

CHAPTER THE FIRST

EDITORIAL; OR, THE STORY BEGUN, BY PATRICK DRISCOLL.

*In which: an Experiment is tried – the Chairman – practice makes
perfect – one man and his Dream – the narrative Drive – Court
proceedings – a Conundrum*

An experiment is attempted in this Journal, which has (so far as I know) been hitherto tried in many previous Winking Worlds. The Story is told throughout by the characters of the Journal. They are all placed in different positions along the chain of events; and they all take the chain up in turn, and carry it on to the end.

If the execution of this idea had led merely to some attainment of novelty in form, I should have claimed but a moment's attention for it in this place. But the substance of the Journal, as well as the form, has profited by it. It has forced the English Tiddlywinks Association to keep the story moving constantly forward; and it has afforded our characters an opportunity of expressing themselves, through the medium of the written contributions they are supposed to make to the progress of the narrative.

This is the Story of what a man's resolution can achieve. All readers of our august Journal have cause to thank, in particular, Mr Alan Dean, the Chairman of the Association, for both having the vision to conceive and the resolution to carry into execution the recent triumphant tournament against the inhabitants of the New World. Mr Dean is particularly to be congratulated on his insistence, in the face – nay, in the very faces – of doubters, on a rigorous routine of practice, and a full programme of events to build up the confidence of his team in advance of the event.

Who can argue but that the assurance gained from long hours at the practice mat in advance of the event was fundamental in calming the wavering hearts of English Tiddlywinkers at vital moments? The properness of the planning prevented piss-poverty in performance: this should be recognised for what it is: the crowning tribute to a man who has earned himself the honour to be truly called an ambassador for the sport.

If another single mind could be trusted to comprehend the fullness of Mr Dean's vision, the breadth of his appreciation of the task at hand in preparing a company of English Tiddlywinkers for the task ahead, the events which fill these pages might have been recorded by one individual only, or at most by a small number of writers. But the great majesty of his comprehension, the glorious wealth of Mr Dean's forethought, is so vast that even in retrospect, the individual mind can only contain a small portion of the whole.

Therefore we have apportioned and assigned, allotted and allocated, divided and distributed the effort of describing each of those preparatory events that preceded – and in the case of the London Open, postceded – that moment of glory in Washington, DC. No circumstance of importance, from the beginning to the end of the disclosure, shall be related on hearsay evidence. When the writer of these introductory lines (Patrick Driscoll, by name) happens to be more closely connected than others with the incidents to be recorded, he will describe them in his own person. When his experience fails, he will retire from the position of narrator; and his task will be continued, from the point at which he has left it off, by other persons who can speak to the circumstances under notice from their own knowledge, just as clearly and positively as he has spoken before them.

Thus, the story here presented will be told by more than one pen, as the story of an offence against the laws is told in Court by more than one witness – with the same object, in both cases, to present the truth always in its most direct and most intelligible aspect; and to trace the course of one complete series of events, by making two persons who have been most closely connected with them, at each successive stage, relate their own experience, word for word.

But before the story is taken up by the first pen, that of Mr Matthew Rose, I should like, as editor, to add one more word: that is, to comment that while our Journal may have adopted the form of a Court of Law in order more accurately and perhaps more succinctly to recount the events of the half year now past, our Readers will find that our story differs in one fundamental respect from that told in a court of law: Mr Dean has committed no crime! Indeed, and this is the one more word that I, perhaps, as editor, should add, but find hardest to add – because I don't know what it is – whatever Mr Dean has committed may be the antonym of crime.



Alan Dean in contemplative mood: a squop here would turn the game, but would he be able to make it under the pressure at the International Match?

CHAPTER THE SECOND

THE ENGLISH NATIONAL PAIRS, SELWYN DIAMOND, APRIL 24 AND 25 2010,
BY MATTHEW ROSE, OF ENGLAND.

*In which: a volcano – a tight contest – all beating all – a
Congress of Winkers – a Tie Break – the unstoppable
Runs – the Grand Finale – the Road Ahead*

The 2010 National Pairs was an event before it started – the uncertainty as to whether legendary figures could make it across the pond in time; and whether the walking wounded would make a miraculous recovery.

Yes Patrick Driscoll did flee the country to avoid another Axis of Evil with Alan Harper. Yes the ash-hole of a volcano did disrupt the plans of Larry Kahn and a pair of Lockwoods. But nothing could stop Matthew Fayers from making it to England.

The volcano did, however, deny Patrick Barrie and Dannish Babar their well-earned challenge as 2009 National Pairs Champions. When will they get their chance? And who will they play? Where is IFTwA when needed for a decision?

Stewart Sage made a faster than expected recovery from injury, and replaced Sick Boy in the A of E partnership. Chairman Dean had also brokered a previously unlikely pairing of Andy Purvis and Matthew Rose, and Charles Relle had contacted Steve Welch to return to a full winks tournament after a very long period of absence. In the end, seven pairings were to play in the Diamond.

High-scoring games predominated in the early stages, although not one-sided matches. In the second round the two highest seeded Pairs both lost 4 - 3 and Charles and Steve secured the first pot out, before lunch of course.

In the afternoon a series of all beating all rounds developed and it was fairly even amongst six of the seven Pairs; but Andrew and Sarah were usually competitive. I was aware of relatively few squop-ups and lots of narrow victories. Many games went to the wire and a few key squops or misses were decisive. In the day's final round, Matt Fayers ran six against Andy and Matthew to ensure that he and Ed Wynn held the overnight lead. This cool pot-out clearly showed that Matt can play against experienced players and not just bunnies.

Congress was as dramatic as ever. The death of 'flat winks' started to approach.

On Sunday morning, the players identified that second place was shared between two Pairs. Consequently, the tie-break rules had to be used to determine the all-important placings in the reverse seeds on the Sunday. This could not be settled from the results of

Saturday's matches, so a squidge-off was undertaken to decide who would take the second seeding. Andy Purvis won this, but when advised by the Tournament Organiser that this allowed choice of second or third spot, promptly chose third to avoid an immediate bye! Bizarre.

On Sunday, Ed and Matt survived an early threat from Andrew and Sarah, while Patrick and Dan had an early pot-out against Stew and Alan. Andy and Matthew had a very tight game against Steve and Alan, as Steve nearly achieved a pot-out just before rounds but was just overtaken in round five.

The second round saw Matt and Ed extend their lead, but Alan and Steve here started an incredible run of victories.

During his Pair's bye, which took place at this stage, Matthew decided that bringing in flip-stylee had been a cause of some of the poor starts to games so far, and decided on a change of bring-in method for the afternoon.

