

CAUTIOUS BIDDER [118]

The Welsh Premier League is run over two weekends in late October/early November and functions as the trial to aid selection for the Welsh teams that will compete in the Home International Championships for the season – the Camrose Trophy.

Eight teams compete in the Premier League, playing a round robin of seven 14 board matches, and then repeating the process two weeks later. The League got under way last weekend, and the current standings can be found by following the link on the Home Page of the Welsh Bridge Union website.

The team currently in the lead has a strong Newport connection, with three of the four players having long-standing ties to the area. The captain is Richard Plackett, whose mother still plays at the Gwent club, and other team members include Paul Denning, originally from Newport but now living in Tewkesbury, and Adrian Thomas, a long-standing Gwent member. Adrian and Paul currently lead the X-IMP rankings - the table of individual pair results, arrived at by matching each pair's results against the datum score across all the boards played.

The following hand offered plenty of scope for IMPs to change hands.

Dealer South; E/W vul

	♠A98762	
	♥K75	
	♦86	
	♣AQ	
♠Q53		♠KJ10
♥83		♥J1062
♦95		♦J102
♣KJ8532		♣1074
	♠4	
	♥AQ94	
	♦AKQ743	
	♣96	

Although the Plackett team is well in the lead overall, they actually lost on this board against the Mike Tedd team. Six of the eight North/South pairs played the hand in Three No Trumps, making twelve or thirteen tricks, whilst just two pairs (Tim Rees/Gary Jones and Barry Jones/Bob Pitts) bid to slam.

Slam is by no means cast iron. On a spade lead (admittedly unlikely on the lay-out), diamonds have to break and then, in addition, declarer needs either a three/three heart break or for the club finesse to succeed. We've all been in far worse.

If declarer escapes a spade lead, any two of the 3/2 diamond break; hearts 3/3; or a successful club finesse will see him home. Those are pretty good odds, at least as viewed through my habitual rose-tinted spectacles.

The key to bidding slam is for South to grade his hand as being of reversing strength, which it certainly is with that source of tricks in diamonds. North however may be

concerned that his long but emaciated spade suit will not furnish many winners, and that is perhaps what held back the majority of the field.

How would you and your favourite partner bid it?

GD