

HARRY SMITH & ALEX ADAMSON

SCOTLAND'S SENIOR MOMENT



Wonderful — the best underdog story since the Jamaican Bobsled Team.

— Mike Passell

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Preface

Bridge World Championships tend to be dominated by the same countries year after year. They are usually either big countries like the USA, France, Italy or Brazil, or have a relatively large bridge playing population, such as Norway, Sweden, Poland or The Netherlands.

Scotland has fielded its own team in the European Championships since 2000, and does not meet either of these criteria. Before 2012 no Scottish team had qualified for the World Championships. Indeed, none had even been close, and no-one in Scotland was predicting that one of our teams would do so any time soon. The Scottish Bridge Union felt fairly safe in not budgeting for attendance at a World Championship!

In 2012, at the European Championships in Dublin, all that changed. The Scottish Senior team not only took one of the six qualifying spots for the 2013 World Championships in Bali, they actually won the bronze medal. They were seriously in contention for the silver medal, losing out on the very last deal of the event.

My old friend Harry Smith was the non-playing captain of that team. Soon after the same team was reselected for the World Championship, he spoke to me about the idea of writing a book about the Scots in Bali. I took very little persuading.

A year later, Harry took the Senior team to Bali. He made copious notes, much of which went onto a blog on a website created and updated by another of our bridge friends, Adrian Orłowski. Back in Scotland, I watched as much of the bridge as I could and had started work on Harry's blog entries even before the event was over.

Since that time, we have been working on this book. We are indebted to a number of people for their help. Firstly, we would like to thank the players. Not just for giving us such a great story to report, but also for their help afterwards in supplying details of the bidding, play and defence, and for insights into their thought processes. They have also given many useful comments on the text.

Similarly, we want to thank Mike Passell, Eddie Wold and Roger Bates from the USA2 team, all of whom offered their help in filling in some forgotten details. Barry Rigal helped us with introductions to the USA2

players, and John Carruthers, who was writing the Seniors part of the World Championships book, was very generous in sharing his draft material.

The text would be much poorer without the help of our reviewers and proof-readers. There were two groups. The first group consisted of Harry's wife Alison, my wife Elinor, and my mother Eva. They not only proof-read large sections, but also made huge contributions to our style, particularly on matters away from the bridge table. The second group consisted of four expert players: my sister Sheila Adamson, Bob McPaul, Mike McGinley and Senior team member Iain Sime, who have proof-read and given many helpful comments on our analysis. They have saved us from many errors. We, however, take full responsibility for any errors that remain.

We have also made use of material supplied to us by another Scottish internationalist, Professor Sam Punch of the University of Stirling. She is currently researching the Sociology of Bridge, and sought detailed information from each of the team members before and after the event.

Finally, we must thank Brian Senior. He took the text and turned it into a book.

One final comment about the authorship of this book. We have both contributed to every section. Where one of us wrote the initial draft, the other edited and rewrote parts of it, so that it would now be impossible and inappropriate to separate out our individual contributions. This applies to every part of the book, whether this preface or throughout, where at many points it is written from the viewpoint of the captain.

Alex Adamson.

Linlithgow, Scotland June 2014

About the Authors

Harry Smith

Harry is a retired actuary who rose to a senior position in a large life assurance company before embarking on a successful consultancy business. He lives in Perth, is married to Alison, has three children in various parts of the globe, and one grandchild.

A keen card and chess player from an early age, Harry took up bridge while at Glasgow University in the late 1960s, a complete beginner in the company of already highly accomplished players like Barnet Shenkin, Gerald Haase and George Cuthbertson. He only started playing seriously about fifteen years later, and has won many national and district events. He has represented Scotland in the Senior Team on four occasions with two different partners. Twice he played in the home internationals, the Teltscher Trophy, and twice in the European Championships, in 2006 in Warsaw and 2008 in Pau, and has played in several European Open Championships, twice with Alex.

Captaining the Senior Team to the Bronze Medal at the European Championships in Dublin was his first experience of being non-playing captain, but he followed this up by captaining the Scottish Womens Team to the European Championships in Croatia in 2014.

He has written many bridge articles for various magazines, and is currently researching a book on Roman Roads in Scotland.

Alex Adamson

Alex is a project manager at the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. He lives in Linlithgow, is married to Elinor and has two children, both of whom are students.

Coming from a card playing family, he took up bridge while still at school and was part of the strong group of junior players at Edinburgh University in the mid-1980s, including Malcolm Cuthbertson, Andrew McIntosh and James McGeorge. He played for Britain and Scotland at junior level with three different partners, and has gone on to win many national and district events. He played in two European Open Championships, both with Harry.

