EDITORIAL

By Patrick Driscoll

What a struggle it has been to produce this, the ninety-fifth edition of Winking World. So many small things, each individually trivial, have collaborated to delay its release. And each delay has extended the final product, as more and more happenings kept demanding inclusion. Another editor might have left them out and closed the door, not to mention the book, on new items. But not I, for I really believe that it is in the fine details that the great truths lie.

My previous issue, Number 94, drew criticism from many quarters. Some said it was a tissue of lies and half-truths. Some, including one of the contributors to the current volume, who hides behind his pseudonym like a snake hiding in the long grass (like a *rat*), have said that I was trying to be too clever.

*Nihil sapientiae odiosius acumine nimio**, as Seneca observed.

Other critics have assailed Winking World 94 for its literary pretensions and lack of clear factual information with reference to scores and ranking tables. Excluding these useful data, they remark, is idiotic. It detracts from the value of Winking World as ETwA's organ of objective record. With Prince Myshkin, I say '*Там существуют 3 вида лож: лож, проклятые лож, и статистик*'.**

What is closer to the truth of a tiddlywinks tournament: the clear, orderly impression created by the final numbers and standings, or the tangled mess of reality?

Is the truer characterisation of a winks tournament the blithely untroubled picture of Matt Fayers holding the trophy at the end or a narrative of the fraught details that preceded his triumph?

Only a monomaniac could enjoy a game in which he never made a mistake, never got beaten, never incurred a fine. The rest of us could not gain sustained enjoyment, meaningful stimulation – the thrill of pure ratiocination – from just winking happy thoughts unimpeded into our little tiddle cups. Tiddlywinks is a contest.

I submit that since the sport of tiddlywinks is competitive and therefore does not have a linear, ordered structure, its journal should document its true nature – the contest of valence between the pattern constructions as viewed and created by each of the participants, blue, green, red, yellow. Thus, our attention should focus not on the documenting of outcomes, which at best can only ever summarise the process, but on the activities of pattern formation and contestation which comprise the reality of a winks match.

Thus, by prioritising the clamour of dissonant refrains within the winks tournament, by listening to each individual voice singing its own interpretation of the universal refrain, by refusing to drown those frail voices under an amplified orthodox recording, we move away from the stultifying uniformity of an official version and we hear the authentic voices of the people crying out.

This Winking World sees tiddlywinks as a microcosm for life. The spirit of the edition is encapsulated by the sanctified words spoken by Dante on his first sight of Heaven:

* Nothing is more hateful to wisdom than excessive cleverness.
** Madness is the mind contaminated by knowledge, idiocy is the virginal, untainted mind. The former may be holy, but the latter is angelic.

Qui vid' i' gente più ch'altrove troppa, e d'una parte e d'altra, con grand' urli, voltando pesi per forza di poppa.

*Percotëansi 'ncontro; e poscia pur lì si rivolgea ciascun, voltando a retro...**

I shall leave the final words (and there are forty-four pages of them) to that very disparate group, my contributors. But before I sign off this piece, I have the happy duty of congratulating Charles Relle on his victory in the caption competition with "What? Do I have to partner Driscoll in the next round?" He wins a vinyl recording of Ed Wynn reading *Grandpa Magic's Fire Engine*.

This edition's competition prize will go to whoever can return to me a silver snuff box containing my squidgers that I accidentally left at the London Open.

* I saw a multiplicity / of simultaneous visual / and audible events // all going together in my experience / and creating enjoyment...

ALL THE SMALL THINGS

Or How it's easier to stop being nice and blame throwing away a lead in the National Singles on you lot than it is to get better at winks

By ANDREW GARRARD

I'm a frustrated man and this is a story about my frustration.

The morning of the National Singles dawned bright, if not clear. Had I only listened to a weather report, this would have been something to look forward to while I spent three hours on Friday night sitting in traffic, in driving rain. My plan was to drive to Cambridge and watch the fireworks on Midsummer Common the night before, to be in Cambridge in plenty of time for the start of the tournament.

As it was, my winkend started with road rage at all the drivers who haven't learnt to drive in the wet, and this was a sign for the next few days. Unlike last year, at least I got to see some of the fireworks display in Cambridge, albeit from a distance and through low clouds. The fireworks were even still going on after I'd parked at the Carlton Arms and was approaching Mitcham's Corner, with Steph and an umbrella. They had stopped, though, by the time I reached Midsummer Common.

I shall not detain you with the details of a frustrating pub crawl that followed. The only enduring image I take from the evening is that of my car windows, on which two nameless passengers, to whom I helpfully offered a lift, wrote the opening lines of 'My father's a lepidopterist'.*

Figure 1: Alan's piles: Part I (see page 4 for further details)

* Younger readers will be interested to learn that a lepidopterist is one who mounts butterflies. Famous lepidopterists include Johann Siegfried Hufnagel, John Stapleton, and Vladimir Nabokov.

In short, I was grouchy and uncomfortable before I lifted a squidger.

By lunchtime on the first day (the tournament was staged in the Diamond, at Selwyn), I had lost a close and fascinating game against Alan Harper, 5-2, in a game in which a wink became wedged against the pot (see page 3 for juicy pics!), and beaten Alan Dean, 6-1, capitalising on a few errors by my opponent.

Having a few thousand pounds' worth of camera kit in the room, I made a point of waiting for Matt Fayers and Paul Moss to finish their match before going to lunch myself, to ensure that the venue was locked. They, however – almost before the final wink had finished rattling in the pot – charged out of the door without thinking of security, leaving me to lock up and walk to the pub alone.

At the Red Bull, I eventually squeezed in at the end of a table at which Stew Sage was busy throwing plastic pigs on the floor and Paul Moss was preparing to leave his drinking games equipment under the table.

On our return to the Diamond, after lunch, Tim Hunt threw away a dominant lead against me in rounds. I hope he took no offence at my commenting that he has a reputation for throwing such leads away. I would have the same reputation, were I more often ahead when time expired. I did my best to distract myself from any offence I may have caused by ranting at people who hadn't stopped their timers from beeping.

Patrick Barrie treated me with deserved contempt throughout the round that followed, but I managed to keep him from working six winks free.

Stew Sage, now recovering from his disappointment at lunchtime, made a heroic long pot to take half a point from me in round five.

Steve Phillips, perhaps lacking match practice, freed the fifth wink of my potting colour, before I worked the sixth out as well. A fine Saturday afternoon left me seeded fourth for the final.

While this was happening in my matches, Matthew Fayers potted out against Larry Kahn.

Figure 2: Matt is pleased as punch after potting out.

At around this time, we returned Paul Moss's drinking games equipment to him.

Meanwhile, Joe Crouch spent the afternoon losing a series of games to successive opponents.

We went to the County Arms on Saturday evening, agreeing to have an early curry, which makes it frustrating that I was told off by my host for arriving home late after leaving people eating in the Maharajah at eleven o'clock. I received a phone call from Paul Moss about an hour later, to ask if he'd left his bag, which contained his squidgers and his car keys, in my car. He had not.

* * * * *

Sunday dawned fresh and the sun shone down from an azure sky onto the waxen visages of winkers who queued outside the doors of the Selwyn Diamond. Mine was among them, since I arrived earlier than most people for the 9:15 start. This may have been because someone had made a point of lying to me about the re-start time.

I felt too wobbly to risk a squopping game in my opening match against Charles Relle, so I took the opportunity of a good bring-in to charge at the pot. I did so with barely more competence than Charles showed in his attempts to squop me. My successful conversion of the pot-out meant I was briefly leading the tournament.

I next played Paul Moss, whose bag was still missing, along with his squidgers (and his car keys). I played poorly. This may have been because the timer we were using mysteriously disappeared during the game. It was Charles's timer and he was incredulous that anyone would borrow his timer without asking first. Apparently his incredulity overruled his ability to notice that it was running and next to an active game.

Patrick Driscoll was well in control of me in the third game, but he failed to capitalise fully as I potted well for second and third. I took six off Stew Sage (who was having a miserable weekend) in the fourth round but I bet he doesn't remember it because it was the round before lunch, which we once again took in the Red Bull. After that, I beat Alan Dean for the second time in the weekend, 4½-2½, in an interesting game that was only decided by a few critical mistakes he made at the end.

Paul Moss, having contacted unsuccessfully the County Arms and the Maharajah restaurant in search of his missing bag, now withdrew from the tournament. He had to escort his car back home on an AA tow truck. This meant that my defeat against him earlier in the morning was wiped out, and I found myself back in the lead of the tournament. I began to forget that I normally get thrashed in the Final, and I started to hope that I might do well.

Alan Harper brought me down to earth – in a second game involving a wink propped up by the pot. This time the wink was wedged between the pot and the pile, held up over the winks it squopped. Nonetheless, my mood was still good.

Left:
Figure 3:
Alan's piles
Part II

I was holding Patrick Barrie in a reasonably even squopping game in the antepenultimate round of the tournament, supported by my control of a big pile next to the pot. I had – unusually for me – a guard available, but elected to keep it free and squop Patrick's attacker by gromping. I did this in a continuous squidger movement, but too slowly for Patrick's liking. I conceded this and replayed the shot, but also squopped my guard. Distracted by my incompetence and my frustration at the situation (Patrick was not unjustified in his complaint, but the definition of 'quick and continuous' is something for which I have previously proposed a rule revision), I missed a relatively easy pile shot. Patrick capitalised and I was left feeling aggrieved at having been taken down to one point, without really being able to blame my opponent.

I was still grinding my teeth when Larry Kahn and I prepared to play. I practised briefly, we squidged off, and Larry spent five minutes finding his 0-5 die (although we had already marked the squidge-off winner), giving me time to get rusty at my bring-ins again. Having written on this subject recently, I felt an odd sense of frustration mixed with irony. We then started the game, with twenty minutes on the clock. With nineteen minutes and thirty seconds on the clock, [*editor's note: a section of this article has been excised as being inappropriately graphic for a family journal*].

On Larry's return, I got four winks of at least one colour near the pot, with Larry relatively distant. Unwilling to see the tournament delayed and too frustrated to drag the game out, I threw winks at the pot a little recklessly. Had I been able to get them in more competently, there might have been an upset and I might have been happier (and ended in fifth place rather than eighth). Alas, it was not to be.

Whether owing to winks fatigue or to [*further excision*], I lost the ability to hassle either to free myself or to keep Larry under. Given the circumstances I'd have liked a point out of the game, but given that I got into the mess by losing my ability to pot I probably can't be surprised that I didn't get one.

The outcome of my match against Matthew Fayers was not dissimilar. Matt is fond of saying that it is the pot-out *threat* that matters. When he potted his last nurdled wink to follow in with his second colour, he probably deserved the seven he got.

* * * * *

This led to an pulsating play-off in which Larry beat Matt 6-1, on which there is no further commentary, because I was busy having fun in the Plate.

I can report that Joe Crouch is pretty competent for a novice, that Christian Gowers can squop but hasn't learnt to pot in rounds yet (but still won the Plate), that I got a few hero shots which might have given some justification to my being in the Final after all and certainly made me feel better, and that I nearly pulled off a spectacular pot-out starting with only two flat winks.

Following the presentations, we cleared the room, finding that Paul Moss had left his drinking games equipment behind again. We took it with us to the Castle Inn. This was where Paul called us to tell us that the County Arms had found the bag with his car keys in after all, and that he was by now half way up the M1 on a pick-up truck.

Congratulations to Larry, who mostly played quite well and who wound me up over the weekend no more than several other people. To everyone who agitated me: sorry if I was shirty with you — I know nobody did it deliberately (well, except for those responsible for writing on the car windows).

Left: Figure 4: Can't pot in rounds but doesn't care: Christian Gowers wins the Plate.

Below: Figure 5: The invaders have won again: Larry Kahn wins his eighth ETWA National Singles, his first for eleven years.

TIDDLYWINKS PHOTOGRAPHY

Searching for the perfect tiddlywinks photograph? Winking World commissioned this exclusive interview with action sports photographer William Fox Talbot.

By Philip Buckham-Bonnett

I met William Fox Talbot at his country pad in Wiltshire earlier this year.