Lunch (in the public house at the sign of the Red Bull) was a fairly drawn-out affair as food was slow, but pigs warmed up and some high session scores were achieved, including notably successive scores of more than 150. If only Kevin Pietersen could have been there to see how it is done.

After lunch, two close games and a good win for Alan and Steve, whilst Matt and Ed's bye tightened things up. The tournament got even tighter when Alan and Steve potted out against Matt and Ed in a round in which Andy and Matthew turned around a poor start against Sarah and Andrew for a five to get within $3\frac{1}{2}$ points of the lead. Patrick and Dan continued to pick up points and all was fairly tight.

The fifth round saw Andy and Matthew play Charles and Steve, where Matthew had most winks free. However, it was only after Charles blew a pile just before rounds and left almost all twenty-four winks flat that a pot-out was attempted. Matthew ran his six, and Andy eventually came second in a scrappy potting race. With Matt and Ed getting four against Stew and Alan, this put Andy and Matthew ahead by half a point. Alan and Steve were now close behind.

As a result of Andy's choosing to take third place overnight, the match between the two strongest Pairings – Matt and Ed and Andy and Matthew – fell in the penultimate rather than the final round. Andy and Matthew were slightly more tactically aggressive, and a high-quality set of rounds left Andy and Matthew with $4\frac{1}{2}$, questioning again whether Matt can in fact play against experienced players or only bunnies (for mild amusement only and not part of any mind games at all – honest, although hope that this comes out after any International match).

Alan and Steve also won with $5\frac{1}{2}$ and there were consequently three pairs in different games going into the final round within two points of each other.

Alan and Steve saw off Patrick and Dan for a 6 – 1 win, giving them 29½ points in their final five matches - a fabulous run. That put them four points ahead of Andy and Matthew and 5½ ahead of Matt and Ed.

Matt and Ed had a close game against Charles and Steve and could only manage a 4 – 3 win. Not enough.

Meanwhile, Andy and Matthew were always slightly behind against Stew and Alan: Stew had a number of winks free and looked likely for first place in a race against Andy, while Alan and Matthew seemed destined to fight for third. Matthew attempted and achieved a long squop on one of Stew's winks in early rounds, but failed with shorter squops in later shots, such that going into the final two turns Stew and Andy each had three winks in the pot. Stew had the chance to pot a wink and then squop one of Andy's to seal the victory. However, at the vital moment, he shot long, allowing Andy to pass for a 4½ - 2½ win, thus securing the tournament victory by half a point.

In the end, the top three Pairs were separated by only two points, and there were only a few points between fourth (Patrick and Dan – well done) and sixth. The performances of Steve Welch were impressive as were those of Stew Sage, so soon after his injury. Stew additionally deserves thanks for booking and administering the room arrangements.

The feature of the weekend was that the games were very close. Alan and Steve's fabulous run also almost brought them from well behind at the end of day one to steal the title. Of the thirty-six games played in the tournament, only seven were pot outs, and there were not many early squop-ups at all. For the winning score to be an average below 4½ shows how close it was overall. The overall standard was reasonably high: this served as a good tournament of close games. Perhaps that would be a feature of the matches to come later in the year?



The President of the Cambridge University Tiddlywinks Club, Dannish Babar, lines up a long pot during his partnership's challenge for the National Pairs. He means business.

CHAPTER THE THIRD

THE MAIDSTONE INVITATIONAL, BY CHARLES RELLE, OF ENGLAND.

*In which: First Person – Twenty(Twenty) winks – time
passes – longer is found to be better – we learn the
correct recipe for a Buck's Fizz – a long lunch – the
results*

I write this article firmly in the first person. On Saturday 19 June, I held an invitation tournament in my house. I had hoped for eight people, but in the event only six could make it. The date clearly did not suit everyone, but no other was possible for me.

I decided to give Twenty(Twenty)Winks a run, thinking that a day's play was a fair test of the scheme. I introduced certain variations suggested in my article in WW93. We used the Sachs-Mapley boundary rule: if you send any wink off the mat, the opponents decide where on the boundary the wink is placed (subject to the four inch rule), and you do not lose a shot. If you send more than one wink off with a single shot, the opponents have the same rights, and you do lose your next shot.

I also decided that potting is fun, and that any potted-out game should be played to a finish, however much time or many rounds it took. 'The object of the game is to flick the winks into the pot', said the Rules when I started playing. In the event five games out of the fourteen finished in pot-outs.

I thought the squidge-off winner should have the advantage of finishing as well as starting, so he had 21 turns.

We needed specialised timers: I found a program that worked on my laptop, and Alan Dean brought his chess clock. I provided pencil and paper numbered Start and 1 to 20 to record rounds. Andrew Garrard produced twenty-sided dice. We used paper in the tournament. This provided a record, but was not always easily visible from the table. We felt that twenty-sided dice could too easily be knocked from their proper positions to be useful. In retrospect, I am not sure we were right. I can see one advantage of twenty-sided dice: they could be on the table and visible without serious obstruction. I have also one query: can they be turned so that the next number is quickly visible? Maybe this comes with practice. If they are available in sizes rather larger than the one Andrew showed to us, and thus more stable and visible, they are a Good Idea. As to the clocks, we managed. We were slightly cramped for space in the house, and it was not always easy to reach the timepiece quickly. Added to this, two systems were in use, which made it less easy to become familiar with them. I am sure, however, that practice will make things easier.

In the tournament, no player ran out of time. We were all very conscious of the passage of time, and played rapidly. We were much less conscious of the passage of rounds. Round 15 of the twenty came up sooner than most of us expected, and not all of us adjusted our thinking to make the most of the last few rounds in the way that we do in the normal game. Alan Dean seemed to cope better than most. We agreed that the squidge-off winner should keep count of rounds, so he had a slight advantage in that he was forcibly aware of their passing. He sometimes also had the slight disadvantage of having to press the timer at the same turn. We soon recognised that the person nearest the timer could and should intervene if possible. We also recognised that most, if not all, of us were taking part in this kind of tournament for the first time, and that if we were to play again, we would manage more smoothly.

How did Twenty(Twenty)Winks affect the pace of the game? We started as near to time as we could. I had named a ten o'clock start, and all the players arrived on time. There was a little explanation to do, but we were under way by 10:15. We then played two games, and had a pause for aperitifs. There was then one more game, occasionally interrupted while I made a dash to the kitchen. As one of the playing tables was also the dining table, we had to lay the table, then have lunch, which lasted rather more than two hours, then clear the table and play four more games. At the end we had a relaxing cup of tea. It was still well short of six o'clock. There was not a doubt that people could play quickly and enjoy the game. In fact, it was agreed that we could have played twenty-five rather than twenty rounds in the game time allotted. This, it was felt, would be an improvement, as the game did not seem, in twenty rounds, to develop as far as it would in a normal game. Of course, this would play havoc with the names proposed for this variation. I suggested a new name in my WW93 article, and am now going to put forward another. Why not name it after its inventor, and call it HarperWinks?

