent facilities and organisation. A feature appreciated by the liquid winkers was the hiring of the back room of a pub in one of the more dubious areas of Southampton for the Saturday evening. All this thanks to the club is by way of a smokescreen to hide the fact that yours truly has left his match report elsewhere, but hopes to have it printed in the next edition if the public demands it. The result eventually came as the pub pundits had predicted, with Nigel and Alan beating Geoff and Keith, and Cyril and Dennis sliding into third place...but the matches themselves were close, and the five-round Swiss Tournament revealed some enterprising play by some of the Southampton pairs, as well as revealing that Hugh Goyder can still play even if, like his hair, he is a little rusty. The tournament depended on the final round, and with the matches observing complete secrecy it was only when the final shot was played that Keith and Geoff realised they would have won had Keith attempted the last of an increasingly difficult series of potting shots. As it was Alan and Nigel won by 1/3 of a point, doing a Seaman in the process in that they only won 3 out of their 5 games.

Another feature of the weekend was a Marchant Trophy match between 11 Khartoum Road and S.U.Tw.C.. Alan and Barbie played, which meant that the baby came too...and perhaps the most lasting memory is of Alan playing a series of shots with the baby in one arm. 11K won fairly comfortably.

On the Sunday afternoon S.U.Tw.C. players joined with those attending the weekend for an informal coaching session, it being the belief of some of the old hands that all S.U.Tw.C. basically need is confidence, and a bit more idea of exactly what to do with their winks when in a reasonable position. The session was enjoyable enough for all to wish that the experiment could be repeated in the future.

Geoff Cornell.

### 2. The Manchester Open

The Setting of this years 'Open' was a little different, with cries of 'Is mat 1 upstairs?', 'No its in the cell ar next to the dart board' ringing round the house. The new, more informal arrangement of having the event at Knowles Towers just about succeeded in reversing the decline in the number of entries. Seven pairs managed to attend this year, in the competition held at the end of July... and the entries were drawn from far and wide.

Dave Lockwood flew in from the States, and immediately created a problem for me. I had to find a partner for him who was a sufficient handicap to give me a chance. I 'phoned Cyril, but unfortunately he already had a partner. By some piece of cunning one of our promising young players had failed to find himself a partner (he did the same for the Hants Open!) and so I was landed with the pairing of Seaman and Lockwood...but funny things can happen when the U.S. Champion plays with the ex-U.K. Champion.

With three games to play (it was two games against each pair) Steve Welch and I were safe unless Dave and Keith started getting 7-0s. They were playing Alan and Pam, who were not having the success they had had in the Marchant Trophy (see below). Dave brought his winks in and immediately started potting. Five went in, and one didn't, so that was that. All in all the weekend seemed to be a success (but perhaps I'm biased). One disappointment was that there was no Irish Representative as we had hoped, but I think the Open can now be expanded, to reverse the Recent Trend.

Nigel Knowles.

### SCORES

	A/P	C/J	N/S	P/G	S/I	G/F	K/D	Total	Position.
Alan & Pam	-	6½	3	12	8	10	8	47½	4th
Cyril & John	7½	-	4	13	13	7	5	49½	3rd
Nigel & Steve	11	10	-	12	12	11½	6	62½	1st
Pam & Graham	2	1	2	-	5	3	5	18	
Sue & Ian	6	1	2	9	-	5	1	24	
Geoff & Fred	4	7	2½	11	9	-	6	39½	
Keith & Dave	6	9	8	9	13	8	-	53	2nd

(All above scores the total from two games against each pair)

Challenge Match for the Marchant Trophy : ll Khartoum Rd v NEWTS

The second Marchant Trophy defence of the year was played amidst the architectural splendours of Goldsmiths College, London, in March. Both sides thought that the other was going to win, and both meant it, so it was likely to be a close match. The match started an hour later than scheduled, Geoff Rawlings finding it taking nearly as long to come with Keith from Harrow as it had to come from South Africa a few weeks previously. Even this was too early for Stefan, who, pleading engine trouble, arrived at the end of the first round just in time to see his partner, Jeremy, forfeit half the  $2\frac{1}{2}$  points he had amassed playing solo. Charles Relle had switched back into competitive winks as if he had never been away, and he and Paul scored a 4-3 over Geoff and Christine. The other games went 6-1, one to each team, which meant that llK led by  $3\frac{1}{2}$  points at the end of the first round. With Stefan now playing, NEWTS moved into an emphatic  $7\frac{1}{2}$  point lead in the second round, with Pam and Alan registering llK's only victory. In the third round NEWTS moved another point into the lead, and needed only ten points for victory from the last round. The first indications that things were not going to be plain sailing came when Geoff successfully risked a pot-out, and Christine was a commendable third, to score their first victory, a 6-1 win over Stefan and Jeremy. A few minutes later Malcolm potted a vital wink, and he and Nigel scored their first victory with a 6-1 over the two Micks. The two unbeaten pairs had met in this round, and honours went to Alan and Pam by 6-1, ending a disturbingly fine spell of play by Cyril and Dennis. On the last table Paul and Charles were, meanwhile, cruising along to a comfortable 6-1 victory when news reached them that NEWTS now needed a 7-0 for victory in the match. A 6-1 was all they could manage, which gave the round 19-9 to llK, and the match to llK by  $56\frac{3}{4}$  -  $55\frac{1}{4}$ , the closest-ever Marchant Trophy Match. Another challenge is to be expected soon.