William, known as Foxy to his friends, is cagy about giving away the details of his patented action sports photography technique, but has some pointers to share that will prove invaluable to all those hoping to make a name for themselves. Here are his tips:

- Make sure to use the largest lens possible (but make sure everyone sees you spending time selecting from the twenty or so that you brought). Use a belly or empty beer glass to support the lens if required.
- Taking a picture in the same room as a game of winks may distract players. Try the top of a building across the street.
- Use autofocus so when a blurred picture is taken, extra credit can be given.
- The optimal subject for a winks photograph is a gentleman of generous proportion bending over a table. It is a curious property of light that this subject is best captured from behind.
- Artistic deviations from these tips will likely be frowned upon by the players.

Why not try these tips yourself, and see whether you can take a photo good enough to be published in the next *Winking World*?

[*Editor's note: sadly, this advice came too late for Andrew Garrard, who took the fabulous image on the cover of this edition.*]

UNDER PRESSURE

The National Handicapped Individual Pairs draws the biggest crowds — of spectators, if not players

By Patrick Driscoll

To get to the NHIPper, the NHIPper which masqueraded as the Shrewsbury Open, you needed a sense of fun.

Contestants had to dance their cars through the Shropshire snow again this year to get to the tournament. It's certainly a chilly time of year to travel but it is great when you get there to receive such a hearty and much-needed lunch, as well as all the coffee and biscuits you could want.

Although only one Shrewsbury Schoolboy, Jack Kinnaird, participated in the tournament, there were significant groups of schoolboy onlookers , and they hung on the outcome of each and every shot.

The schoolboy audience generated a tense atmosphere which set the stage for some close and exciting games, particularly as it became clear that with the pressure and the excitement from the crowds, not to mention the fact that many players were trembling with cold, even the easiest shots could be missed.

The tension rose higher and higher; the matches got tighter and tighter; the audience grew keener and keener.

They knew that with a few missed shots, any game might turn on its head at any time, and they hoped that the schoolmaster Charlie Oakley could pull off a famous victory.

Particularly memorable was one match just after lunch when I partnered Sarah Knight against the local favourite.

Sarah and I created a strong position from the bring-in, so that by twenty minutes we had control of a pile of virtually all of Charlie's winks. Casual readers of *Winking World* may mistakenly assume that we reached this position because of my piloting Sarah through the choppy waters of the early game. That was not the case at all. Sarah was no average sailor: she played like the Captain in that game.

However, we missed vital (but very short) squops and pile shots to lose control in the last few turns of the game. Charlie now found that he had the chance to pot with both colours to waltz to a surprise 6-1 victory. As he potted, each successful shot was cheered into the pot by the schoolboys. What fun!

The adrenaline rose higher and higher; his pots flew in faster and faster; his odds on victory grew shorter and shorter.

You could see what he wanted to be: he wanted to be an example to the boys of perseverance and skill.

But he missed crucial pots in round five with both green and yellow, either of which would have won him the game.

Groans echoed throughout the dining room, but Sarah and I were happy to escape from the match with 3½ points.

Though I had done very well in the morning, and I was leading the tournament at lunchtime, this game set the pattern for my afternoon.

I made small errors, which undermined an otherwise solid performance.

My dreams of victory (so carefully woven together in the fabric of strong early play) unravelled like a poorly knitted mitten.

At last, since Larry Kahn wasn't there, Matthew Fayers won.

2010 ~~LARRY KAHN~~ NATWA SINGLES

Sometimes you're better to be lucky than good.
But it helps if you're good as well.

By Larry Kahn

As with most tournaments, you definitely need a bit of good luck (in addition to good play) to win, but this wasn't news – even for the main beneficiary, me! I'd have probably traded some of my 2000's good luck in the US for some better luck in England.

Something we did find out, though, was a disadvantage of the Biden format versus Palin. With a Biden, it's impossible to have subsets of players taking breaks at different times because the subsets for the next round are playing a different group of people (I needed a math major to word this properly, but most of ETwA is likely to know what I mean).

Anyway, we fortunately made this discovery only one round into the tournament, so we were able to make the switch to a Palin without too much difficulty. If you're wondering why we needed to do this in the first place, well, it's NATwA so what else do you expect? We were actually running two events in parallel, the Singles and a Plate for the High School, but we wanted to allow experienced players to cross over and help out by partnering novices.

It actually worked out fairly well, with some real excitement for the fourth playoff spot (the top two in each division went into knockout semi-finals). Max Lockwood was within range of Ferd Wulkan, so there was a one-game playoff to give Max a chance to catch him. He couldn't quite do it, so the semi-final draw matched Larry against Ferd and Dave Lockwood against Bob Henninge.

One of these was a blow-out: guess which! So I was able to wander over to see the end of the third game between Dave and Bob, who had split 6-1s.

Boy, did I luck out! I got there just in time to see Dave bounce out a seemingly perfectly potted wink early in rounds, which, given the position, just about sealed his doom. It's hard to say if he'd have been able to get the 4 even if the wink had stayed in, but he might well have.

I was quite happy to play Bob in the final (mostly because I didn't have to play Dave) and wouldn't have minded (too much) to see Bob win. For a game and a half he had zero chance. I was playing really well and getting lots of luck. I had him squopped out midway through the second game.

Then things got bizarre, and all the good play and good luck totally reversed itself. I mean TOTALLY. By the end of the second game, Bob had pulled even in the match with a 6-1. Things continued on this way for about half of the third game and I was almost resigned to losing, but kept plugging along and kept my chances alive going into rounds. The game was pretty even at that point but the ending turned out to be unfortunate. Bob missed a couple of relatively easy pots in rounds 4 and 5, so I'll never know if I would have been able to respond with some difficult pots I would have needed.

[*Ed: Larry Kahn has now won nine NATwA Singles in a row, and 22 in total. Perhaps he has a right to call it his own.*]

THE SOMERSET INVITATIONAL

A photo-journal

I

In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
In the bleak midwinter, long ago.

II

Our God, Heaven cannot hold Him, nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away when He comes to reign.
In the bleak midwinter, a stable place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

III

Enough for Him, whom cherubim worship night and day,
A breastful of milk and a manger full of hay;
Enough for Him whom angels fall down before,
The ox and ass and camel, which adore.

IV

Angels and archangels may have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim thronged the air;
But only His mother, in her maiden bliss,
Worshiped the Beloved with a kiss.

V

What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man, I would do my part;
Yet what can I give Him? Give my heart!

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Re: the article on etiquette in the autumn edition:

This found little favour with me. I felt
That you attend too little to the troubles of your readers,
The most faithful of whom, I'm afraid, is me.
I went wild when you likened winks with death.
Perhaps I'm being precious, but possibly not:
I'm more affected than most, you see.
Some similarities I'll grant (I don't say there are none),
But don't overdo it. Differences abound,
In timing for instance: whilst winks sometimes takes too long
Death, by distinction, really does last forever.
Take it from one who knows.

Another anomaly:
Winking spectators are rare (the Singles had none),
But sometimes crowds come, like those kids at the NHIPper
Surrounding Sick Boy when he said "S**t!"
And newspaper journalists now and then
Or television crews. Trust me, that's a difference:
Death is a solitary thing: the Styx we cross solo –
Charon hardly counts as company.
I speak from experience, something you should heed.
'Oh, melodrama!' you'll say: I'm making a meal of it.
But nobody came, none of my so-called friends.
They preferred carousing, cursing and drinking.
They stayed in the Turf.

So try, editor,
To see what I'm saying: stop speculating!
Kindly cease and desist! It's stupid, not clever.
Don't do it again. I dislike that sort of thing.
Make facts your masters and follow their footprints:
Only write and record real results and events;
Tables of scores, truth not abstraction –
That's what we'll welcome, what will win our acclaim.
That apart, I suppose your prose is okay,
A tad pretentious at times, possibly.
I'm not a harsh judge, don't begrudge you your fun, BUT
Don't laugh at death: it's not light entertainment.
Take it from one who knows.

The Ghost of English Tiddlywinks.

FAYERS AGAIN

Larry didn't play in the Cambridge Open, so Matt won it instead.

By Patrick Driscoll

You might assume, just because Matthew Fayers has won almost all the tournaments he has entered that didn't involve Larry Kahn (and some that did), that the Cambridge Open was an easy win for him.

In fact, he was pushed to the wire and had to avoid losing 5-2 to Andrew Garrard in his final game to win the tournament. Matt was partnering Stew Sage in the final round, and Andrew partnered Bob Wilkinson. Matt and Stew won 6-1.

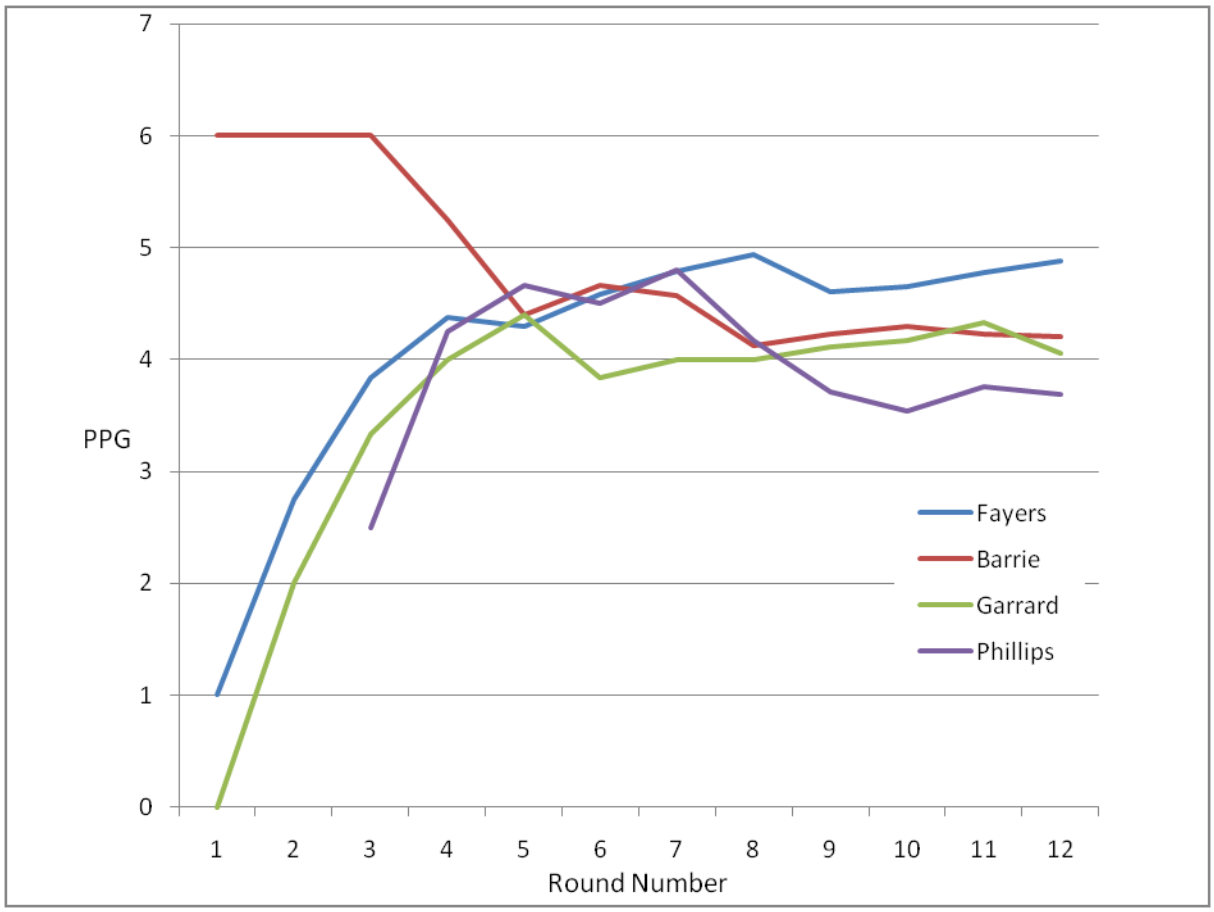
I have no details of this game, but, given that Stew had previously scored only three points on the second day of the Cambridge Open, it is reasonable to assume that Matt had to play quite well to win the title.