What of the tournament itself? The players were, in draw order, Alan Dean, Chris Abram, myself, Ben Fairbairn, Andrew Garrard and Geoff Thorpe. I used a Bridge movement for eight players, an imperfect solution, but agreeable enough. In the last round, when the two ghosts should have been partnering each other, the remaining two played a singles match. We drew to decide who started where, except that I arranged that I should have the place nearest the kitchen, with a view to keeping an eye on the lunch. This arrangement was accepted by all players! I urged people not to call umpires if at all possible, as it would mean a trudge of 34 stairs up and back for the umpire. No umpire was called.

I found myself playing singles in the first round, coping with the unfamiliar phenomenon of a chess clock, recording rounds, and confronting Ben and Geoff. Memory is hazy, as it often is on these occasions, but I rather think I squopped them up towards the end. The result was certainly a six. Meanwhile Alan and Chris had got the better of Andrew to the extent of 4 – 3. Moving upstairs, Alan, now partnered by Andrew, inflicted a 7 – 0 on Ben, while below, and with half an eye on the kitchen, I, in harness with Chris, had a struggle with Geoff. Various scores were possible as the end

approached, the most likely being 4 – 3 to us, but Chris, with his final shot, squopped Geoff while freeing two of my winks to give us 5½. Geoff was on a hat-trick in this tournament, but his score was now only 2½, giving him a lot of ground to make up in the remaining rounds. At this stage, with the tournament moving briskly, I decided we could stop for aperitifs, and we strengthened ourselves for the next round with Buck's Fizz. I have discovered that this drink should theoretically be two parts orange juice to one of bubbly, but thought half and half was right, and made it thus. I apologise to any purists in the tournament.

What effect did this have on the next round? Geoff potted out for a six on Chris and Andrew, while Alan tried to repeat his result of the second round against Ben and me. He potted five blues, and we both failed narrowly with attempted squops on the last wink, which was about four inches from the pot. Not wishing to be present at the consequence of my failure, I went into the kitchen to stir the pot (a Le Creuset full of *poulet basquaise*), while Alan attended to a rather smaller pot. I returned, and he said, "I missed that pot". I squopped him, and we needed at least to pot five of one colour and beat red in a limited number of turns. Alan had a green squopped and a doubleton of yellow in a well defended position close to the pot, but on the far side from the vital squop of blue. This meant that our only possible win was a 4 – 3 by potting five greens, getting ahead of Red with Yellow, and resquopping the blue with yellow, all in the last three rounds. Ben had put two yellows near the squopped blue, which meant that if Alan squopped one, he could use the other. I came off the blue, Alan tried, correctly, to squop me, and missed the difficult shot, and Ben squopped blue with his last turn. I now potted the green, and Alan, who had won the squidge-off with Red, tried, with the last turn of the game, to knock yellow off blue from an improbably short distance. He very nearly achieved this, but succumbed 3 – 4. Ben guided the partnership through the last few rounds impeccably.

Lunch followed, and when I, a well-known advocate of short lunch hours, remarked that it was nearly a quarter to three, we resumed. The game after lunch was not my best: Geoff and I were outmanoeuvred by Alan and Andrew to the extent of 5½ – 1½ (Alan's shrewd appreciation of the number of rounds left put his side in a strong position). Meanwhile Chris, in the only postprandial round in which no pot-out occurred, beat Ben 6 – 1. A quirk of the draw meant that they were in opposition again in the next round, partnered by Geoff and Alan respectively. Deciding, perhaps, that wars of attrition involving Alan usually go his way, Chris and Geoff potted out for a six. Meanwhile, Andrew was battling it out against me. I do not remember the game. I do know, however, that Andrew is a formidable potter, and has a range of shots that are not in my repertoire and are sometimes unexpected. My endeavour is to involve him in a squopping game as soon as possible, and either to play solidly, in which I usually fail, or to conjure up shots which are beyond his imagination and surprise him into defeat. Whichever I did worked, for he got one point.

Lunch had had a good effect on Chris, for he scored two sixes in a row, but the benefit wore off in the next round, when he encountered Alan and me. Alan reposed confidence in me to the extent of persuading me to try a pot-out. It succeeded, the last wink being a large green which was on a large red, which the shot nurdled. Other reds were somewhat scattered, allowing Alan to follow in for a seven. In the same round Andrew took six from Ben, and confronted him again in the last round, this time partnering me, while Ben was teamed with Chris. Alan was playing Geoff in the basement, and soon emerged, having potted out for a six, and having worked out all the possible results of the tournament consonant with the possible scores in the other game. The last result was in fact 6 – 1 to Andrew and me.

The custom at my invitation events is to collect for a charity. As it happened, I had just heard from a former winker that his wife had very recently died at the early age of 49. He was supporting the Stroke Association in her memory, and I asked participants to contribute to this charity. They did so to the extent of £180, so I gladly say thank you very much to all of you.

INTERLUDE

ON ETIQUETTE: A GUIDE, BY ANDREW GARRARD, OF ENGLAND.

*In which: friendly suggestions are mooted including –
die before the game begins – don't hesitate – prepare
yourself – move towards the light – consolations – it's
over now*

This august journal has provided a bountiful archive of suggestions on the improvement of the game. While commendable in its own right, I believe that this body of work has overlooked the opportunities presented by one's opponent. Interfering with an opponent would be both caddish and outrageous. This article will serve as a guide to ensuring that no one should find himself accused of such unfair gamesmanship.

Prepare yourself

The foundations must be laid before building work can commence. Some players have corner or colour preferences: if expressed, one should take the time to understand them. One must then consider whether the opponent would be helped to develop by playing outside his comfort zone.

To hasten the start of the game, I often think it best to pick a colour at random, but to remain in the corner in which I find myself standing. The choice of colours often reminds one to seek out one's squidgers, timer, and die before the game begins.

The end of the beginning

Many players like to practise squidge-offs before the game begins. One should not distract them, and should wait until they have finished before doing likewise. To indicate that the practice period is over, one may squidge-off with one colour before searching for one's squidgers.