Scores

NEWTS =	Mick Still Mick Wiseman	Dennis Opposs Cyril Edwards	Charles Relle Paul Light	Stef. Jefferis Jer. Shepherd	Tot.
llK :					
Alan Dean	1	1	$2\frac{1}{2}$	1	
Pam Knowles	6	6	$4\frac{1}{2}$	6	$22\frac{1}{2}$
Nigel Knowles	1	6	6	$5\frac{1}{2}$	
Malcolm Frazer	6	1	1	$1\frac{1}{2}$	$9\frac{1}{2}$
Geoff Cornell	$5\frac{1}{2}$	$5\frac{1}{2}$	4	1	
Christine	$1\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{1}{2}$	3	6	12
Keith Seaman	2	6	6	$1\frac{1}{4}$	
Geoff Rawlings	5	1	1	$5\frac{3}{4}$	$12\frac{3}{4}$
Tot (NEWTS)	$9\frac{1}{2}$	$18\frac{1}{2}$	$18\frac{1}{2}$	$8\frac{3}{4}$	
<u>Rounds:</u>	(1) $15\frac{3}{4}$ - $12\frac{1}{4}$	(2) $8\frac{1}{2}$ - $19\frac{1}{2}$	(3) $13\frac{1}{2}$ - $14\frac{1}{2}$	(4) 19 - 9	Tot: $56\frac{3}{4}$ - $55\frac{1}{4}$

The match prompted a number of thoughts....NEWTS leaning, as Southampton did long ago, that its doubtful to play the two Micks together...the importance of picking up the odd half point in rounds...the return of Charles Relle, who played winks with a verve and aggression that Southampton had thought was their style of play, only to find Cambridge had been playing it earlier...the advantage of having a decent car...the scrapping of the rule which says no re-challenges for the Trophy from the same challengers within i year of their defeated challenge.....

U.S. News : From the latest edition of the N.A.Tw.A. Magazine comes the following: 'There are two kinds of people in this world - those who divide the world into two classes, and those who don't.'

The New Year edition of Winking World included some 'Basic Rules' concocted by Dave Lockweed, which I feel are worthy of further comment. There is no doubt that the fundamentally defensive philosophy behind these 'rules' has been largely responsible for the supremacy of American winks in recent years (ever since dear Rosie Wain in fact), and for the success of some British winkers, notably Keith (H.) Sailor. Rules (2) (When in doubt bring in a wink), (5) (If you are only slightly behind, pick at the edges), and (12) (It is usually better in the long run to play conservative strategies than aggressive ones) would probably find the ready acceptance of leading players on both sides of the Atlantic. It follows that these ramblings are addressed primarily to the majority of us who are not leading players.

At our own recently founded club, NEWTS (New London Tiddlywink Society - anyone in the vicinity of London fancying the odd monthly game please ring me at 01 - 692- 3937), I was horrified when one of my opponents advised me against going for a 2 or 3 inch-distant doubleton on the grounds that it didn't make tactical sense. The situation occurring on that particular evening was roughly as follows. A couple of minutes had passed, and owing to the inept way in which we had brought in our winks we found ourselves on the losing side of a fairly evenly-balanced small pile near the pot. Opponents had 2 or 3 guards, two of which were so close together as to make a barely possible - or in other games a perfectly reasonable - doubleton, the distance being the main problem. Now conservative strategy in this slightly behind situation advocates that you bring in a second wink to the proximity of the pile, and proceed in this fashion until the opposition either lose patience or bring in a wink badly. In this position it has always seemed to me that the long squop aimed at a doubleton is a good idea. You may not get the bridge (by the way, I don't like this terminology, although it is fashionable: surely a bridge is when you are already on one of the winks involved, a doubleton when both enemy winks are free) but you are more likely to get at least one of the winks, and thereby complicate matters sufficiently to make their task of guarding the pile more difficult. Getting the doubleton amounts to counter-attack, getting one of the winks at least serves as a valuable irritant, provided partner can then bring a wink in near the pile.

I would like to expand this one situation into a more general defence of the Long S squop. Obviously to a certain extent this depends on what one is good at as an individual. Not having potted many winks in the last eighteen months I tend to look for other ways of playing aggressive winks - its a bit like Jack Charlton who in the last few years of his career as a player said the only fun he got out of the game was in sorties into the oppositions penalty area! But perhaps the early use of the long squop could be an effective weapon against the conservative tactics of superior opponents, certainly in our British context. If I may be permitted to reminisce (and this strikes me as one thing that is lacking in WW - could we not have a series on great games of the past?) (Was anyone sober enough to remember them? Ed.) my most successful winking partnership was with someone who was not only a consistently brilliant potter but also had a soft spot for the Long Squop, Idwal Jones, who has now hung up his squidger in favour of playing Tom Fool in Nottinghamshire Mummers Plays. In 1972 we had a highly enjoyable run in the Nat. Pairs (details confirmed by a glance at WW No. 20, page 17 - those were the days) and a feature of our unexpected victories over Bungy and Alan, and then Hugh Goyder and Mary Timmins, was effective use of the long, sometimes hyper-long squop. Bungy and Alan in particular were demoralised by our foot-long squops in the early stages, when we had nothing to lose, and were feeling frisky after a liquid lunch. When Idwal and I get together nowadays we invariably blame our defeat in the semi-finals by Bolton and Gould, the notoriously tortoise-like schoolboys, on our record hangovers. We shared a pint glass of water throughout the three games. But that's another story. My point is squopping, and especially long-squopping is fun; its not defensive, quite the opposite. New-comers to the game are often appalled at the fact that winks consists of covering other people's winks as well as potting. Perhaps we should show such fledglings the exciting long squop instead of the usual potting exhibition.