Andrew Garrard commented that "Dr. Fayers won the Cambridge Open, through the cheating strategy of Being Quite Good. I came third through the far more fair strategy of Being Lucky."

Honourable mentions go to Paul Moss, who achieved a PPG of 6 1/3 from three games on the Saturday, to Steve Phillips, who won four of his first five matches and therefore found himself challenging for the lead in rounds 5, 6, and 7, and to poor Charles Relle, who won only three games in the whole weekend.

After all that, though, it will be seen that Matthew won by playing extremely consistently. He started weakly on Saturday morning, but broke away from the pack early on Sunday, and was never caught.

Amongst all the winks, some people found time to hold a club dinner.



Left: Phil Carmody
lines up a crucial squop
onto the pile during
the first day at Selwyn.

Right: Matt Fayers wins again.
Still a bit of practice to be had in
looking modest for the camera.

Left: Mine Host:
CUTwC President Dannish
Babar welcomes guests
to the Club Dinner
and the Cambridge Open.

SANDY INVITATIONAL: FEBRUARY 2011

In which a small number of people have a lot of fun

By Richard Ackland

In any organisation it is always with a mixture of self-importance and trepidation that one finds oneself sought out by the Chairman. But such was the case for so many honest winkers who were caught unawares at the Cambridge Open by the exhortations of A. Dean, Chairman, ETwA, to take part, a fortnight subsequently, in the Sandy Invitational.

Eight stalwarts succumbed to the honeyed tones of the Chairman, and so it was that we were summoned, along with Keith Seaman, to convene on the morning of 12 February; not before 10:00 hours (Alan and Barbie wouldn't be back from swimming) and not later than 10:15 hours (can't have the tournament starting late - would be too much of a break with precedent).

At a distance of 95.3 miles (according to 'Bing'), such accuracy is difficult to manage. To complicate matters further, our unthinking reflexes had directed us on a previous visit via the eastern side of the M25, whereas the all-knowing Mr Bing recommended the westerly route. Mission, however, was accomplished when we arrived at 10:07 exactly, to have the front door opened by Charles Relle, who said he had arrived just five minutes earlier. His logistics were even more complex than ours since he had graciously made a detour in order to collect the four members (Harley Jones, Joe Crouch, John Haslegrave, and Philip Buckham-Bonnett) of the Cambridge contingent. Keith Seaman was also already in attendance, so Charles pronounced us the penultimates since only Steve Phillips was still awaited.

With consummate efficiency the Chairman had constructed an electronic draw, designed to cope with ten players with widely varying ratings, with a mixture of singles, 2:1s and conventional doubles - and with an inbuilt device which would avoid 'one-sided' matches.

My first match was in partnership with Harley against Joe and Steve. The tournament organisational committee, a body nine strong, determined that our match should start on the dot of 10:30, and that Joe should play singles, relinquishing control of green the moment Steve should appear. But he didn't. However, not too much odium should attach to him, since it subsequently transpired that his apologies for absence had been dutifully conveyed by e-mail the previous day; in an uncharacteristic lapse our Chairman had omitted to consult his incoming mail.

And so there were nine of us.

Details of that first match remain somewhat hazy (95.3 miles is a long way), but I do recall rather sheepishly acknowledging to Joe that Harley and I had been a trifle fortunate in scraping a 4-3 from a match which Joe had controlled for most of the way. Meanwhile Charles was busy defeating Alan and Keith, whilst John and Liz Ackland were making short work of PBB.

At this point the Chairman had to acknowledge that his carefully prepared draw programme couldn't cope with the reduced number, particularly if the constraints imposed by ranking differentials were to be maintained. Thereafter we were on a paper draw. This was to condemn me to three afternoon matches with the very same partner who had let me down so badly at the London Open 2009 (see *WW93*).

My next match partnered me with Charles against Keith playing singles. Despite the hindrance of his partner, Charles steered us through to another 4-3.

Elsewhere there were more decisive wins for Alan & Joe and Liz & PBB, which meant

that at this stage Liz led the field by the handsome margin of three points from Joe.

Few self-respecting winkers allow themselves more than two pre-lunch matches (despite the inevitable consequence of a gruelling afternoon), and so we adjourned, the nine of us plus Barbie, to the King's Arms. I was perplexed to hear Charles ordering poultry all round, but it transpired that this was a code, known to him and the landlord, for beer. The company was fairly evenly divided between the poultry drinkers and those who, for reasons of road safety or of ambitions on the afternoon mats, preferred to drink softly, softly.

Pre-lunch conversation concerned itself, not with winks, but with bridge, since in our midst was John, an eminent expert both on the laws and on the intricacies of accommodating differing numbers for complex tournaments (just like winks, after all!).

Over lunch, conversation turned, midst many other topics, to the academic provenance of those present, from which it emerged we were five from Cambridge, three from Southampton, one from Reading/Nanterre and one from the great unwashed.

Not only was lunch both good and cheap, it turned out to be even cheaper as Alan had persuaded the landlord that his voucher entitling him to 15% off the advertised price should apply to the whole company.

Suitably refreshed, we returned to the real business of the day.

Playing with Joe, I was up against Liz and John, and we somehow beat them substantially. This put Joe in the tournament lead, where he remained right up to the effaflabbergasperingovva final round (see below). Elsewhere there were wins for Keith and Harley against PBB and for Charles playing singles against Alan. Alan later related that Charles had begun so poorly that he had offered Alan a 7-0 victory there and then. Our chairman chivalrously rejected the offer, an opportunity he was to regret as the tables were turned and he was fortunate to lose by only 3-4.

At the Cambridge Open I had noted the (blindingly obvious) importance of the bring-in. This was key to my next match against Charles and Liz. I brought in particularly badly and before I knew it Charles was embarked upon an early pot-out. Poised over his fifth pottable wink, he produced from his vast resource of winks lore the nonchalant remark that '15 is a difficult score to beat' (attrib. J Mapley, date and location unknown). He then missed! A few minutes later, having pouched my fifth wink, I produced from my very recently acquired store of winks lore the nonchalant remark that '15 is a difficult score to beat' (attrib. see above). And so it proved as I managed to edge Charles out for first place, but could do nothing about Liz's numerous free winks and thus her third place. 4-3 again!

Not much to say about round five. I lost to Alan and Liz whilst John was disposing of Harley and Joe & Keith were beating PBB.

It might be observed that PBB hardly features in this write-up so far. The reason is simple; at no stage did the vagaries of the paper draw pair us either as partners or as opponents. However round six was his moment of glory as he achieved the only pot-out (against Harley) of the whole day's proceedings. So now is probably a good moment to offer him my non-apology for abbreviating him throughout. My reasons are identical to those advanced by an earlier journalist reporting on a tournament involving DBW: the full name simply won't fit onto the scorecard.

During the course of the day I noticed that the matches were exceedingly long. This was odd since with no recognisable trophy on offer, and neither rating points

nor national acclaim at stake, we should in theory have been relaxed and carefree. Instead, the absence of pressure led to far more prolonged strategic thinking than in a ranking tournament. It also led to more frequent calls for umpires (a reason why I encountered PBB so much despite not playing with or against him!). Perhaps all that soul-searching with regards to slow play (such a feature of discussion in *WW* in recent months and years) has been in vain. Perhaps in truth we all prefer to play slowly and, despite protestations to the contrary, neither crave, nor need, artificial measures to speed us up. At the very least it might explain why none of the suggested solutions have met with universal accord.

After round six, exhaustion set in and Liz and I wondered whether we would be capable of playing any more. We had certainly determined that we would have to decline the enticing invitations to a post-tournament feast.

It was as well that we persisted. In Liz's last match she played singles against Harley, who had a predetermined strategy of pot-out or bust, a ploy he saw as the only means of hauling himself out of bottom place. He set about it, and Liz, deciding that attack was the best form of defence, endeavoured to match him blow by blow and pot by pot. Both attempts were halted dead in their tracks when Liz was suddenly presented with a doubleton squopping opportunity she couldn't refuse. Eventually there was no pot-out, but rather a 4-3 to Liz.

Meanwhile we approached the dramatic climax - a real *coup de teâtre* by our Chairman and host. It will be remembered that after round one, the whole of the ensuing draw had been pre-determined. Yet our master of ceremonies had carefully contrived matters so that the tournament leader (Joe) should now play against the only player (me) in a position to overtake him. Not only that, but the match would be a fully-fledged four-person doubles match (rare in a nine-person tournament) and our partners would be the two highest ranking players present.

’E’s a born showman is our Chairman !

The technical position was that Joe could afford a 4-3 defeat and yet win the tournament. Anything worse and I would usurp him.

The two top-ten players, Alan and Charles, entered into the spirit of the thing with such gusto that it seemed they were displaying more enthusiasm on behalf of their respective protégés than the protégés were themselves. They were like a couple of boxing promoters prancing about, urging on their charges — the only difference being that they were required to join us in the ring!

My own prospects soon dimmed to the point of invisibility when, after the opening salvoes, Alan, my partner, found himself with three winks squopped and three still on the base-line. My woeful bring-in wasn’t helping. We were clearly in for a grim war of attrition, but were soon aided by a most fortuitous squop which immobilised two of Charles' winks.

We struggled on, Joe and I, with every move plotted by our respective mentors. By the time rounds were reached it was touch-and-go. Charles and Alan were pretty well out of mobile winks, their only available free winks lying precariously on vital piles. The position was finely balanced on the cusp of a 4½-2½ and a 4-3.

Our managers were beside themselves. Charles interrogated Joe incessantly as to which of two unlikely pots (one on the edge of the mat, the other semi-nurdled and crucially squopping one of my reds) he would attempt in round five. This decision would influence Charles’ last shot with his only available (but squopping) wink. Alan meanwhile was trying to talk me into a most ambitious pile-shot, which he claimed would release one of his blues, thus enabling him to reach third place and securing me the tournament, always

supposing I'd stay just ahead of Joe. To me the risks seemed greater than the potential reward and I preferred a more passive play. But we are both British and so a compromise ensued. I respected the theory and attempted the shot but, failing miserably in the execution, involuntarily achieved the passivity I had sought.

Came the penultimate shot from Joe. Magnificently he potted the semi-nurdled wink; this was a shot which deserved to win any tournament; but having of necessity freed a red, he next needed to achieve a squop in the midst of a pile of complex proportions (or else pot the distant wink).

He tried the squop and failed, releasing me from the need to pot a wink with the last shot of the match. I needed therefore only to declare I would pass. Summoning up my reserves of mental strength, with nerves of steel I brought it off with exquisite accuracy, judgement and execution.

And so, gentle reader, that is why you are subjected to my prose-style rather than that of a transatlantic provenance. For the tournament prize was to take responsibility for the report.

At this point I would suggest to the mathematicians amongst you (and I know there are many) that they take a moment to sum the world rankings of Alan and Charles and then do the same with those of Joe and me. You will find the former number to be far smaller than the latter, thus demonstrating, I hope to the satisfaction of our illustrious editor and to his learned mathematical theories, that small numbers invariably have a profound influence upon large ones.

All this excitement persuaded us (Liz and me) that we should after all stay for the feast. And how right we were to do so, Barbie having provided a right royal spread for us all. The tournament (and its predecessors) should be grateful for having a co-host such as Barbie. Not only are we welcomed, fed and watered, but she exhibits an enviable and admirable stoicism in the face of invasion of her home, hearth and hospitality by hordes of marauding winkers. Brava!

Our editor, I know, has an aversion to scorecards; well, he must learn to live with the notion that some of us are obsessed with them. So I have no compunction in appending full details.