Alex is a former bridge columnist for the Scotland on Sunday newspaper and has written articles for a number of bridge magazines, as well as several books on local history:

- ‘Murder, Poaching and Lemonade: Crimes and Court Cases in Nineteenth Century West Lothian’
- ‘Linlithgow 1851: A Moment in Time’
- ‘Linlithgow - Architecture and History of a Royal Burgh’ (with Ron Smith)

The Team

We are indebted to Liz McGowan's 'Scottish Bridge Union 1933-2008' for much of the information in this section.

Willie Coyle

Willie worked in education, first as a teacher and later as an administrator, for which he was awarded an MBE in 2006.

Willie took up bridge in 1960. He had played a lot of Solo Whist in his teens. In the Glasgow University Student Union one day, someone asked 'Anyone play bridge?' and Willie thought he might as well give it a try. Improving rapidly, he formed a partnership with Victor Silverstone. Eighteen months later they were in the Scottish team for the Camrose. The two of them 'fell into' Victor Goldberg's team, which had the habit of winning most major events, including the Gold Cup in 1969 and 1973, an event Willie has won twice more since.

From 1965-76 Willie was one of the mainstays of the highly successful Scotland team. He played in six winning Camrose series and two where they tied for first.

Along with Victor, he played in the British Open team in the 1969 and 1973 European Championships. Also in 1973, they were in the bronze medal team at the Common Market Championships.

Willie's next major partnership was with Rob Sheehan. They played for Britain in the 1975 European Championships and the 1976 Olympiad, winning the bronze in the latter. Playing with Barnet Shenkin, Willie was in the British teams which played in the Olympiad in 1984 and the European Championships in 1985. With the advent of senior bridge, he played with John Matheson in the Scottish teams in the 2004 Olympiad and the 2008, 2010 and 2012 European Championships. After the bronze medal success in Dublin and John's subsequent withdrawal, he reformed his partnership with Victor Silverstone for Bali.

As well as being a top-class player, Willie is a highly respected bridge trainer and coach.

Derek and Rhona Diamond

Derek and Rhona, the team coach, are one of the best-known couples in Scottish bridge. Derek is a successful entrepreneur. In recent years, he and Rhona have spent most winters abroad in the sunnier climates of Florida or the Far East, but Derek has still managed to compete in a fair number of Scottish events.

Derek was introduced to bridge in his final year at school during preparations for the annual Gilbert and Sullivan operetta. The principal characters, waiting to be made up, were playing a rubber, and he came to watch. When one was called away they were about to abandon the game, until Derek volunteered to make up the numbers, reckoning, 'I could do better than this, and I don't know how to play.'

Amongst many other achievements, he has won the Scottish Cup twice. Derek has probably set a record: he has played at international level for Scotland with twelve different partners in the Junior (many years ago), Open and Senior events. He won the Junior Camrose trophy in two successive years with different partners, and has also won two Camrose trophies, again with different partners. His favourite bridge is when playing in truly international competitions, with a significant record of success:

- Commonwealth Games India 2010: gold medal
- European Senior Teams Dublin 2012: bronze medal
- European Maccabi Games Antwerp 2001: gold medal
- European Maccabi Games Marseilles 1987: bronze medal
- Maccabiah Games Israel: one silver and three bronze medals

He played the 41st World Bridge Teams Championships in Bali Indonesia with his lucky thirteenth international partner, Gerald Haase.

Gerald Haase

Gerald grew up in Glasgow and qualified as a doctor in 1973. Following post-graduate training in Haematology, he moved to live in London in 1984. For the last 30 years he has worked for multinational pharmaceutical companies and the UK medicines regulatory agency on clinical trial evaluation and regulatory assessment regarding the potential benefits and risks of new medicines.

Gerald began playing bridge at Glasgow University bridge club and was a member of the team that won the British Universities Congress in 1970. Before leaving Scotland he had several successful partnerships, in particular with Michael Rosenberg and George Cuthbertson. When he and Michael first played in the Camrose he was 23 and Michael was 19. He has represented Scotland thirteen times in Camrose matches and has never been on the losing side.

He has won many national events including three Scottish Cups and the Blue Riband of UK Bridge, the Gold Cup, twice.

John Murdoch

John is a retired librarian and trade unionist. He is married to Betty. They have three children, nine grand children and one great grandson. He started to play bridge at a young age. While working in Glasgow as a librarian, he still found time to attend many bridge events.