It is rude to start the squidge-off when one's opponent is about to do so, but no undue delay should arise. A good compromise is to play immediately the opponent has squidged off. This is best achieved by lining up the shot and resting on the wink when the opponent is doing likewise.

Of course, one would not want to impinge on an opponent's squidge-off in any way, so one may, out of a sense of politeness, wait for the opposition to squidge-off first. When playing a pairs game, a weaker player may elect to squidge-off first, giving his partner more justification in his opportunity for polite deference.

The beginning of the end

If one's opponent has won the squidge-off, one should be ready for a tough game. Before the clock is started, therefore, one should prepare one's bladder, find any additional squidgers, prepare a secondary clock in case the first is not restarted after umpiring decisions, and otherwise make oneself comfortable. Later adjustments would needlessly disrupt the smooth flow of the game.

In order to improve the flow of gameplay, one should be ready to bring in as soon as the opponent has played. One should therefore have a squidger lined up and be in position. If one's opponent won the squidge-off, he will have an opportunity to start the timer after his shot.

Are you sitting comfortably?

Chairs are an essential part of the bring-in process.

Those who are lithe enough not to need one will not be unduly inconvenienced by having to walk around the chairs. If elderly, one may even share the workload by encouraging one's opponent to move chairs out of the way when necessary to reach his shots, so that one only needs to move them back into position before playing. Chairs with sharp corners or splayed legs are particularly good for reminding the opponent that they should be moved. Chairs also help one's opponent avoid rushing shots, particularly if the playing area is confined.

These benefits continue throughout the game, so there is no need to move a chair away once all the winks have been brought in; one may, after all, have to return a docked wink.

Carpe diem

One should take one's time when faced with a pot-out. Rushed shots are often missed, so the squop on the sixth wink should be fully considered. Such game-changing shots are important, and one should be comfortable; thus one should take the opportunity to retrieve the correct squidger for the shot and to ensure that bladder pressure is not providing a distraction. One should not fear to pass wind if necessary - we are all friends. The counter-pot should be played slowly and carefully.

Your time is up

One should not rush shots; one should savour any complex situation. Rather than allowing an uncontrolled and complex game to develop, one might wish to explore every avenue of strategy in a game of fewer shots. It is a right to think a shot through before playing it; this is how we learn.

If an opponent takes longer than his or her allotted time over a shot, one can stop the clock. One should ensure that the opponents know that this has happened, so that the clock is restarted; thus one should indicate that the clock is being stopped clearly and loudly, particularly if the opponent is distracted by lining up a shot.

To avoid distracting an opponent during his or her shot, one should announce when one is considering stopping the clock. In a pairs game, the decision-making process about whether the clock should be stopped should be consultative: the impending probability of the clock stoppage should be made clear to the opponents - who may be unaware of their slow play - by ensuring that this discussion is clearly audible. If the delay is long enough to permit practice, one should practice obviously to avoid suspicion or surreptitious behaviour, and sufficiently close to the match table that one is ready to resume.

Move towards the light

Sometimes it may be helpful to ensure that the opponent has appropriate lighting to play his or her shot. Sometimes it helps to provide contrast by shading part of the playing area. Try moving the boundary of shadows to help the opponent visualise the playing area.

In other circumstances, it can be better to have more uniform lighting. Where this is the case, blot out any significant light sources. If the opponent is disturbed by the lighting, one can help by allowing them to block their own light, or by encouraging spectators to block light.

Consolation and commiserations

It is a bad feeling to miss a shot. One should show support for one's opponent by recognising how critical a shot can be, and how one's respect for the opponent means that one would not normally have expected the miss.

If the missed shot was particularly easy, one can console the opponent with how unlucky was the outcome, and remind them that everyone misses a half-inch squop

sometimes. This is particularly important if the opponents are discouraged. Sometimes the best salve may be humour, so one should try to help them laugh off shots that are particularly poor.

Flashbacks of a former time

Everyone wishes to improve their play. It is therefore friendly and helpful to bring to the attention of the opponent when they played the wrong shot, or why they missed. One can do this while the next shot is being prepared, rather than holding up the game by delaying one's own shot. Each shot stands on its own; the fact that one is losing does not disqualify one from the opportunity to provide constructive criticism.

In a pairs game, it is important to ensure that the members of the partnership are on the same page. One should discuss all one's options, especially at critical moments such as when the opponents are part way through a pot-out. It can be helpful to discuss one's opponents shots as well, so that one's partner learns as much as possible. One can also profitably discuss the impending shots of the opposition, so that both members of a partnership are prepared to counter.

It can be particularly helpful to remind one's partner of the respective and individual strengths of one's opponents. Ensuring that the weaker partner is known, or that a shot selection is allowing for an opponent's inability to groom is important. With shot weaknesses, one might even emphasise the train of thought in a singles game, by vocalising it.

Sometimes the opponents - or one's partner - may talk when one is ready to play. Since they may not be paying attention to one's preparedness, one should indicate that silence is required rather than waiting for the sentence to end. The need to concentrate on a shot is a priority over any information that a partner may need to impart. Often, once sensitised to noise by the proximal players, one may need any other players in the vicinity to keep quiet as well, so one should ensure that a request for silence is clearly audible at a decent range.

Judgement day

Umpires are available to make impartial decisions about the game.

If there is any doubt over a decision, the impartial thing to do is therefore to summon an umpire. Attempting to resolve a situation solely with the players in the game will simply cause that one game to over-run, with the result that everyone in the tournament must wait for it.

If there is any doubt about whether a shot would be legal, or the status of a critical wink, an umpire should be called. One should not do this until it actually affects the shot, of course, so there is no point in disputing whether the sixth wink is free until the opponents have potted the other five.

In the excitement of a critical shot, an opponent may forget rules such as hitting the upper wink first or not hitting other winks in a pile. Why not helpfully remind them of this when they are lining up the shot?

Looking on from above

It is polite to show interest in other games during a tournament. One may not offer shot advice in these circumstances which could prejudice the outcome of a match. However, it can be friendly to point out to a player retrospectively how a shot should have been played, or an alternative that would have been preferable.

Moving on

After the game, there will be lessons to be learnt. One can bring to the attention of the opponents the shots which they misplayed, giving them the opportunity to improve. One should remind them of the bad luck in the half-inch squops they missed, or when they failed to notice six free greens; this sympathy will improve their mood for the rest of the tournament. One may also bring up such shots the next time they are played, so that the opponents do not forget such learning experiences.

Above all, winks is a game. One should ensure that an opponent is having fun - especially, by asking if they are enjoying themselves when shots have been missed. One can cheer an opponent up by telling them how close they came to stopping the pot-out.