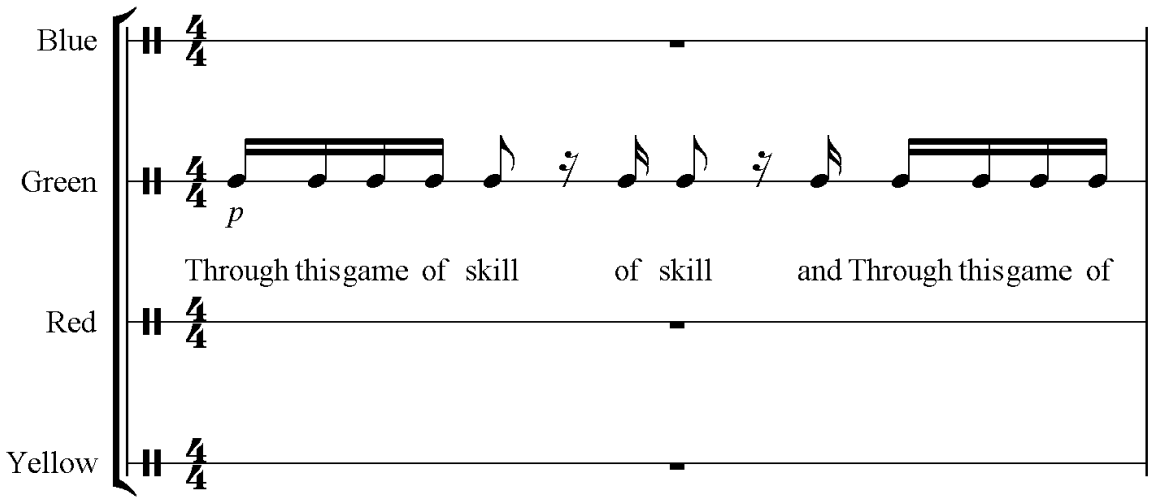
Finally, tho' it's strictly not within my brief, a word about the Cambridge Open. As we waited for the formal unlocking of the Diamond doors, Alan Harper arrived, apparently from Stoke-on-Trent. Probably only a discrete inner circle of his intimates could say why he should have been there. The rest of us can only conclude it was in an attempt to improve his potting.

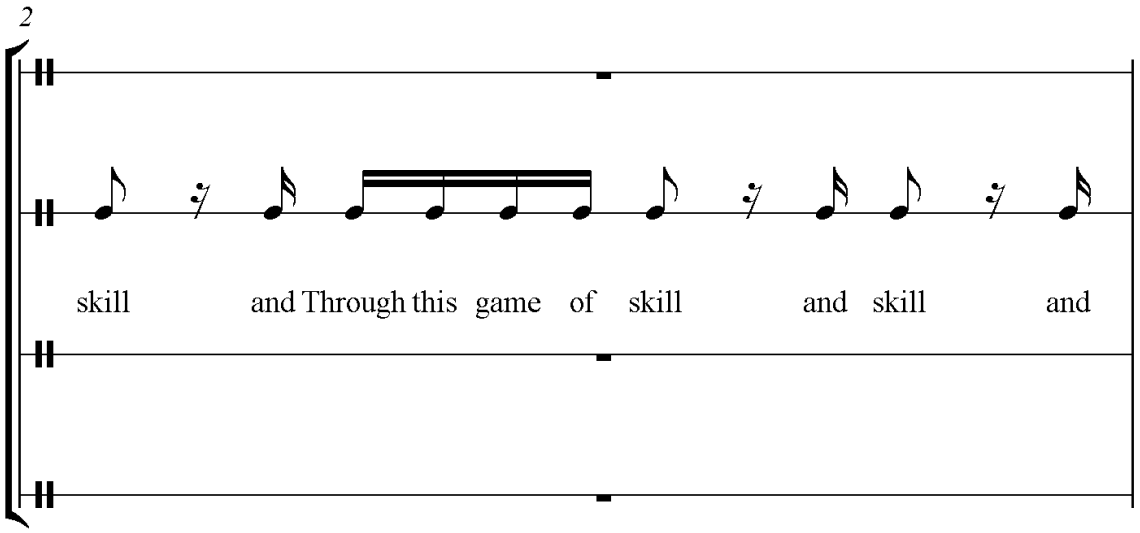
	Rounds	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**Total**	**PPG**
1	**Richard Ackland**	4	4	6	4 b	2½	6 b	5	**31½**	4.50
2=	**Joe Crouch**	3	6 b	6	5	2	6 a	2	**30**	4.29
2=	**Alan Dean**	2½	6 b	3	3 a	4½	6 a	5	**30**	4.29
4	**Liz Ackland**	6	6 a	1	3 b	4½	1 b	4 b	**25½**	3.64
5	**Keith Seaman**	2½	3	4⅔	2	6	1 b	4 a	**23⅙**	3.31
6	**PBB**	1	6 a	2⅓	3 a	1	6 *	3 a	**22⅓**	3.19
7	**John Haslegrave**	6	1 b	1	4 a	5	1 a	3 a	**21**	3.00
8	**Charles Relle**	4½	4	4	3 b	1	1 a	2	**19½**	2.79
9	**Harley Jones**	4	1 a	4⅔	2	2	1 *	3 b	**17⅔**	2.53

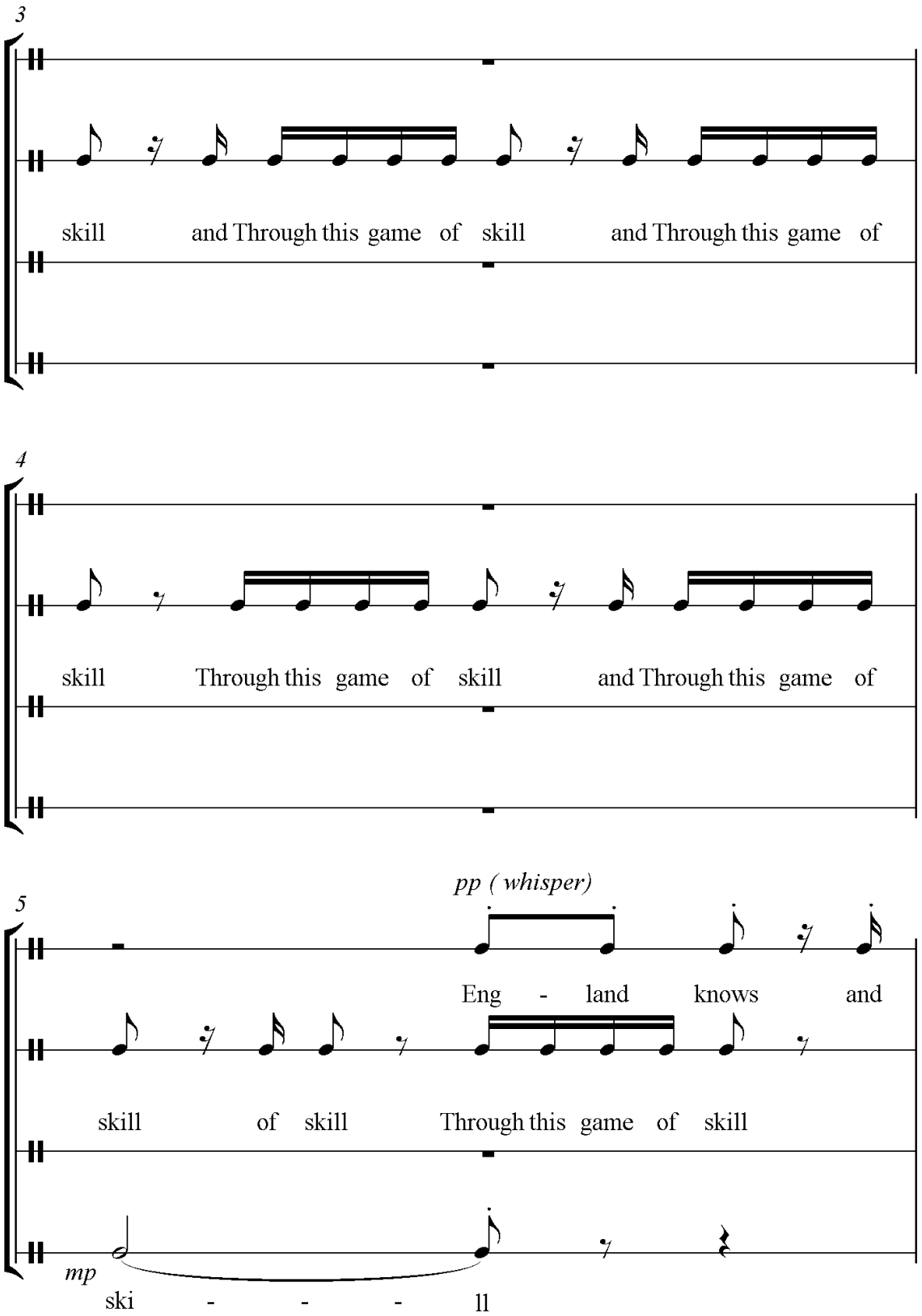
Squidging Room Music

With many apologies to John Cage

"Through this game of skill and power,
England knows her finest hour."
The Tiddlywinks Anthem