John has won both the Scottish Cup and the Winter Fours (Scotland's two premier teams events) seven times each. He has shown himself to be adaptable throughout his career, building successful partnerships with a number of players. Since Scottish bridge independence in 2000 he has played in two European Championships and one Olympiad in the Open team, and a further three European Championships in the Senior team.

Playing with Douglas Piper, he won the Gold Cup in 2006. In 2010 he was part of the Scottish team which won the Commonwealth Games Gold Medal, this time in partnership with Brian Spears. In Bali he played with his regular senior partner, Iain Sime, having been part of the team that won the Bronze medal in the Senior European Championships in Dublin in 2012.

Victor Silverstone

Victor moved to London with his wife Linda in 1975 and is a practising accountant. They have four children.

Victor was born and raised in Glasgow. There were always card games at home, but it was only during his first year at Glasgow University that he learned about bridge. He promptly started a University Bridge Club, where he played with Bill Whyte – discovering only on the last day of the academic year that they had both been ‘attending’ the same course of lectures.

Before leaving Scotland he had a long and successful partnership with Willie Coyle. Between 1966 and 1974 they played in Scottish teams which won the Camrose Trophy outright four times and tied for first place twice. They were also in the first Scottish team to win the Gold Cup, in 1969. He has since won it twice more. He has also won the Lederer five times.

A few years after his move south, Victor briefly resumed Camrose duty for Scotland, this time with Barnet Shenkin, adding another Camrose series win to his portfolio.

Beyond these shores he has a wealth of international experience. He played for the British Open team in the European Championships in 1969 and 1973. In 1973 he won a bronze medal in the Common Market Championships, and then a gold in 1981.

He played in the British Senior team in the European Championships in 1999. In 2008 he played in the English Senior team at the European Championships, coming seventh.

Subsequently, Victor returned to the Scottish fold to resume an old partnership with Derek Diamond in the 2012 Senior European Teams Championship in Dublin. As John Matheson was not able to make the arduous trip to Bali, Victor and Willie Coyle renewed an even older partnership for this event.

Iain Sime

Iain is a chartered tax adviser for a leading law firm in Edinburgh. He is married to Linda and they have one son. Much of his spare time is spent following football.

Unusually for an international bridge player, Iain didn't take the game up until he was in his thirties. Having previously focussed on chess, he has made up for lost time with many successes in national competitions. He made his Scotland debut in 2004, playing with Derek Sanders. They stayed in the team for the 2006 European Open Teams Championship in Warsaw, where Scotland finished respectably in mid-table. Iain then formed a successful partnership with John Matheson. They played in the 2008 Olympiad in Beijing and have appeared in eleven of the last twelve Scottish Camrose teams. On becoming a senior, Iain teamed up with John Murdoch. They won the 2012 Teltscher Trophy, shortly before winning the bronze medal in Dublin.

Chapter 1 – The Road to Bali

Bali at last!

Midday, Saturday 14th September 2013 and I was in Nusa Dua, gazing over the Indian Ocean. After all the months of preparation and planning, this was it! There was a feeling of unreality about it all. It had always been so far in the future, something to be aspired to. Now it was here. We'd made it! Something we could never have imagined happening – Scotland qualifying for the World Bridge Championships.

Looking out of my window, dazzled by the strength of the light and the vivid colours of azure sea and luscious, dark green palm trees, I could hardly believe our senior team was now the focus of attention in the Scottish bridge world, and all the efforts, all the fund-raising, all the practice, and all the hopes of everyone, both in the team and back home, now depended on how we did.

The team met at breakfast that first morning – our first meal for a few days at under forty-thousand feet. It was gorgeous: sumptuous fruit, which I can only describe as ambrosial; light, fluffy omelettes, cooked and tossed before our eyes; and a profusion of Asian dishes. The Hotel Melia Bali in Nusa Dua was exotic and lavish. The breakfast room, one of the hotel's five restaurants, was lined from floor to ceiling in a beautiful variety of hardwoods. It was hard to tell inside from out, as the interior, filled with enormous pots of flowering plants, imperceptibly drifted into the beautiful gardens outside. Here too, a lush riot of colour bore witness to the fact we were now in the Tropics, only eight degrees south of the equator.

As we breakfasted, a young man, white flower tucked neatly behind his hair, played percussion on a wood and bamboo instrument, which we learned later is called a 'gamelan'. All the very plentiful staff smiled and bowed a greeting with hands placed together before the chest. We met this graceful greeting everywhere we went in Nusa Dua and many of us Scots could take a few lessons in courtesy from these charming Balinese people.

For elderly gentlemen, who had just spent up to 32 hours travelling across half the world, we felt surprisingly fresh. John was the exception. He and his wife, Betty, who was here to do some exploring,

both looked exhausted and went back to bed. They had not managed to get much sleep on any of the flights.