An Article on Etiquette? Next thing you'll be telling us you're a Master of Politeness.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH

THE WESSEX TROPHY, BY CHARLES RELLE, OF ENGLAND

*In which: a public house – an early start – polyglot
naming conventions – a false hope – another
tournament*

There's quite a lot of us that play tiddlywinks, Sir, and we come from all over the country, well, from Cambridge mostly. It's the tournaments that bring us, Sir, that and the beer, you have to say the beer, Sir, specially as this one was played in a public house. Actually it was more outside, in a kind of shed, and the beer was there too.

It was played on a Saturday, Sir, back in July. Hot it was, so we needed the beer. We started early in the morning, about ten o'clock it must have been, so some came up the day before. By train or coach, Sir, but some came by car, but not many, on account of the beer.

It was quite a small tournament, only eight of us, playing in pairs. Yes, it was a pity we were so few, though the beer did go further. We don't always play in pairs, sometimes it's singles, but this time it was pairs. With the eight of us, it was quite easy to organise. We were split into two teams of four, and each of us partnered the other members of the team for two games. Incompatibilities, Sir; I don't honestly know what they are, but people did seem to find their partners difficult. But there was that barrel in the corner to help them out. Funny names the teams had: Octopus and Das Boot; polyglot, I think you call it. No, I don't know why they chose those names.

I don't need to tell you the results, Sir; I think they'll be printed in *Winking World*, that's the magazine, Sir. But Alan Dean, that's the Chairman, got a lot of fours, and extra two thirds in one game. He got a three as well, but that was the only game he lost. I think he was organising it, but another one called Jefferies, Tim I think they called him, arranged it. It was easy for him, you see, because he's what's called a regular, not a soldier, but in the pub. He hadn't played for a while, but his results were good; his average, p.p.g. it's known as, was well over four.

We all enjoyed it, Sir; in fact, we even came back for another tournament the next day.

Image right: Geoff Thorpe takes a break from the heat of the action at the Wessex Trophy



CHAPTER THE FIFTH

MARCHANT MATCH A, BY PATRICK DRISCOLL, NOT AN INTERNATIONAL PLAYER.

In which: the winners are announced – the tournament ends – the teams are drawn – angels on bicycles – the winners are announced – the tournament ends

The Marchant Trophy was unexpectedly held in Kidlington, Oxfordshire, on Sunday 11 July. The tournament was one of a rash of events held in advance of the great exodus of the English National Team to America. It was an initiative of the Chairman of the English Association, who identified, correctly, that one team (Das Boot) was playing very well and enjoying itself during the Wessex Trophy match, and that the other team, consequently, was losing. It can be of no account that the Chairman was himself among the players of the Octopus team.

That tournament, therefore, was ended, and a new tournament was started. In order to ensure a just and fair distribution of talents, the Chairman himself undertook to organise a new draw. I am pleased to announce that the new draw for the Marchant Trophy was more satisfactory than the original draw for the Wessex Trophy, and therefore the tournament was able to be completed. The winners were Team Green (Alan Dean, Andrew Garrard, Alan Harper, and Tim Jeffreys).

Our host at the King's Arms provided a fine lunch and good beer. We were also joined during the day – a vindication of the tournament's flexible structure – by Rupert Wilson, who cycled to the pub from Oxford with his wife, and who was able to play a couple of rated games and thus re-enter the lists without inconveniencing anyone.

Above all, it was certainly good practice for the International Match, which was the most important thing for everyone who attended.

CHAPTER THE SIXTH

THE SANDY INVITATIONAL, BY MATTHEW ROSE, OF ENGLAND.

*In which: untraditional goings on in Ancient Sandy –
Andy Purvis is still going strong – is there mead still for
lunch? – All Hail Leighton Buzzard!*

In the parish of Ye Olde Sandy, eight gathered for intensive winks following Alan Dean's kind invitation. The mere expectation of Andrew Garrard's participation led us to revise the draw before the first round started, but in the end he was not the last arrival. This would never have happened in 1320.

A good mix of England players past and future, and two Kidlington-ites plus a relative local (more to follow) turned out and a variety of improving standard games ensued.

In the first round the two South West Londoners defeated the two Midlanders: Andy Purvis showed that he remains a fine player. The second round saw Alan Dean and Matthew fight to a pot-out against Andy and Rupert Wilson while Steve Phillips built upon a winning start (this time with Geoff Thorpe as his partner). The third round games were close.

At lunchtime, the players drove to nearby Potton, after finding that the public houses in Sandy had run out of food (well, one had, anyway). Mead was unavailable.

The fourth round witnessed two swift games, as might be expected after lunch. In the last three rounds Andy, Rupert Wilson and Tim Jeffries produced some fabulous shots in their games and scored the same or more points than in their previous four games. Tim also showed us some remarkable magnetic devices to repel insects! (editor's note: the text does not inform us whether insects were likely to be a problem in Sandy).

Overall, Matthew narrowly won the tournament, beating Andy despite fading from a strong start. There was a tie for third between Steve Phillips and Rupert Wilson, who both hail from the same area: as Rupert informed us it was 'a nice result for Leighton Buzzard'.

And overall, how was the proto-England team performance? Well the four England players scored 98 and the four remaining participants scored 98! At least it shows the addition worked.

Many thanks to Alan and Barbie for hosting splendidly as ever.



Rupert Wilson: 'a nice result for Leighton Buzzard'.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH

THE INTERNATIONAL MATCH, WASHINGTON DC, 3 SEPTEMBER 2010, BY
ANDREW GARRARD, OF ENGLAND.

*In which: an apology – pre-match nerves – the build-up
– the Big Match – Lunch – a surge by the visitors – the
Final Round – a Grand Plan accomplished*

The author would like to apologise in advance for any inaccuracies in the following discourse. To prepare for the most important match of his life on Friday, he stayed up overnight on Wednesday to fiddle with the ETwA web site (plus ça change...) and endured a troublesome and frequently uncomfortable flight on Thursday, before staying up into the evening to look on as his compatriot and team-mate Matthew Fayers lost a World Singles challenge match to the American, Larry Kahn. As a consequence, he experienced a constant nervous irritation and headache throughout the International Match. Whether pain dulled his senses or sharpened his sight, the reader will judge for himself.

The day of the great match dawned bright and unpleasantly warm. Our hosts informed us that this is normal for the American capital. Several members of the ETwA team expressed concern that the sultry conditions would favour the home team: in the event this proved an unnecessary concern: air conditioning units provided a neutral playing environment.