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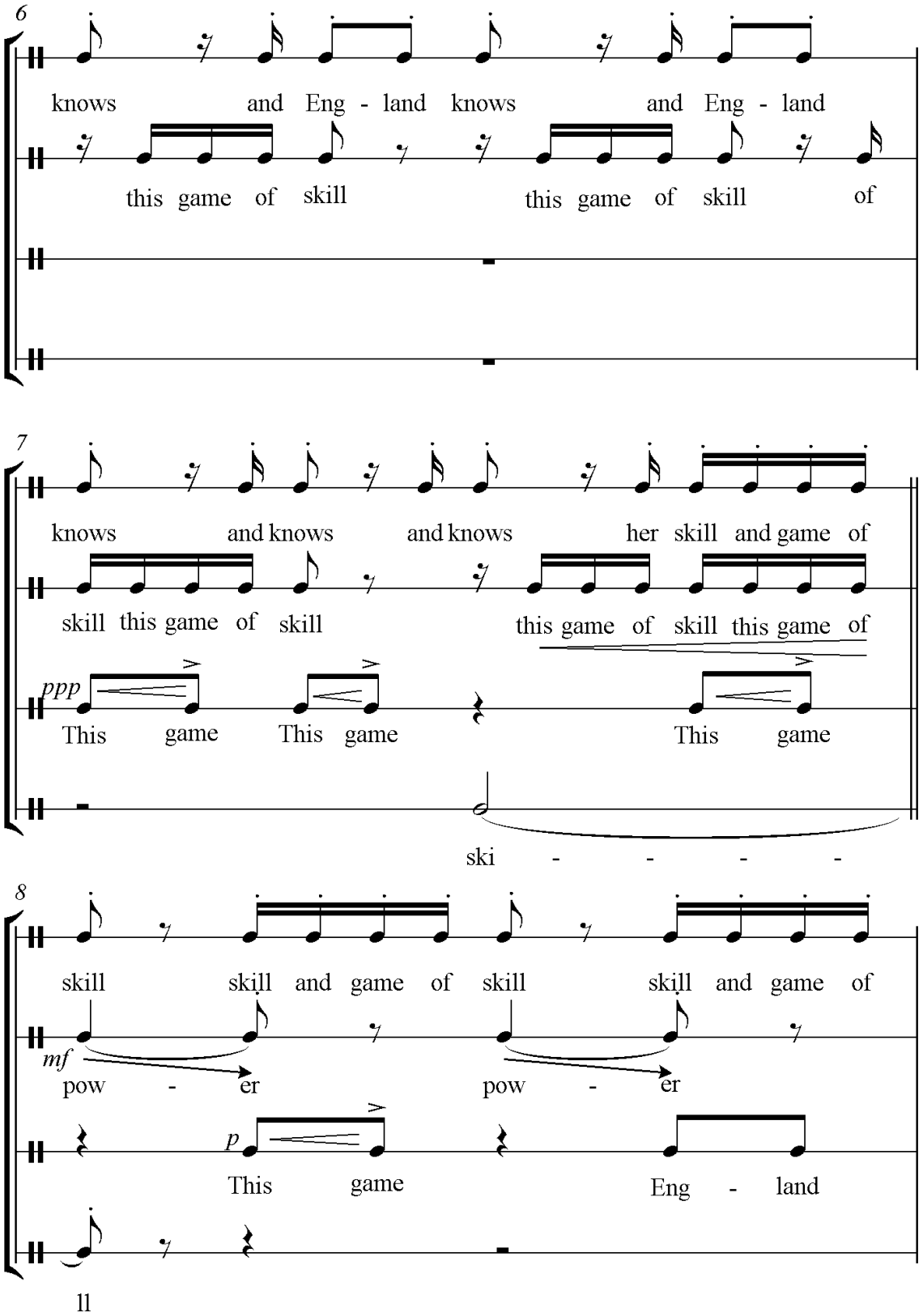
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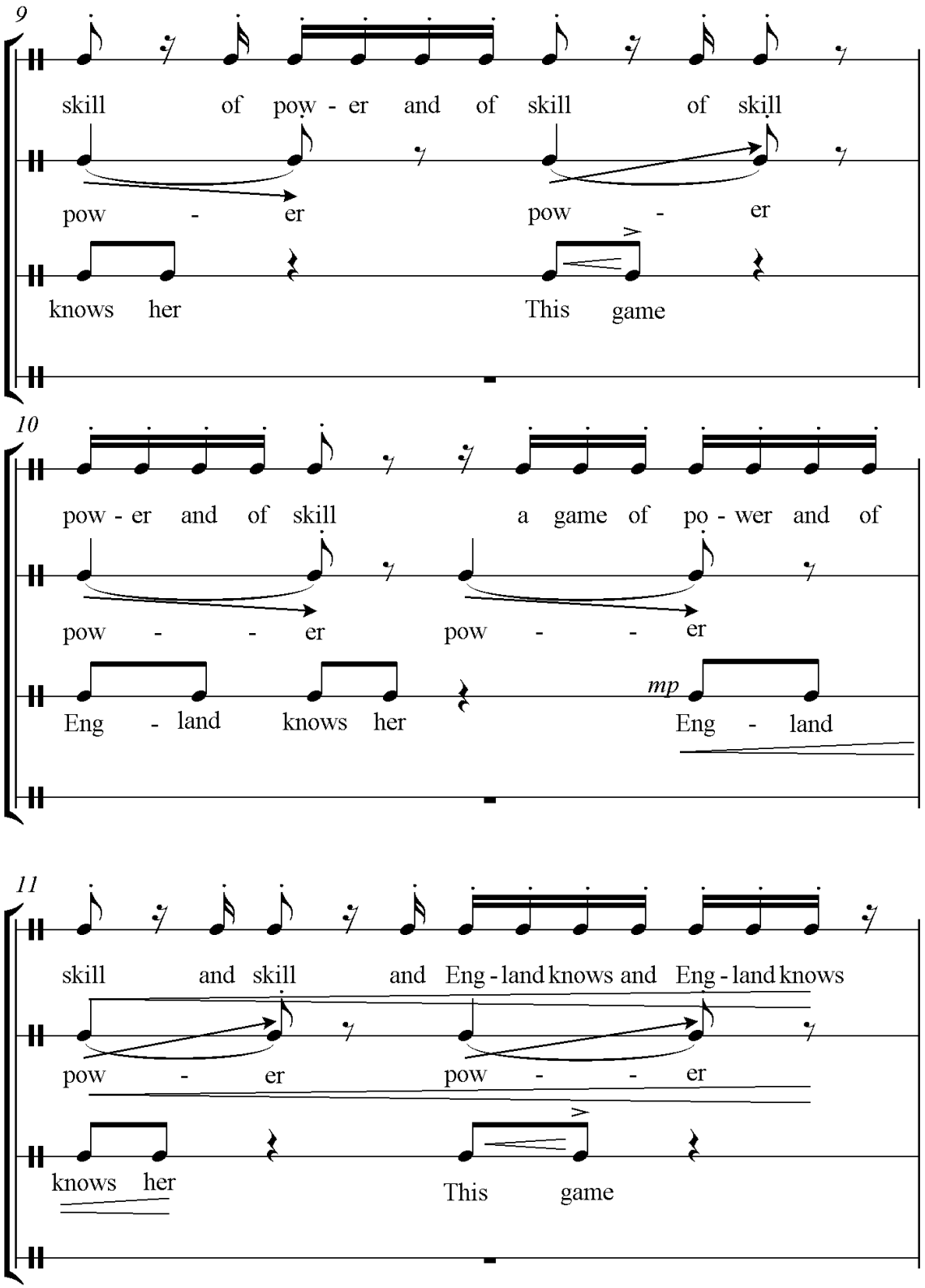
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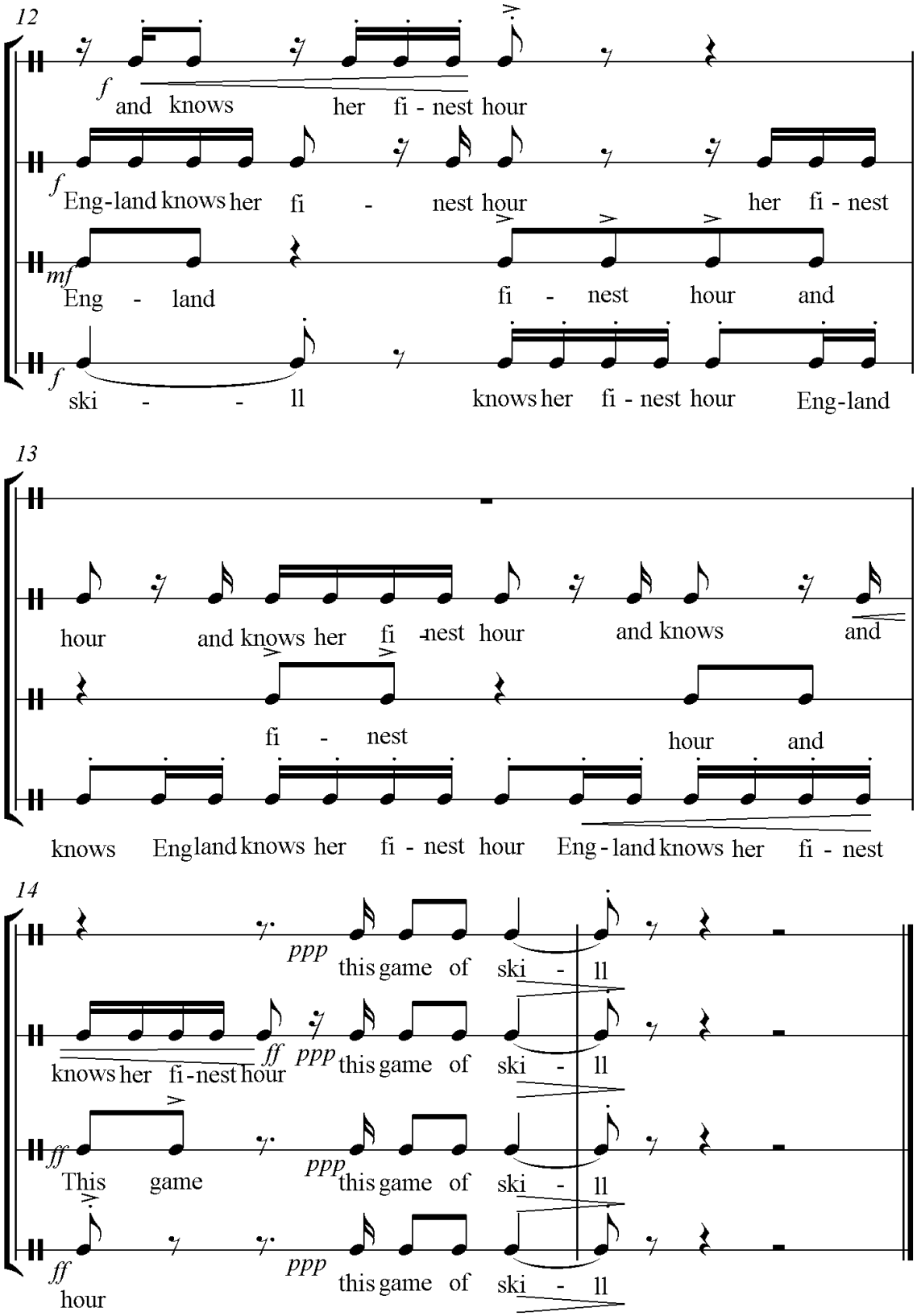
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NATIONAL TEAMS OF FOUR: MARCH 2011

Least said, soonest mended

By Patrick Barrie

Dear all,

Gentlemen: thank you for a lovely game of Fours.

Was it exciting? Possibly. Certainly all three teams had a chance of winning going into the final game. Only 5⅓ points separated first from last after each team had played 24 games. The winning team had a ppg of only 3.613 (after handicap transfer).

The result was:

1. Alan Dean, Steve Phillips, Charles Relle, Keith Seaman: 86 $^{17}/_{24}$

2. Ben Fairbairn, Stew Sage, Joe Crouch/ Matthew Rose, Harley Jones: 83 $^{11}/_{12}$

3. Patrick Barrie, Patrick Driscoll, Matt Fayers, Sarah Knight: 81 $^{3}/_{8}$

I've looked at the points obtained (after handicap transfer) and can reveal the best performances came from Sarah Knight, Stew Sage, Harley Jones and Alan Dean (all with adjusted PPGs of just above 4).

The worst performances came from Matthew Rose, Ben Fairbairn, Patrick Barrie and Matt Fayers (all with adjusted ppgs of just below 3). There were some excellent pot-outs, notably by my opponents...

Ratings have been updated on www.etwa.org.

Best brundles,

Patrick

Raw individual scores:

	Points	Games	PPG
Alan Dean	57	12	4.750
Patrick Driscoll	53.5	12	4.458
Sarah Knight	53	12	4.417
Patrick Barrie	50.5	12	4.208
Matt Fayers	50	12	4.167
Steve Phillips	49	12	4.083
Charles Relle	48.333	12	4.028
Keith Seaman	45.333	12	3.778
Stew Sage	33.667	12	2.806
Matthew Rose	14	6	2.333
Harley Jones	12.667	6	2.111
Joe Crouch	8	6	1.333
Ben Fairbairn	15	12	1.250

As will be observed from the table below, Dean, Phillips, Relle, Seaman staged a remarkable comeback in the final round.

Their victory, however, was facilitated by a remarkable collapse by Barrie, Driscoll, Fayers, Knight, who achieved fewer than half as many points in the third as in the first round. Winks fatigue on a Sunday afternoon?

	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Total
Dean, Phillips, Relle, Seaman	22 $^{5}/_{24}$	27 $^{7}/_{8}$	36 $^{5}/_{8}$	86 $^{17}/_{24}$
Crouch, Fairbairn, Jones, Rose, Sage	25 $^{5}/_{12}$	27 $^{1}/_{4}$	31 $^{1}/_{4}$	83 $^{11}/_{12}$
Barrie, Driscoll, Fayers, Knight	36 $^{3}/_{8}$	28 $^{7}/_{8}$	16 $^{1}/_{8}$	81 $^{3}/_{8}$

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A man walks into a bar…

Sir,

This year I completed The Cambridge University Tiddlywinks Club Pub Crawl in the space of one academic year.

I distinctly remember what happened during the leg that covered the centre-of-town pubs. We arrived at the (then) Red Cow and as soon as we entered my glasses steamed up. The place was hot, full of people and was producing vast quantities of a noise that purportedly passed for 'popular music'.

In short, it was essentially a club. Its one saving grace may have been 'at least making the pretence of selling real ale' (an old standard bearer for defining a pub). Alas, we could not even see any sign of that. We promptly left and deemed it to not be a pub.

We live in interesting times. With alcohol consumption in the UK having decreased every year since 2003, by several different measures, it is no surprise that pubs have been closing at an alarming rate in recent years. Consequently The Crawl is somewhat leaner than it once was. This has led to some reorganisation of its legs, and in particular the centre-of-town pubs are currently in a leg that includes NINE (at one point it was ten!) pubs.

So you can imagine my horror, that when I pointed out that the Cow is barely a pub (taking pressure off this already over-subscribed leg), people actually argued *in favour* of counting it as a pub.

