

# Pêl Cyflym Champion Crowned!



Sophie Akers  
Official Superstar

At the Junior Camrose and Peggy Bayer Competitions at Newport on 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> February 2025, Sophie Akers came from nowhere and took no prisoners, leaving a trail of destruction behind in her quest for the number one spot at the launch of the official Welsh National Sport of “Pêl Cyflym” (Speedball with a Welsh twist.....!). It was an amazing performance in her first outing with partner-for-the-night Greg Blicharz achieving a monumental 67.3%. In Pêl Cyflym you are teamed with a random stranger and left to play bridge as quickly as possible to the sound of Welsh musical legends with multiple bonuses and fines on the way! It is not for the faint-hearted!!

Sophie’s Welsh competitors are pictured here but the event involved infiltrators from England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Eire including their older “sensible” team Captains!



Sophie is pictured here prior to her Pêl Cyflym victory with her Junior Camrose partner Sarah King and a middle-aged photo-bomber....



As the self-proclaimed National Sport of Wales, Pêl Cyflym brings out the Welshness in all of us, as illustrated by England's Daniel Winter as he considers defecting to our Nation!

Dan was seated South, the key position for elite athletes, as South must wave the Welsh flag as soon as that table's players have finished the round and put their cards back into the board. Not a second before or they will be fined! Then the flag needs to continue to be waved by South until the end of the round! Or South will be fined!

As Pêl Cyflym prefers all partnerships to be new ones formed on the day, the England and Wales respective Peggy Bayer Captains Charlie Bucknell and Mel Thomas combined forces to try and defeat their own junior teams (with considerable success)!!

They came second overall with an impressive 61.47% but with a minus 12% fine handicap!



This almost teetotal event took place under the sensible stewardship of the Welsh Bridge Union Chief Tournament Director Sarah Amos, TD Megan Jones, Compere and general awarder of bonuses and fines WBU President Andrea Knox, WBU CEO Ceri Pierce and EBU Director Abbie Smith





The English Bridge Union Junior Camrose Captain Stephen Kennedy dressed for the occasion with no less than 3 England Flags on display!

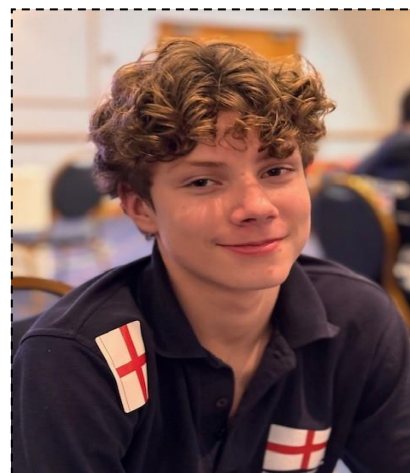
Part of the fun of Pêl Cyflym is obeying the eclectic rules and, where opponents can be seen to be breaking the rules, grassing them up ASAP so they are fined!

The Two of the England juniors shown (right and below) were the undisputed masters in the art of grassing up opponents for minor rule infringements and will make model citizens! Well done those young men!!





Despite our best efforts to convert the whole room into Welsh subjects for the night, for some their home nation call was too strong and they were able to resist the call to fully cross the line!



Pêl Cyflym has a way of drawing different deep emotional reactions from its participants, in clockwise order here (i) patriotism (ii) embarrassment (iii) over competitiveness and (iv) normal enjoyment





Pêl Cyflym brings together players of all ages and nationalities with one aim in common – to be CHAMPIONS!





As the night progressed the noise in the room reached a crescendo with the cries from the players drowning out the dulcet tones of the likes of Sir Tom Jones, Dame Shirley Bassey, Aled Jones, Catatonia, Manic Street Preachers, Stereophonics and a number of Welsh male voice choirs.

Pêl Cyflym, cards can only be played while the music is playing. Any players commencing a round before the music starts will be fined!

In Pêl Cyflym, each player on the first two tables to finish gets a 1% bonus for the score for each player and each player on the last two tables to finish (or all tables that do not finish within the allocated time for the round) are fined 1% per player.

When Pêl Cyflym is played as an International Match (as was the case here) these bonuses and fines accrue to each player in that Nation!

On the final round this bonus/fine increases to 2% per player (Scotland winning an 8% bonus per player on the last round!).





The final adjustments were such that the loan of a GCHQ supercomputer was required to calculate them due to the extent of fines handed out! Adjustments per pair ranged from plus 8% to minus 16%. Sophie did well on her bridge play to win the event as she had an adjustment of minus 4%, essentially due to fines picked up by the fellow countrymen of herself and her partner Greg!



Congratulations to the 4 prizewinners, 3 of whom are Welsh! Pictured are: Louise Woolley and her son Kester Woolley, Sophie Akers and Greg Blicharz. Very well done all!!



The summary wouldn't be complete without mention of our own George Prothero who came a disappointing 31<sup>st</sup> carrying a handicap of minus 12%. George seemed somewhat distracted during the evening and not on his 'A' game. He explained afterwards that he was waiting to receive a phone call from the producers of the James Bond franchise to see if he had been selected to play the next James Bond. He is pictured here enjoying a pint of Kronenbourg 1664, shaken but not stirred.....