

## **Oxfordshire v Nottinghamshire 14 April 2019**

The hands and cross-imp scores are available on the OBA website.

This report seeks to pick up on hands of interest and learning points from the match.

Reading players' comments, there seemed to be two recurring themes in the match.

**[RC1]** was failure to use the green card enough. **RC1b** was using it at the wrong time.

**[RC2]** seemed to be weird things happening, possible misleading or unauthorised information from hesitations, questions, bids out of turn, extraneous questions, failure to use Stop card, etc.

A few years ago, the opening of off-centre 1NTs would have been an RC. However, nowadays they all seem to be doing it – e.g. North hand on board 5 (15-17), West hand on board 28, South hand on Board 19. The advantage is that an opening then rebid of a major can guarantee a 6 card suit but it does make low level bidding a bit of a lottery. To open off centre 1NTs should certainly be a conscious partnership decision – the captain's strong advice is that it should not be done with a maximum point count.

Comments on some of the hands are as follows:-

### **Board 2**

I believe that 3NT is better than 4S as you only need to force one heart trick rather than two, though on this hand both contracts make. Nonetheless, it would be wise for pairs to review their auctions if they did end up in 4S rather than 3NT.

Against Denis & Kathy, declarer in 4S played a heart to the jack rather than the 9 and drifted one off

### **Board 5**

My partner breached RC1 and overcalled North's 1S with 2H. South made a negative X and I friskily bid 4H in response. This was doubled for -300 on a part score hand. Elsewhere action by South (RC1) worked less well for NS and a few played in 5D -2.

### **Board 6**

This hand had the capacity for loads of double game swings but only one pair bid on to 5S over 5H. Bridge players seem to like to use mantras in place of judgement, so they probably thought they had "bid to the level of the fit" and "the five level belongs to the opponents". Surely Ghestem players would have nailed it. Well done to the valiant Notts pair.

### **Board 7**

On board 7, all vul, South opened 1C and West with K, AK83, Q652, K643 has to make a choice of call. For me it is between 1H and pass. A 1NT overcall usually led to getting too high. Having chosen to over-bid with a 1NT overcall of 1C, thus ending in 3NT, you have to play two tricks better than Deep Finesse to make it. Christopher managed this with a little help.

After a discussion with our skipper who felt that 1NT was best, while I felt it was "totally horrendous", said skipper has been consulting folk on that interweb, who seem to be siding with me so far.

### **Board 11**

In hearts, Deep Finesse pins the ten of spades to make 11 tricks, while playing to drop the queen in either hand is better odds. However, the auction is the thing. Usually North opens 1S third in hand (normal third seat, not RC1), East overcalls 1NT and South usually doubles. What do you do as North? You have opened light in third seat and a passed partner has shown 10-12 points. One sporting North who passed this conceded 180, another scored +100. I think it is right to chicken out to 2H. The Norths who did so either found themselves in 4, like Robert and Matthew or scored 9 or 10 tricks in a part score. All 4H contracts made (one was doubled).

### **Board 16**

Defenders have to be very sharp to defeat 3NT by East. North bids diamonds at some point and South might even raise, so a diamond will probably be led. After one top diamond, North has to switch to the ten of hearts. A spade or King of hearts lead would also have defeated the contract.

Lots of confusion for Peter and Malcolm. West opened 1C and North bid 2D without using the STOP card. This was described as strong, then this was corrected to weak. In fact it turned out that it was neither but was mistaken and he meant to bid 1D!! this was passed round to West who doubled and East reasonably converted but this was -180. It is pretty hard to get your mind right on these chaos hands at the table. Many players dislike making take out doubles in these situations with a void in trumps as you won't be able to lead even one round through to help partner's trump holding if he converts the double as he very likely will. However, AK, A, K is a pretty good holding, so it seems reasonable.

### **Board 17**

RC1. If South dredges up a response to partner's 1D opening, they will get too high. That old green card will save you from this fate.

Denis Talbot was forced to guess the contract but did so skilfully. He writes:- "I had the N hand and opened a strong club. E called 1D (majors) and Kathy 1H (0-4 points, any shape). I was considering what to do over W's major bid and thought that Double would be the best first action. When I played the red card there were three simultaneous call for the Director. I did not know what this was all about until I noted W had passed. I was told to remove the double and replace it with a legal call. However, Kathy would be forever silenced. Having never experienced this opportunity ever before, I called 4C which ended the auction. I figured partner would need the K hearts with the Ace on side for game to make."

A new one for all of us, I hope, i.e. doubling partner. No wonder Denis has a skilled TD with him at all times.

Incidentally a similar situation arose on Board 9 for Peter and Malcolm as South opened with a pass out of turn and North had to guess a final contract over west's 1S but guessed 3NT which went one off.

### **Board 19**

This hand is about judgement at the 4/5 level and also about getting into the bidding. East West will have to judge over 4S whether to carry on to five hearts – four pairs did so and two of these were left to play it for +650. Once again the five level belonged to us, not the opponents.

A couple of EW pairs thought to wait before getting involved and were then fooled by oppo bidding confidently to 4S. Robert and I were one of these and have no excuse for our timidity (RC1b) . The Talbots play canape so South opened 1S; West cannot overcall this and 4S closed the auction. I think even the timid might have said something as East at that point.

Against Nick & Jonathan, EW did find their hearts but bid 6H.

### **Board 23**

4H was a bit sweaty but usually came home. Peter Lichfield reports:- "the bidding went P-1H-P-1S P-2C-P-2NT All pass. This went one off. I presume E thought 2NT was forcing whereas W having opened very light didn't." If forcing, 2NT is what Hugh Kelsey called daisy-picking- if a straightforward clear and accurate bid is available, make it; don't torture partner unless he or she really deserves it.

### **Board 27**

If a partnership failed to reach 6D, they need to discuss it. This means everyone who held the cards including me and Robert but not Christopher and Mary-Ann who did reach 6. The South hand is a whale and if it gets an unforced diamond support can practically bid 6 straight away.

### **Board 28**

One A team Notts pair opened the off centre 1NT and East transferred to 3C which was -50 against the 140 available elsewhere. *See- I was right all along.*

### **Board 32**

Alan suffered an RC2 moment. He writes:- "Chris opened a constructive 2S and I asked with 2N. But S intervened with 3D, and Chris passed. I wasn't 100% confident that this showed a better hand than bidding 3S immediately, so failed to bid 4S. Instead I talked myself into bidding 3S on the basis that this had to be invitational after going through 2N. To make it worse, though, I spent a few seconds reaching this conclusion, making it impossible for Chris to go on unless his bid was completely clear-cut."

We have all been there and indeed I did two dithers in the match putting partner under pressure- fortunately the oppo felt that his choice was reasonable and didn't want to "seek a ruling" to try to get an advantage.

The final position for the season was excellent for the victorious B team, good for the C team but disappointing for the A team. A sincere thanks to the county captain for his superb efforts all season and for his encouragement and advice (some of which we nearly took) to us all.