Having done some research, I conclude from analysis of the decor, the emphasis on food, the clientèle and the range of 'beer', that this place is in fact a pizzeria (and not a very good one at that) which happens to be licensed.

The selection of 'real ales' is as follows:

1. Smooth flow John Smiths; and
2. Guiness.

Since it is at best tenuous to call either of these real ale, I believe this place still fails to meet the basic criterion of 'at least makes the pretence of selling real ale'.

Furthermore, the general public of Google users seem to agree with me. Almost all of reviews obsess over the food and how cheap it is. At best it is occasionally refered to as a 'bar'.

Beware!

Sincerely,

Ben Fairbairn

THE US PAIRS: APRIL 2011

A Two Day Diary

By Charles Relle

It was only fair to Bob Henninge that I should revisit America to defend our US Pairs title. At the outset, I must say that the hospitality of Larry Kahn and his wife, Cathy Furlong, and of Severin and Pam Drix, was splendid. In addition, I much enjoyed visiting Washington, and the country around the Drix home is very beautiful. So is that on the outskirts of Washington.

Unfortunately, the most disappointing feature of the tournament was my own play. Bob was quiet and tolerant, but he must have been very disappointed in me too. We did not progress beyond the semi-finals, and the tournament was won by Larry Kahn and Mac Macavoy.

Though I have some reservations about the minutiae of tournament organisation in England, such as fractional handicaps and other things that make the format difficult for the ordinary player to understand, successive tournament organisers have ensured that tournaments run smoothly, we know whom we are to play and when, people have arrived more or less on time, and punctuality has improved. We even return almost to time after lunch. Though we sometimes complain about slow play, we do get through a reasonable number of games in a day.

The 2011 US Pairs seemed to me not to have these attributes. It was played at Ithaca High School, a good venue with tables the right size and plenty of light, though the room was windowless. The idea of including some of the High School players was commendable, and only fair after the work put in by Severin Drix to promote the game at the school. A number of the students were also participating in a Robotics Weekend, designated as the first weekend in April. It was a pity that that the student who gave this information to Severin did not mention that the Robotics event started on a Thursday, in fact the first Thursday in April, so that the nominated weekend was in reality the second in April. This produced a clash. It was known that I had already booked my flights, so NATwA, very kindly to me, let the dates stand.

The result of the clash was that it was not clear which of the students were going to turn up when, and this confusion extended to the Saturday and the Sunday. In addition, the students' notion of timekeeping was hazy, and one said he was coming but did not.

The pairs were divided on the Saturday into two groups of three, and it was arranged that the pairs in each group should play the pairs in the other group. Then the top pair in each group should play the second pair in that group in a three game semi-final, and there would be a three game final after that. Since there were only three pairs in each group, two strong and one weak, this last being from the High School, the semi-finalists were virtually predetermined from the outset, and all the games on the first day were irrelevant.

Readers may wonder at the last clause of the previous paragraph, for it implies that only three rounds of tournament games were played on the first day. However, this is exactly what happened, though one or two non-tournament games also took place.

Wondering who was going to turn up, and waiting for expected persons to materialise, took a long time, and the pace of play in America is such that it was sensible not to put too much strain on the schedule. Those who complain about slow play in

England should try America, and bring comfortable chairs or even sleeping bags.

In the event, there was one student pair in each group. In one group were Severin Drix and Ferd Wulkan, and Larry Kahn and Mac Macavoy; in the other were Dave and Jon Lockwood, and Bob Henninge and myself. The scoresheet will give all the results [*Ed: I would have included a scoresheet had I had one to hand*], but I remember that we beat the students 6-1, won 4-3 against Severin and Ferd, and 4½-2½ against Larry and Mac. I was playing weakly, my bringing in and potting being especially poor, while Bob sustained the partnership with some good play.

Sunday looked formidable, with six games to play, and the possibility that more and different students might appear, and a new schedule might have to be devised. However, it had been assumed on the Saturday that none of them would reach the semi-finals, and that these would be played before the rest of the tournament. It was also decided that we would skip lunch or send out for some, in the hope that the tournament might be completed as a result of this measure.

Bob and I were against the Lockwoods in one semi-final. Once again I was the weak link in our partnership; of the opponents, Jonathan was playing especially well. He was also quickly learning from his father the technique of pulling up his partner just as he was about to play a shot. However, their methods worked well enough to give them 6-1 and 4-3 in the first two games, which meant we had to get a seven to win. As the third game developed, this never looked likely, and in the event we got six, thus losing 11-10. In the other match, Larry and Mac began with a six and a four against Severin and Ferd, who got only three points in the third game. In the final, Larry and Mac began with two fives, and followed with a six; the Lockwoods, of course, needed a seven in the final game: striving for such a result often ends in a loss. There were a few more random games, played for fun. So ended the tournament, to attend which I had undertaken an eight hour flight and a seven hour car trip.

On the Saturday evening, Severin took some of us walking in the superb scenery near Ithaca, and I do wish to express publicly my thanks to him and Pamela for their delightful hospitality. Equally, I thank Larry and Cathy for showing me the Great Falls of the Potomac river, another breathtaking spot, and for entertaining me for several days. Larry also drove me to and from the tournament. I was glad of the opportunity to partner Bob again, and thank him for his tolerance of my wayward play. It was good to renew so many friendships with American players, and to meet some of the younger ones; I do hope they will continue.

JUBILEE AND SANDY INVITATIONAL: APRIL 2011

By Alan Dean

Sandy Invitational

Six players took part in this tournament: Charles Relle, Matthew Rose, Rupert Wilson, Steve Phillips, Tim Jeffries and Alan Dean. Keith Seaman had car problems, so withdrew on the day. A computer program was used which produced random draws, constrained by not allowing the same two players to partner each other more than once, and selecting the best one it found in the given time. 'Best' was here defined as the draw with the smallest difference in the sums of the squares of the differences in the combined ratings of the pairs, summed over the whole tournament. This did not, however, take into account how many times anyone could face the same opponent, which led Charles to complain (for which he later apologised) that he had to play Matthew four times, and did not get to partner Alan.

All the morning games were hard-fought. Tim played some spectacular shots in refusing to lie down and die against an in-form Alan. Two rounds were played before the players adjourned to the King's Arms, where the other participants treated the tournament host to lunch.

In the day's only pot-out, Matthew overcame Charles to the tune of 7-0. Going into the final round there were two possible winners, with Alan being one and a half points ahead of Matthew, and these two faced each other, with Matthew having Charles as his partner and Alan playing solo. It looked like being a rather quick decider with Matthew going for an early pot-out, but he missed the sixth and Alan pounced on it. From this point on Charles played a brilliant attacking game, and managed to free Matthew's last wink three times, only to have it recaptured each time, but time was marching on and Alan was torn between concentrating on his own pot-out and preventing Matthew's. In the end, after potting five of one colour Alan used the sixth to guard the pile containing Matthew's last wink, but Charles' run of genius finally gave out and he offered a simple doubleton to the controlling wink of that pile, giving Alan a 4-3 win for the tournament.

Scores:

1	Charles & Tim	1½	5½	Matthew
	Alan & Rupert	5	2	Steve
2	Rupert & Charles	3	4	Steve & Matthew
	Tim	3	4	Alan
3	Tim	1½	5½	Matthew & Alan
	Rupert	1	6	Steve & Charles
4	Steve	2	5	Tim & Alan
	Rupert & Matthew	2	5	Charles
5	Charles	0*	7*	Matthew
	Steve & Alan	6	1	Rupert &Tim
6	Alan	4	3	Matthew & Charles
	Steve & Tim	1	6	Rupert

Final table:

Alan	29½
Matthew	27
Steve	21
Charles	18½
Rupert	18
Tim	13

Matthew and Charles needed to get away early. The other four had tea and then, at the request of Andrew Garrard, tried out a new game format that Andrew was considering for use in a new tournament for which he was planning to present a trophy in commemoration of having been playing winks for half his life. The idea was that each player played for himself and that, at the end of rounds the player with the fewest points would drop out of the game, leaving the others the fight it out to determine the two qualifiers from that game, with the now owner-less winks remaining on the mat (removing these winks was another of Andrew's suggestions, but that was rejected on the grounds that it would be difficult to do if any significant piles were involved). Steve and Alan were involved in squops against each other. Tim and Rupert brought in well, keeping out of trouble, and Rupert potted out quickly. Steve's view was that he and Alan should not have wasted time fighting each other.

Jubilee Trophy

Alan Dean v Steve Phillips

Alan successfully defended his title, beating Steve 18-3 (6-1, 6-1, 6-1) in the first three of the eleven games they played whilst waiting for Andrew Garrard to join them for some friendly games in preparation for the national Pairs. The match was less one-sided than the scores suggest: Steve looked like winning 6-1 in game three, before he made a few mistakes that allowed Alan to turn the tables. It wasn't Steve's day: he only managed to win one of the 16 games during the day (between 10:00 and 17:00 - no need for Time Lords here).

VARSITY MATCH: MAY 2011

The winks club mats are soaked in port...

Dear ETwA,

You may be interested to know that Oxford University Tiddywinks Society won the Varsity Match against Cambridge University Tiddlywinks Club, with a score of 62-50.

Congratulations to the OUTS team; I hope this historic result encourages a resurgence of the game in the dreaming spires. And I hope CUTwC have fun drowning their sorrows.

A reminder that next weekend will see the ETwA National Pairs, held in The Chadwick Room, Selwyn College, Cambridge, I suspect convening from 10:15 for 10:30. Congress will be held, as usual, on the Saturday evening. I look forward to seeing many of you there.

Andrew Garrard

Secretary to the English Tiddlywinks Association

...And so are all who play the sport.

By Ben Fairbairn

"Who's Ben?…Are you Ben?…I'm told you *should* know what's going, but with a rating as low as yours I can't believe that".

Rupert Wilson (Junior Umpire) soon changed his tune when in just under five minutes I (the Senior Umpire) had a filled the whiteboard with blank score sheets, a diagrammatic room layout indicating mat numbers and a Graeco-Latin square allocating players to mats in each round.

This was the scene in Lecture Room XXIII of Balliol College Oxford - the site of the first Oxford and Cambridge Varsity Tiddlywinks match since 2006: the culmination of months of negotiations between the CUTwC secretary, Deborah Fisher (Not-An-Umpire), and her OUTS counterpart, Daniel Kessler (Not-An-Umpire-But-A-Captain).

The Oxford team started the day enthusiastically and in high spirits. Just to make the day extra-sociable they had gone to the lengths of making name badges for everybody in both teams in their respective university colours and for the umpires (hence the titles) in green.

After Oxford received some pregame instruction from Rupert and Cambridge had an incredibly slow lunch, the games began. Unsurprisingly, the first round passed quickly with three of the four games ending in pot-outs, such that OUTS scored just two points in the entire round.

Round Two saw Cambridge showing off their grasp of the subtleties of the game: not only did they pot out twice but one game was actually conducted entirely with the colours in the wrong order! There are reports that footage of this extraordinary game exists.

By this stage we were running well ahead of schedule and it was decided that we could afford a ten or fifteen minute break. Pan-Oxbridge hero and supporter Liz Batty (Not-An-Umpire-But-Keeper-Of-The-Rules-NARG-iPhone-App) had pre-emptively gone on a beer run, enabling a mid-tournament drinks break on the lawn outside in the sunshine (a perfect day to spend hours stuck in a windowless room to play winks).

Round Three and Sarah Knight (Not-An-Umpire-But-A-Token-Sarah) let slip Cambridge's successful strategy: "[They're] not so much guards, more pre-emptive reinforcements".

Mind you, Oxford's Dan Hollis (Not-An-Umpire-After-All-He's-At-Oxford, not that I'm biased or anything) revealed where's Oxford's thoughts were really headed with "What's it called when you get on top?" Other highlights of the round included Cambridge's PBB (Not-An-Umpire-But-A-TLA) calling for a shot judge – on himself – and Cambridge's Christian Gowers (Not-An-Umpire-But-The-Captain's-Dogsbody) being potted out by his partner Dannish Babar (Not-An-Umpire-But-The-Captain) while not being under just ONE other wink but TWO!

