

Celtic Challenge Cork 2009

The twenty first annual international series in pètanque (French boules) was won by Wales. In a hard fought and very tight contest the visiting Welsh clinched victory in the final set by 29 wins against Ireland A's 28 wins and Scotland's 27 wins.

Ireland A started the weekend event well by defeating Ireland B by 12 games to 4. Scotland also had a good start with a 9/7 victory over Wales. By Sunday morning it seemed that Ireland A were cruising when they defeated Scotland by 10 games to 6. Wales, meanwhile, had wiped out Ireland A's advantage over Ireland B by recording the same 12/4 victory over the B squad.

But in two crucial sessions after lunch on Sunday Ireland A lost all eight of their matches to Wales. Before the final set of four matches Ireland A needed all of them to win. Meanwhile Scotland had started a rout of Ireland B and were themselves in sight of overall victory.

In the last set on Sunday evening Ireland B stopped Scotland in their tracks when the Murrays and Tim O'Neill from Cork beat their Scottish counterparts, and then Martin Ryan, Sheila Broderick and Martin Lovisek sealed the Scottish fate with a victory in their last match.

The Ireland A team almost pulled it off with three out of four victories against the Welsh.

The margin of one game difference between the three nations was the closest ever. No team suffered the ignominy of a 13/0 defeat (fanny). The games were opened by the Lord Mayor of Cork, Cllr. Brian Bermingham. The tournament director was Sue Ryan from Cork, and the umpire was Derek Jones from Wales. The best triple overall was Scotland 2, Robbie Stronach, Lynn Jenkins and Johnny Wilson. Best for Wales was the triples of Neil Dobbins, Paul Bond and Matthew Frank, whilst for Ireland the leading triple was Jim Ryan, Jackie Broderick and Tom O' Keeffe from Cork.