Greater concern arose over the logistical implications of organising such a large touring party. Your author found himself lost – metaphorically – on the morning of the match, alone in the lobby of his hotel, uncertain of how to get to the match. Fortunately, a breakfast of Pringles and Diet Coke steadied the nerves. I was also pleased to see Geoff Thorpe, when he emerged from his room. Finally, a saviour, Charles Relle, appeared and summoned us to our transport, wherein the ETwA Captain, Alan Dean, awaited. Our journey, dull enough in principle as it took us through the suburbs of Washington, was enlivened by the Charles Relle navigational method; I inquired whether he would like to join us in the back, so as the better to be able to drive. After some time in which all the chief actors became increasingly agitated, the situation was resolved when Alan remarked the characteristic ‘RT’ number-plate of Rick Tucker's SUV heading directly towards the venue.

The bright, spacious, well-prepared and air-conditioned Community Centre provided a suitable situation for so important a contest. The now-assembled England Team changed into sporting whites provided specially for the occasion by the environmentally-conscious clothing company, Rapanui. Commemorative garments of all

kinds were also provided for the occasion by Rick Tucker: most of the American Team garbed themselves with at least one item. There was even a spectator, Alan Smith.

We took a moment to photograph the assemblage for posterity; NATwA took the opportunity to sing. The photographs can be found on the ETwA website. The songs, regrettably, have been lost to History.

Thereafter, the members of the teams introduced themselves to one another, not in the boorish manner of the All Black Rugby Football Team, but by name, and by recollection of the year that each first began to play the game as an adult. Many England team members had forgotten how old we all were.

The draw for the first round and the pick of pairings was eventually arranged. Alan gave a motivational talk (editor's note: the article originally contained a long transcript of this inspirational speech, surely the equal of Henry Plantagenet's exhortation to his troops on St Crispin's Day – this was cut due to lack of space).

Although most of the team tactics had been discussed during preparatory events, the Chairman reminded us above all not to be complacent. In the author's case at least, this did more to rouse his nerves than his courage. No doubt the Americans also had some cheerleading: the outcome, however, suggested that it was less effective than ours, as ETwA took a six-point lead at the end of the first round. Perhaps the rustiness of some of the Americans played a part – many claimed that they had had little chance to practice prior to the event. Be that as it may, they were the beneficiaries of some extremely poor luck for England in this round, and it was a resilient performance by the tourists that established the early advantage.

By the second round, the first round of Pairs games, NATwA began to establish itself in the match. This was a tight round that ETwA won by a single point.

The third round, however, the round before lunch, saw a stumble by the tourists. Weak performances in some of the games allowed the hosts opportunities which they seized. A strong NATwA performance left England trailing by a point, the hard work of the first two rounds undone.

It was a somewhat disheartened England team that trooped through to the dining area at the break.

The secret of the changing room will not be revealed in print, but once we'd made a dent in the beer, pizza was summoned. Clearly the refuelling settled us, because the fourth round went entirely England's way. Strong performances in the other matches were capped by Charles Relle and Geoff Thorpe, who beat Ferd Wulkan and Severin Drix, 6 – 1. Perhaps the lunch had helped calm England's butterflies; the team was certainly more aggressive.

With the wind behind the team, England again played strongly in the final round of Pairs games - the only weak link being myself and, less so, Matthew; even that game was undecided until I allowed myself to be distracted from an easy shot by a long discussion.

Thus, England went into the final round with a sixteen-point lead – a strong, but not an insurmountable advantage, given the larger number of points available for the Singles games.

While NATwA now required a very strong performance to turn the match around, it was ETwA who flourished. I was certainly relieved to be informed that the crucial pot had been sunk before the end of my game (the editor notes how surprising it is to find that Andrew was involved in one of the last games to finish).

England – the slight favourites before the match – were crowned the first International Champions to win the trophy on opposition soil. The match, however, was close: there were few one-sided games, and every participant accounted well for him- or herself.

Team NATwA, retaining their good humour, gave a recital of traditional songs on the subject of losing; ETwA responded with their Anthem, in a variety of keys.

RESULTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL MATCH

First round:

Larry Kahn	6	:	1	Andrew Garrard
Ferd Wulkan	6	:	1	Matthew Fayers
Severin Drix	2	:	5	Charles Relle
Mac McAvoy	1	:	6	Geoff Thorpe
Bob Henninge	3	:	4	Stewart Sage
Rick Tucker	5	:	2	Alan Harper
Dave Lockwood	1	:	6	Alan Dean
Jon Lockwood	1	:	6	Matthew Rose

USA 25 : 31 England

Second round:

Larry Kahn	6	:	1	Charles Relle
Rick Tucker				Geoff Thorpe
Ferd Wulkan	4	:	3	Alan Dean
Severin Drix				Stewart Sage
Bob Henninge	2½	:	4½	Matthew Rose
Mac McAvoy				Andrew Garrard
Dave Lockwood	1	:	6	Matthew Fayers
Jon Lockwood				Alan Harper

13½ : 14½
USA 38½ : 45½ England

Third round:

Larry Kahn	5½	:	1½	Alan Dean
Rick Tucker				Stewart Sage
Ferd Wulkan	2*	:	5*	Matthew Fayers
Severin Drix				Alan Harper
Bob Henninge	4½	:	2½	Charles Relle
Mac McAvoy				Geoff Thorpe
Dave Lockwood	6	:	1	Matthew Rose
Jon Lockwood				Andrew Garrard

18 : 10
USA 56½ : 55½ England

Fourth round:

Larry Kahn	2½	:	4½	Matthew Rose
Rick Tucker				Andrew Garrard
Ferd Wulkan	1	:	6	Charles Relle
Severin Drix				Geoff Thorpe
Bob Henninge	2½	:	4½	Matthew Fayers
Mac McAvoy				Alan Harper
Dave Lockwood	2½	:	4½	Alan Dean
Jon Lockwood				Stewart Sage

8½ : 19½

USA 65 : 75 England

Fifth round:

Larry Kahn	0*	:	7*	Matthew Fayers
Rick Tucker				Alan Harper
Ferd Wulkan	6	:	1	Matthew Rose
Severin Drix				Andrew Garrard
Bob Henninge	3	:	4	Alan Dean
Mac McAvoy				Stewart Sage
Dave Lockwood	2	:	5	Charles Relle
Jon Lockwood				Geoff Thorpe