By this time it was clear that Oxford were catching on how to actually play the game as the depth of the aforementioned pile testifies and as Cambridge's Joe Crouch (Not-An-Umpire-But-An-American) said, 'they deserved more'. It was clear that Oxford's tactics were changing from the traditional Pot-Squop strategy to the lesser known Stop The Pot-out BEFORE It Happens strategy.

By Round Four, an Oxford victory was arithmetically impossible and Cambridge 'smelt blood', recalling the fondly-remembered and all these years later still much talked-about record breaking 98-14 victory.

Clearly, the boat was now being pushed out to make sure everything went well. Having been umpiring all day I was surprised at how few of the decisions were clear-cut. It was not until this final round that a genuine 'you could drive twelve double-decker buses through that!' decision arose. There was even one instance of a contentious soon-to-be-destroyed-by-squidger-damage pile being pictured by at least two (possibly three) digital cameras.

It turned out that such care was justified: in the final game, Oxford won their first pot-out of the day!

This meant that Cambridge had to follow in and take second and third to secure the record. In a tense few minutes for Cambridge, Victoria Pinion (Not-An-Umpire-But-A-Heroic-Cambridge-Stand-In) eventually pulled off the potting of her last winks, thus earning the undying glory of the record for herself and her team-mates.

It was at this point that both the CUTwC and OUTS PR machines went into overdrive. Or at least the Cambridge Captain's sense of humour did. What do you expect if you elect a stand-up comedian for president? "What's a realistic sounding false score giving Oxford a victory?" A well placed text message to Andrew Garrard (Not-An-Umpire-But-The-CUTwC-Lord-Haw-Haw) ensued. The efficiency of the CUTwC PR machine was staggering - the players first heard reports of what Andrew had done in a phone call from DBW (Not-An-Umpire-And-In-Fact-Not-Even-Present) when the coach home had only got as far as Milton Keynes! OUTS meanwhile had already drafted a letter to the chancellor of the University, Baron Patten of Barnes, apologising for their performance.

"Not only have we let ourselves down, but the pain of knowing we let down our fellow students, our tutors, and above all, our illustrious forefathers of the game, is perhaps too much to bear. It is tempting at this point to admit defeat, and to slink away, forgotten and unloved into the annals of history. But we are stronger than that, and it is for that reason that we collectively promise to continue as a society, and face Cambridge next year with a more experienced team. Maybe we'll even read the rules fully before the match."

The OUTS crew were energetic, enthusiastic and a fun bunch of people with great potential to become more than just a flash-

in-the-pan of activity. More than one of the supposedly novice players showed some real talent – a fact borne out by the statistic that two of them entered the world rankings with only about 100 fewer rating points than the Senior Umpire.

To quote subsequent correspondence with the Junior Umpire "Sell OUTS(?) the tools and they may go far."

To quote the victorious Cambridge Captain in the Clarendon Arms: 'If there's a Varsity Match next year, we could be in serious trouble'.

Dear Liam,

News had, of course, reached me in London concerning the Society's recent humiliation; and I understand that there was some debate about whether this catastrophe should lead on the BBC 10 o'clock news.

You may, of course, be right that perfidy played a part in the outcome, though it seems to an outsider more likely that you have all been spending far too much time in the library!

Perhaps I can give you a piece of advice as a very old man? If you continue through the rest of your adulthood 'winking' at people, you may find that it gets you into quite a lot of unnecessary trouble.

Best wishes,

Chris Patten

Cambridge University Tiddlywinks Club

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Results of the 2011 Varsity Match between Cambridge and Oxford

Held on Sunday May 1st in Lecture Room XXIII of Balliol College, Oxford

	Daniel Kessler / John Lees	Liam Shaw / Nicola Sugden	Laurie Pycroft / John Edwards	Dawn Hollis / Alex Hill	Total
Sarah Knight / Joe Crouch	0* 7*	1 6	1* 6*	1 6	25
John Haslegrave / Deborah Fisher	1 6	1 6	0* 7*	0* 7*	26
Philip Buckham-Bonnett / Victoria Pinion	1 6	0* 7*	1* 6*	5* 2*	21
Dannish Babar / Christian Gowers	0* 7*	1 6*	0* 7*	0* 7*	27
Total	2	3	2	6	99 / 13

Key

Round 1	CUTwC
Round 2	
Round 3	OUTS
Round 4	

THE WORLD PAIRS: MAY 2011

Attached is a write-up of the recent World Pairs. It wasn't very exciting, so I made sure the report wasn't very long...

Matt Fayers & Larry Kahn (champions)
Andy Purvis & Matthew Rose (challengers)

By Patrick Barrie

The weather was humid. Maybe because of this (why does humidity affect winks?), the quality of play was patchy – good in parts, but poor in others.

The first three games followed a fairly similar pattern. Fayers & Kahn would get a narrow advantage early on, tying up most of Purvis' winks while most of Rose's were free. In the first two such games, Rose managed to get first place, thanks in part to missed pots by his opponents. In the third game, Fayers potted well to get first place. The match score at this stage was 11-10 to Fayers & Kahn; Purvis had yet to score a point for his partnership.

Game Four was to prove the turning point. There were threats of early pot-outs from both sides, but both sides chose to attack enemy winks. After some skirmishing, there was only one singleton squop for each side with seven minutes to go. Fayers decided that the time was now right for aggressive action. He potted his five flat yellows, and then considered his sixth: it was seven inches from the pot, a small yellow wink totally on top of a small red. He went for it and the wink sailed in – a superb pot. The resulting 6*-1* gave Fayers & Kahn a useful 17-11 lead at the interval.

In Game Five, Rose went for a seventh-turn pot-out because of the match situation. After four successful pots, he missed with his fifth wink and it landed in enemy territory. Fayers & Kahn achieved a squop-up and converted to pot out fairly easily. They got a 7*-0* win after Rose twice missed his final wink.

Needing two sevens, Purvis & Rose played well in the next game. They had an advantage for most of it, and continually threatened to free six winks of one colour but never quite managed it. In the end, Kahn potted a wink from the edge of the mat in Round Five to share first place and get a 3-4 scoreline. Purvis was delighted that his reds got third place, as this gave him his first game point in the match.

So Matt Fayers & Larry Kahn won by 27-15, even though they lost three of the six games played. It's their sixth successive World Pairs title (one behind the record) and challengers will have to play well to take the title away from them.

	Game 1	Game 2	Game 3	Game 4	Game 5	Game 6	Total
Fayers & Kahn	3	3	5	6*	7*	3	27
Purvis & Rose	4	4	2	1*	0*	4	15

THE NATIONAL PAIRS: MAY 2011

View from Fourth

By Charles Relle

The title of this article is taken from 'View from Third', by Dave Lockwood in *Newswink 13*. After playing badly in several successive tournaments, I had mixed feelings about the Pairs. I enjoy partnering Steve Welch, and welcomed the opportunity to do so again, but did not want to let him down in what might be my last national tournament. Probably my last tournament was going to be my still-to-come defence of the London Open with Alan Dean, but age, tiredness and declining ability were combining to discourage me from continuing to play. However, I resolved to do my best, and not to be too disheartened by my performance. Appealing was the idea of taking a relaxed attitude, of not being involved with ETwA, and of arranging my calendar in future without specific reference to Tiddlywinks.

We were in the lower half of the draw, which meant we had to play the more highly seeded pairs first. At the start, some players were, expectedly or unexpectedly, without partners, and pairings seemed finally to be settled by a telephone call to or from Madrid, where a potential participant was apparently engaged in or with tennis. However, we had to face Geoff Thorpe and Patrick Barrie. Any partnership containing Patrick is very strong, and I knew from the International last September that Geoff could be guided to success. We came out of the game with a 4-3 win, very much against the trend, in that each of the other games went 6-1 to the higher ranking pair. I felt that our opponents could have emerged with a win had they been more adventurous.

The next round saw us facing Matt Fayers and Tim Hunt, and they beat us 6-1. They now had 12 points, as did Larry Kahn and Alan Dean. Matthew Rose and Andy Purvis had 11, but the Lockwoods, who had started with a six, lost 3-4 to Ben Fairbairn and Joe Crouch. This proved to be a significant result. At this point, I was already grasping for a non-existent tankard rather than a material squidger, and was glad when the lunch break was declared. I knew Steve was not a beer drinker, and resolved to moderate my consumption so that he could not attribute my poor play to alcohol and decadence rather than old age and decay.

I rather hope I have laid the ghost of the round after lunch, for my last serious mishap at that stage was in 1987. We confronted Keith Seaman and Harley Jones, a partnership formed on the day, since Steve Phillips had been obliged to cry off at short notice. This match pitched one Cambridge and Southampton pair against another, and the more experienced pair (we had played one tournament together a year before) prevailed 6-1. I was relieved, as Keith is a formidable and sure-footed player, and Harley is fast improving. Elsewhere, Larry and Alan edged further ahead with a seven, while Matthew and Andy scored only six, as did Patrick and Geoff. The Lockwoods were this time on the right side of a 4-3, beating Matt and Tim and ending a run of sixes.

Matt and Tim switched back to a six in the next round, against Sarah Knight and Andrew Garrard, while Matthew and Andy played us. Their strategic and shot-making ability is well-known, as is the small number of their mistakes, but curiously we squeezed out a 4-3 win. Alan and Larry got the same score against the Lockwoods, and with Patrick and Geoff getting a six against Ben and Joe, we were left in sixth place, and with a very remote chance of qualifying for the top four.

We did ourselves no good in the next round when we lost 4 ½-2 ½ against Stew Sage and Philip Buckham-Bonnett, who had had a fractional win (5½ - 1½)

against Keith and Harley in the previous round. How we lost this game I do not know; it seemed to drift away from us, and recalled the experience Alan Dean and I had had two years before, when we lost to this pair 6-1. At least the defeat was not so bad this time. We were now in a worse position, four and a half points behind the Lockwoods who were on 22, having just beaten Patrick and Geoff 6-1, leaving them on the same score. Meanwhile the three leading pairs had scored a seven and two sixes.

Round Six saw first wins for Keith and Harley, who got four against Patrick and Geoff, which should have helped our cause slightly, and for Sarah and Andrew, who beat Ben and Joe 6-1. Matthew and Andy beat the Lockwoods 5-2, again good for us, while Matt and Tim got another six. Our game: we went for a pot-out against Larry and Alan, and missed the sixth from close to the pot. The wink landed among the enemy, and, with time on their side, the opponents were able to work a seven. Our chances now looked worse than ever, as we were 6½ points below the next highest pair, and one more point adrift of fourth place.

Ben and Joe were our next opponents; they had just been overtaken by their conquerors in the previous round, and were no doubt eager for a win, and what could be regarded as an upset. In a repeat of our previous game with the rôles reversed, they went for a pot-out and missed the sixth, leaving us with a hard task, for they harassed us well, but we managed to work a seven. But Patrick and Geoff had scored three against Matthew and Andy, and the Lockwoods had beaten Keith and Harley 6-1, so we were still well short of qualifying. Alan and Larry were still out in front, with Matthew and Andy and Matt and Tim tying for second place.

I felt uneasy about the next game: Andrew had beaten me 7-0 in the last singles, and was quite capable of a pot-out that would ruin our chances; added to that, he would rather enjoy doing it. This and the fact that we had an outside chance of qualifying added tension to the game. In fact we beat Andrew and Sarah 6-1, and had to hope that the results on other tables were favourable to us. We discovered that Larry and Alan had beaten Patrick and Geoff 5-2, leaving them half a point behind us, and still to play Matt and Tim, who had lost 4-3 to Matthew and Andy. Stew and Philip had held the Lockwoods to 3-4, who were therefore 3½ points ahead of us. Qualification was, miraculously, possible, as we had to play the Lockwoods in the last round, while Patrick and Geoff were against Matt and Tim.