Derek and his wife, Rhona, the team coach, had arrived here a day earlier and Gerald and his partner, Carol, had spent a relaxing week in Bangkok on the way. Probably very wise.

Two days earlier, I had left home at 6 am, picking up John and Betty on the way to Edinburgh airport, where we met Iain. I was lugging three very full folders, containing the heavy and labyrinthine system notes of the 21 other teams. I also had an assortment of other necessary documents. In addition, I'd brought along eight boards and eight bidding boxes for our practice games. Faced with a charge of £11 per kilo over the baggage allowance, we canny Scots opened up all our carefully packed luggage and divvied up the weight. Even divided by four we just made the allowance and no more.

From the UK to Bali is a long haul starting at Edinburgh, then via London, Doha and Singapore, and on to Bali. The journey, although uneventful, was heavy-going and very, very wearing.

The one and, thank goodness, only hiccup had been at London Heathrow, where we'd arranged to meet the three Londoners at the check-in desk for Qatar Airways. After trekking along the interminable maze of tunnels from Terminal 5 to Terminal 4, we were delighted and relieved to reach the departure lounge at last.

Only we'd arranged to meet at the check-in desks! Oops!

I had all, and I mean all, the paperwork and I had alarming visions of Willie, Victor and Linda, stranded helplessly on the wrong side of security, while the rest of us took off.

Another trek in store! You would think that going from one part of an airport terminal building to another part of the same building would be a simple task. Not so! By the time I reached the check-in area, I felt as if I had walked to Bali.

There was Willie, standing patiently, but no sign of Victor and Linda. Just as my panic was reaching a crescendo, the runaways appeared and it wasn't difficult to guess where they'd been. Victor was looking visibly reinforced by his last cigarette before embarkation and not at all contrite.

It was important to get some sleep on this long journey. We'd only allowed ourselves a few days' luxury of jet-lag recovery, and we knew we'd have to hit the ground running.

We'd agreed Saturday was to be our complete rest day. We knew we would have to shake off the underlying fatigue and disorientation we'd undoubtedly have. I was well aware, from personal experience, of its effect on the quality of your bridge. You may feel you're OK, but your thinking isn't sharp and your judgments are unsound.

So now I intended to spend the rest of the day relaxing by the lagoon-shaped pool, which snaked through the luxuriant and extensive hotel grounds. For tonight's dinner Derek and Rhona had recommended a local centre, where there were less pricey restaurants than in the hotel. We would be eating out every evening for the next sixteen days. I suppose that's the downside of competing in a mind sport – instead of returning, toned and svelte, after running up and down a pitch – we'd come back half a stone heavier.

It was early to bed for the players, but my late nights were to begin right away, when I was to start writing my blog. Fingers crossed the website would work. Adrian had spent long hours setting this up so that the Scottish bridge world, and anyone else who was interested, could share our experience. Our arrangement was that I'd send the text and photos I'd taken to Adrian, who would then download the relevant hands from the WBF or BBO sites and incorporate them into the blog. I was very nervous and hoped that it would come together seamlessly. My fingers were very firmly crossed indeed.

On Sunday and Monday we were to practise together. That marked the end of the rest. It was critical that we got into the way of playing. Imagine Andy Murray turning up at Wimbledon without practising, or the World Cup football teams jogging on to the pitch after two weeks relaxing by the hotel pool! It's just the same in a mind sport like bridge. At this sort of level it isn't just a knock-about with a local team. We were taking on the best in the world. And the players' minds had to be razor-sharp. This would be where those weighty practice boards and bidding boxes would come into use. Then, later on Monday, I'd be at the captains' meeting, we'd attend the opening ceremony, and the show would be firmly on the road.



(l-r) Victor Silverstone, Gerald Haase, Iain Sime, Derek Diamond, John Murdoch, Willie Coyle

Do you ever expect to play in a world bridge championship? The 2012 Scotland Senior team surprised many by qualifying. The story of how they got to Bali, and what happened to them once they got there, makes for fascinating reading.

The authors give the reader a real sense of what is happening behind the scenes. I was left with the very nostalgic thought, "Wish I was there."

— Barnet Shenkin

This book covers aspects of playing in a world championship in a way that I have not read elsewhere, so it is that rarity these days, an original idea.

— Brian Senior



HARRY SMITH and **ALEX ADAMSON** have played together in two European Open Championships. Alex has played for Scotland and Britain at the junior level, while Harry has been a member of the Scotland Senior team on four occasions with two different partners. Each author has had many bridge articles published, but this is their first bridge book.