11 : 17
USA 76 : 92 England

Sixth round

Larry Kahn	6	:	1	Charles Relle
Ferd Wulkan	1	:	6	Geoff Thorpe
Severin Drix	3	:	4	Matthew Rose
Mac McAvoy	2	:	5	Andrew Garrard
Bob Henninge	4 ½	:	2 ½	Alan Dean
Rick Tucker	1 ½	:	5 ½	Matthew Fayers
Dave Lockwood	4	:	3	Stewart Sage
Jon Lockwood	1	:	6	Alan Harper

USA 23 : 33 England

Final score:

USA 99 : 125 England

INTERLUDE

IT'S THE FUTURE!; OR, THE INTERNATIONAL MATCH, BY THE INTERNET

*In which:
USA 99 – 125 England*

Facebook | Charles Relle Tiddlywinks: Last Friday,...

facebook



[View you and Charles](#)
[Send Charles a message](#)
[Poke Charles](#)

Information

Relationship Status:
Married

Mutual Friends
9 friends in common [View All](#)



Alan Harper Ben Fairbairn Larry Kahn

Friends
127 friends [View All](#)



Simon Gandy Larry Kahn Bob Henninge



Alan Harper John Haslegrave Rick Tucker

Likes
20 likes [1 like in common](#)



Tiddlywinks Rambling Romance languages

Charles Relle

[Wall](#) [Info](#) [Photos](#) [Notes](#)



Charles Relle Tiddlywinks: Last Friday, in Washington, England beat the USA by 125 points to 99, thus comfortably outdoing the soccer players in the recent World Cup. At the weekend, the North American Pairs Championship was played, and was won by Bob Henninge and myself. I am naturally delighted with the two victories.
08 September at 15:22 · [Comment](#) · [Unlike](#)

[You, Anthony Horton, Charles Relle and 13 others like this.](#)



Becky Fox Congratulations!
08 September at 15:38 · [Like](#)



Pamela Patten Congratulations! How about coming over to Portugal now and giving me a few lessons so I can beat Robert?
08 September at 15:47 · [Like](#)



Keeley Jane Lund Well done!
08 September at 16:16 · [Like](#)



Georgie Porgie Congratulations Mr Relle! Georgie Davis
08 September at 16:43 · [Like](#)



Nerys Lane Well done Mr Relle!
08 September at 18:58 · [Like](#)



Rosalind Dodd Good one pops.
08 September at 19:27 · [Like](#)



Liz Williams good to hear, Mr. Relle
08 September at 20:02 · [Like](#)



John Lagrue Well done you. I would expect nothing less from my old tutor :)
08 September at 20:14 · [Like](#)



Ciaran Beary Congratulations - good effort!
09 September at 05:39 · [Like](#)



Patricia Relle Many congratulations!
09 September at 15:58 · [Like](#)



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CHAPTER THE EIGHTH

GEEZERS RULE!; OR THE NATWA PAIRS, BY BOB HENNINGE, OF THE USA.

*In which: a weighty matter – uncontrollable urges
– teeth and nails – a distorted strategy – good
opponents bollocks – a lap of glory for the old guys*

When Charles Relle wrote me in mid-January about partnering him eight months hence in the US Pairs, his degree of foresight left me both nonplussed and with no graceful exit. After a couple weeks I responded, 'If age and experience carry much weight, we'll certainly qualify as a heavyweight pair.'

With little experience playing together, Charles and I conferred shortly after the international match to compare our winx philosophies. He confessed an infatuation with shot-making, the more difficult the better, whereas I tend to play the percentages. We agreed to listen to each other, but he advised me that at times his urges would be uncontrollable and I'd do well to stand aside. Then he expressed the opinion, looking at the field, that we had a decent chance to win. One always wants a confident partner... though at the time I questioned his grip on reality. But indeed the field did give us a chance, as it did to a number of pairs, for unlike what we usually muster in the States it was well balanced, and as the match continued, every pair on the sheet showed itself capable of doing damage to anyone.

In our first game on Saturday against Matthew Rose and Rick Tucker we were nervous and argumentative, but with the game slipping away we thought well enough to limit the damage to 3 – 4 in the spirit of "Tooth and nail" – the motto of our 1970's Somervillains team. After that we stabilized, and though we sometimes disagreed vehemently, we supported each other stoutly – I learned when to stay out of the way of Charles's inspirations, and he appreciated my endgame analyses. His potting was impeccable, and I played my best all-round games of the weekend. We won four in a row, mostly over the lower seeds. With every one else knocking each other off, at the end of the day we emerged in front with 25 points in five games played.

Our three games Sunday morning, to finish the all-play-all, matched us against pairs led by Larry, Matt, and Dave. Perhaps due to Saturday's celebratory evening, I had a bit of a headache and wasn't as sharp, missing some short squops unlike the day before, but Charles's focus took up the slack. When either of us missed a shot, his simple 'That's done' kept us on track, and we made the crucial ones. Our opener was another motley effort in which Larry truly played like horsemeat, missing

plural short pots in rounds, though his partner Andrew saved his bacon (and their 4) by potting three in the fifth. Matt was also off his game, and by the time we played Dave, he and Jon needed a solid win to make the finals, which distorted their strategy to our benefit, especially when Dave potted as poorly as Larry (this is not a typo). We finished with two sixes for 40 points and a six-point lead going into the three-round finals.

Alan and Ferd were the first test. We were struggling to stay even, with Alan's large blue poised to break out a pile and take over the main battle zone, when my last bring-in bounced off the cup and squopped it like an eyeball. We capitalized on their demoralization and won 6-1, then held on against Larry and Andrew 4-3. When Matthew and Rick, who also played tooth-and-nail throughout the match, equalled our four in the second round, it left us seven up going into the last game. All we needed was a point. With excellent approaches they threatened blitz with each color, and the spectre of choking loomed. Rick cashed his five close ones, but his sixth bring-in was unlucky and easily caught. Under Matthew's bombardment; it saw daylight once but was resquopped before it could escape. Eventually Matthew, unable to do anything else useful on his last shot, potted for an extra half point. Their 4½ (the thematic score of the entire weekend) handed us our third and most severe loss of the tourney – but still the overall victory by five points. Charles and I heaved sighs of relief. It was a wonderful, unfamiliar feeling, one to sit with and savor.

I suppose we played well enough to win. But as many of you know, that's never a guarantee. The winking gods smiled on us. Also, I can't remember seeing so many excellent opponents bollocks basic shots. If they were all conspiring to let the old guys take a glory lap, this is what it might have looked like.

Whatever: Geezers rule!

CHAPTER THE NINTH

INTO THE STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS; OR, THE NATWA PAIRS PLATE, BY
ALAN HARPER, OF ENGLAND.