Our position in the last round was thus this: we had to get at least six against the Lockwoods, and six would not be good enough if Patrick and Geoff got a seven. The Lockwoods had to get 3½ or better against us to be sure of qualifying if Patrick and Geoff got a seven. Going into the game, I felt that our chances were so remote that I was unable to feel any tension, and Steve and I had agreed that we would not try to force anything, but let the game evolve and do our best. Late in the game, Steve was involved, but I had four reds free near the pot, one about ten inches away, and one perhaps six inches away but on a green. We agreed that I should try for the pot-out. I potted the four close ones. In situations like this I do not like to leave the opponents with two targets, so rather than try to place the fifth, I said to Steve, 'I am going to risk this'. I managed to pot it. Now Steve said, 'Boondock the green' in a tone that was a mixture of question and command. Left to myself, I might have tried the wink-off-wink pot, but I decided that partnership understanding was paramount, and that anyway Steve's suggestion was probably the lesser risk, for if I had missed the pot, I would have left an easy squop. I did boondock the green, no great distance, for I did not want to put my own wink any nearer an enemy wink or any further from the pot. Dave and Jon were left with difficult squops,

but could not succeed with them, though they were very close. I then potted the last wink. This, however, was far from the end of the story, since we had to get at least six. The follow-in potting demonstrated the pressure of the occasion, and seemed to me interminable, and must have been agonising for the participants. Steve, however, secured third place and the necessary six, afterwards admitting that he thought we needed a seven. I must add that the courtesy and sportsmanship of both the Lockwoods was exemplary. I was especially pleased with the result, because the Lockwoods had knocked me and Bob Henninge out of the US Pairs earlier this year.

It turned out that Patrick and Geoff got four against Matt and Tim, which meant that we did qualify, while at the top there was another 4-3, this time to Matthew and Andy over Larry and Alan.

In the final pool of four, we were 5½ points behind the next pair and 11½ behind the leaders. We first faced Larry and Alan, and soon Steve had four of Alan's winks squopped, while Larry had six free winks near the pot, and I had six free further away. Steve encouraged me to try to squop Larry, but I went for a very speculative pot-out, which failed early. Larry then ran six, and Alan followed in. My thought was that a big win, however unlikely, was the only way for us to make progress, but I am now sure that I was wrong, and that my partner's suggestion was correct. If we had squopped Larry, we might have held the position. Meanwhile Matthew and Andy, whom we had to face next, beat Matt and Tim 6-1, also on a pot-out.

Quite early in the next game, Steve had six free, not in a very close position, but with nothing to lose, we decided on a pot-out attempt. People approach pot-outs in a variety of ways. Some, typified by Andy Purvis, line up each pot with great care, taking their time; others switch into pot mode and play by well-sharpened instinct. Steve did this, potting six without hesitation. The rest of us followed in, giving us a six. I did not go to follow the other match, being too tired to do anything except drink tea, but Alan and Larry lost 2½ – 4½ to Matt and Tim, a result that turned out to be important, as they could be overtaken by Matthew and Andy if the latter pair got a seven against them.

Our last game took a strange course. Over some time, I have not been able to bring in well, putting many winks off the mat. Some years ago, I had changed to squop-style bringing-in sitting down, using a squidger made out of the remains of the front number plate of a car I once owned. It is not now the moment to explain how the transformation from number plate to squidger occurred. This squidger worked satisfactorily, but one day I lost it, and never recovered the facility for accurate bringing-in. Over the last year, things seemed to go from bad to worse, and I decided for this tournament to revert to pot-style bringing-in standing up. Accuracy was not bad, considering I had not practised this style for years, and I did not put a wink off the mat in the whole tournament. Against Matt and Tim, I potted my third wink on the bounce from the corner, and followed this with the fourth, also on the bounce. I potted the other four, evading the squop attempts of the opponents. Steve, meanwhile, was harassing them in an attempt to squop winks anywhere near mine. This left him no time to bring in, and it was not a surprise that we ended with five points.

Naturally, we wanted to see what was happening in the other game, and were in time to see Matthew's amazing shot which knocked his partner's wink free from the bottom of a pile of four, Andy's dramatic pot-out, and Matthew's achievement of second place against the more scattered winks of his opponents, giving them a seven and the title by half a point. Alan was left half a point short of the title for the second year in succession. No doubt all this will be described elsewhere in a less egocentric article. [*Ed: err...*]

We ended in fourth place, two points behind third. It might be thought that this was no great achievement, and not worth writing or reading this article, which, however, will, I hope, encourage people who are uncertain about entering for tournaments. We qualified for the final pool, putting out the pair that had eliminated me from the US Pairs. We did stage something of a recovery to do this, and we did finish higher than last year, when we faded badly on the second day. This year we got the second highest score in the final pool. What is more, we beat the eventual champions twice. I gained rating points for the first time since last year's London Open, apart from a stuttering plus two in the US Pairs. Steve gained 214, not having played since the Pairs of 2010, when he gained 226. A gain of 440 in two major tournaments must be something of a record. (I know Christian Gowers gained 436 in the recent Varsity match.) A more relaxed approach seemed to make for more fun and possibly better play, and the company is always enjoyable. There certainly were more positives than negatives, and we are, all being well, going to try again next year.

Final score table			
		Games	Points
1	Andy Purvis & Matthew Rose	12	58
2	Alan Dean & Larry Kahn	12	57½
3	Matt Fayers & Tim Hunt	12	49½
4	Charles Relle & Steve Welch	12	47½
5	Dave Lockwood & Jon Lockwood	12	49
5	Patrick Barrie & Geoff Thorpe	12	49
7	Andrew Garrard & Sarah Knight	12	37
8	Philip Buckham-Bonnett & Stew Sage	12	34
9	Harley Jones & Keith Seaman*	12	24
10	Joe Crouch & Ben Fairbairn	12	14½

* Harley Jones played 10 games; Keith Seaman played singles in 2 rounds.

THE LONDON OPEN: JUNE 2011

I VISIT A SPEAKEASY

By Digne de Thyeste

When my editor sends me to London, England for this Open Championship, and tells me to look out for two guys called Alan and Charles, who have been World Champions, I look them up in a prize-fighting book, but can find no trace of them. So I go to the Crosse Keys, where this Championship is to take place, and am greatly horrified to find that it is nothing but a speakeasy, because I am never an habitué of such places. Furthermore, there are many guys and dolls drinking beer in the early morning, and this Charles is also drinking beer. He does not look like a prizefighter, and if he ever is a prizefighter in his day, his day is by no means yesterday.

I listen in to the conversation a bit, and find that this is a Tiddlywinks Championship, which gives me much embarrassment, as I am in no way acquainted with this game, except as a child, when it frustrates me no little. It turns out that Alan and Charles are not there to fight each other, but as partners, this being a partnership game, and that there are so many World Champions in the tournament that it sounds like boxing after all, especially when I learn that two guys called Andrew and Geoff agree to partner each other, and that once when they play together, one lays the other a big right hook.

In the first round I watch Alan and Charles play against Patrick Barrie, another World Champion, and a guy called Nick, who it seems is quite new to the game. This Nick plays some very fine shots, and his partner is clever at guiding him through. It seems the object of the game is not to flick the winks into the pot, which is what I remember, but to wear the other side down, and Alan and Charles wear their opponents down to the extent of getting 4½ points, though how they get these points I do not understand. But it seems other pairs do more wearing down, or better, as one pair has five points, and two others, including Alan Harper and Matthew Rose, another World Champion, have six. At this stage I am glad I do not lay any money on the guys I am told to watch, as I think they are at least six to four against for the tournament.

Charles goes for another pint of beer, and I am even more glad I hold onto my money, though I wish to say a great deal of beer is being consumed all round the room. I see that Alan and Charles are to play a big guy called Stew, who is not slow on the beer himself, and Philip, a student who maybe is the future of the game. These two beat Alan and Charles in a game a few years back, but today they seem to be afraid of being worn down by them, as Stew keeps his winks free and tries to pot them, but misses one and is squopped. Now Philip tries to rescue him, but by and by his winks are squopped too. Alan now pots enough winks to overtake Stew, and by the last round Charles has almost caught him up. Charles now lines up to pot a wink angled on another wink very close to the pot, and I am glad I am not a betting man, or I will be laying a good ten to one against its going in. But in it pops, and I am greatly relieved that I keep my wallet shut fast.

Now all the players go to lunch, but order up as much beer as food, and it is a good thing they are not prizefighters, as their trainers will have something to say to them. At this stage Matthew and Alan have 12 points, and the hot money is on them, but Andrew and Geoff score seven in this round, as they are very lively at potting their winks, and are not exchanging right hooks.

Next Alan and Charles have to play Ben and a doll called Aylin, who are at the top of the draw and an international pair, and I am looking to them to defeat the pair I am watching. But it turns out that they are at the top of the draw because Ben is tournament organiser and puts them there, and an international pair because they come from two different nations, and not because they ever represent those nations. Alan and Charles dispose of them before you can say knife, for Alan pots his six winks, and Charles pots his in the next turn, leaving Ben and Aylin with a big round zero. I look at the scoresheet, Matthew and Alan have 18 points, while Alan and Charles have only 17. Some guys called Tim and Steve have 15, and Andrew and Geoff have 14.

Alan and Charles have to play another Patrick and another doll called Sarah. I wish to say that the presence of the dolls lights up the scene for me more than somewhat, as the guys have remarkably homely features. This Patrick soon has six winks free and not too far from the pot, and tries to pot these winks. He pots three before he misses, and the other guys do not miss the squop. But Sarah is a dab hand with a squidger, and makes life very difficult for Alan and Charles, while Patrick keeps his other two winks clear of danger, and eventually pots them. This makes him very hard to catch, but Alan does, and Charles gets ahead of Sarah, so they get four points. I think the tournament must be slipping away from them as this is their lowest score so far, and Charles is probably a bit tired, as he is as old as the hills, and maybe even a bit older.

I walk over to the scoresheet, and see that Matthew and Alan have scored 3½ against Patrick and Nick, which is a big knock to them, and they are on 21½ points, and Andrew and Geoff are level with the guys I am watching on 21. But Tim and Steve get 5½ this round against Ben and Aylin, and are now on 20½, and I am not betting on anyone.

Matthew and Alan play a very steady game, and it seems no-one is going for the pot in their game against Alan and Charles, but each side is trying to wear the other down. All players seem to make mistakes, but more than once Charles redeems himself by making long squops that are very pleasing to his partner, and towards the end they play a sure-footed game that yields them five points. But they do not take the lead, for Tim and Steve take six off Andrew and Geoff and are half a point ahead. At another table, the Patricks go head to head and Patrick and Nick edge it by four points to three. So far, Tim and Steve win all their games, and I am wondering if the smart money goes on them, though I hardly notice them among all these World Champions. But nobody beats Alan and Charles either, and these pairs now have to play each other, so I think it best not to bet on either, and anyway there are no bookies in the room.

I have another look at the scoresheet, and it seems Stew and Philip beat Ben and Aylin by six to one, and now have to play Patrick and Nick, and the other Patrick and Sarah are up against Ben and Aylin. I am greatly tempted to watch a game with two ladies in it, as it will be less painful to the eyes, but decide to watch Tim and Steve instead. It seems they play very safe, for they do not lose so far, but have not potted out all day. This game is very indecisive, with some mistakes, but Alan and Charles establish a slight lead. Near the end Steve has a chance to pot one wink off another, and his partner says to play it harder than usual, but this advice is not correct, for the wink goes over the pot, and Alan and Charles get five points, and are now the leaders, though Tim and Steve are only two points behind, and half a point in front of Matthew and Alan, whom they have to play next.

Now comes the last round, and I get to thinking that maybe I can see a prize fight after all, as Alan and Charles have to play Andrew and Geoff, who are specialists at throwing punches at each other. They say

this Andrew is also a very good potter, and that he likes nothing better than potting out against Charles, as he knows this is more than somewhat annoying to Charles. But in this game Alan and Charles are minded to take all the squops on offer, and mostly do this, so they take six points from the game and the tournament too. Matthew and Alan beat Tim and Steve 4-3, so they cannot catch up.

Andrew begins to take photographs, and it is time for me to take my leave. As I go, I remember watching Charles check in to a pontoon game. He gets a pontoon in his first hand and a five card trick in his second, and then checks out of the game, so I begin to think he is no sap, even if he is as old as the hills.