*In which: escape from the basement – the watchful
eye of Dr Fayers – a mathematical chance – a
lengthy delay – a narrow victory*

While the top four partnerships were battling out the NATwa Pairs final in the basement of Mister Kahn's house, those gentleman who had not mustered the necessary skill to proceed into the later stages of the tournament began a consolatory individual pairs plate competition in the upper room. This cohort didn't include the Lockwood family who made a quick exit after their failure to qualify for the finals in order to go home and celebrate the birthday of young master Benjamin. Three rounds of individual pairs were played out under the watchful eye of the honourable tournament organiser, Dr Fayers. Some aggressive potting in the first couple of rounds left Dr Fayers and Dr Harper in a close contest for the title, whilst Mr Thorpe had a mathematical chance if he could score a 7* in his final game against Alan Smith. Sadly, although the gentleman battled with great courage and spirit, the experienced Mr Thorpe was unable to achieve the desired result. After a lengthy delay for the deciding game between Mr Drix and Dr Fayers against Drs Harper and Sage to allow Mr Drix to check on the progress of the pairs finals, Dr Fayers played a most splendid game early on and was easily the best player in this deciding game, leaving Dr Harper desperately scrabbling for the three points he needed to claim the title. Some inspired potting in the last two turns from Drs Sage and Harper, left Mr Drix needing to pot one wink in the final turn of the game to force a tiebreak between the two leaders, and two winks to earn his partner the title. Unfortunately, as in the previous games of the Plate, Mr Drix's potting touch momentarily deserted him at the wrong time to give Dr Harper a narrow victory in the plate competition.

CHAPTER THE TENTH

SCRIPT FOR A SPORTS MOVIE; OR, THE LONDON OPEN, BY PATRICK
DRISCOLL, NOT AN INTERNATIONAL PLAYER.

*In which: a saddening missive – deserted – another
hard blow – defeat after defeat – a shock result –
the true winners*

I had spent the weeks leading up to 18 September looking forward to the London Open. Owing to pressures of work (I forgot to book any holiday), I had been unable to make the journey to the American capital to play in the International Match of the previous month, and so I had been awaiting the day with a lively anticipation when I might next pick up my squidger in earnest.

The early parts of the weekend, however, brought with them a number of setbacks. I have partnered Sarah Knight in a number of recent London Opens and, perhaps owing to our mutual enjoyment of the convivial and social aspects of the tournament, though we have never threatened to win the trophy, we had always had a good time. Consequently, we had contracted to reforge our alliance once again this year at the Crosse Keys. A text message received on Friday evening, however, brought bad news:

‘I’m afraid to report that I am busily puking’, wrote the young lady, ‘so you might want to consider who you’ll partner tomorrow if I don’t perk up. Sorry ☹’

A hard blow.

Resiliently, though, I made my way on the Saturday morning to Cambridge railway station to catch the Liverpool Street train. A little group had companionably agreed to meet at the station for the 08:50 train, to share the journey and thus make the experience the more convivial.

But now my tournament nearly ended before it had begun: my travelling companion, my friend (my former friend, should I say?), Alan Harper, sent me a SMS at 08:43 as I was fighting my way through the crowds at the ticket barriers to catch the previously agreed-on train:

‘We have bumped into Dr Barrie and taken the earlier 08:42’.

Disheartened, ticket in my hand, my eyes stinging with bitter tears at this unlooked-for betrayal, I was turning back to the sales desk to seek a refund for my ticket, abandoning my hopes for fun and enjoyment, when a little miracle occurred.

Sarah Knight came towards me, crying 'Yo, Sickboy!'

Now recovered from her earlier fever, Sarah, my enthusiastic partner, calmed my fears of rejection, and led me to the train.

The journey, as uneventful as any a commute to town on the Liverpool Street line can be, and as long as any I can remember, left us thirsty (well, I was thirsty: Sarah was feeling a little sick again actually) and awed by the daunting bustle of the City. Fortunately, the benefit of routine and practice led us down Bishopsgate to the Crosse Keys Inn.

Why do troubles always come in threes?

This was the moment of my third terrible shock of the weekend: in all the earlier commotion, I had forgotten to bring my squidgers. We've all had the experience, rarely pleasant or successful, of trying to play with a borrowed squidger. Such days are usually long and undignified.

Defeat followed defeat.

(Matt Fayers and Andrew Garrard, 6 - 1

Patrick Barrie and Tim Hunt, 6 - 1

Alan Dean and Charles Relle, 6 - 1)

Sarah and I tried, tried hard. We tried to win. When that failed, we tried to make the games competitive for our opponents, so that they, at least, would gain satisfaction from achieving the result. When that failed, we tried to enjoy ourselves. And after lunch, we tried to pot out in every game.

Geoff Thorpe and Steve Philips, 4½ - 2½

Stew Sage and Alan Harper, 5 - 2

But then came a moment of true satisfaction. In the first Swiss round (the tournament was all-play-all, followed by two Swiss rounds), against Geoff Thorpe and Steve Philips, when Geoff had won the squidge-off and Sarah had brought her winks in poorly, I had a few golden moments with the neat yellow squidger that Alan Dean had lent me.

From the enemy area, I potted the first threatened wink. And now, from the other side of the pot, a host of blues and reds waiting to catch me if I landed long, four winks from close. Pot, pot, pot, pot. And now, one wink at the baseline: calm, accurate: space.

Geoff, under pressure, obliged to neglect an easy squop on Sarah. Hastily played: a bad miss.

Sarah, a squop on Steve to make him play at me from distance. Success.



Sarah Knight lines up the critical pot in the London Open.

Steve, normally good under pressure: dangerous. Just the kind of player who gets these. Takes his time. Misses.

Adrenaline, surging. But pause. Be still, my beating heart. Slow down. Get down. Line it up. Wait . . . envisage it. Pot!

Of course, we lost the race to follow in, and we lost again afterwards (Andrew Garrard and Matt Fayers, 6 – 1), and we came last in the tournament with 13 ½ points from seven games. But after all the trials and the troubles, and quite a lot to drink, the whole event only existed for five minutes. Pot. Pot. Pot. Pot. Pot. Then wait, and once more: Pot.

As I said, we came last. Alan Dean and Charles Relle won the tournament and can thus call themselves the True Winners.



POSTSCRIPT

COMPETITION – FOR A REAL PRIZE!

The editor hereby gives notice of a Competition.

The winner will receive a bona fide prize, at the discretion of the editor.

The nature of the competition may be familiar to some readers: it is to write a caption suitable for publication in Winking World 95 suggesting what might have prompted the look of disdain exhibited on the following page.

Entries will close at the Cambridge Open, 30 January 2011.

