



# County Newsletter



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### Latest Results

Congratulations to John Hampson and Julian Merrill who finished at the top of a strong field in the A final of the 2 day (106 boards over 5 sessions) pairs event at the EBU Seniors Congress held in early November.

The County open pairs event for the Waterworth Cup was won by Julian Merrill and Paul Roberts. Peter Hall and Daniel Miller were second with John and Pauline Rudolf in third place. These leading three M&CBA pairs will be our representatives in the Corwen trophy. The full results are available on our website.

Well done to David Stevenson, Liz Commins, John and Pauline Rudolf who travelled to the Donegal Congress in early November and were rewarded with the Championship teams title.

## *Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to everyone*

Sadly, despite having shown such good form in the President's Cup and the Northern Counties League, our A team were unable to continue their recent success by getting through to the finals of the Tollemache Cup. This is the main EBU inter-county teams competition and in a tough nine team group they were always going to struggle to grab one of the two qualifying spots. After the two sessions on Saturday they were lying a handy third, but Sunday proved difficult and they eventually finished up fourth.

In this event you play against the best in the country, but it is important not to be overawed by anyone. They still hold just 13 cards on every deal! On only his second hand of the event Peter Hall picked up ♠ A Q J 8 6 ♥ Q ♦ K 10 6 5 ♣ 9 5 3 and Michael Byrne from Manchester on Peter's left opened 1H. The unopposed auction continued 1S - 2C - 2D - 2NT - 3NT and the question was should he double to request a lead of dummy's first bid suit? Peter felt that action might be essential to give his side a chance of beating the contract, but this was promptly redoubled by declarer. Michael is a full-time bridge teacher and writer as well as coach to the national junior team. In addition he is a top-class player, so he is used to putting opponents under pressure. However, Peter got a spade lead from his partner, who held the doubleton 10 9, with dummy putting down K 5 4 3 2. This ensured three spade tricks for the defence and careful defending thereafter from Peter and his partner Danny Miller took the contract a slightly 'sweaty' one down. Several tables let 3NT through, even on a spade lead, so well done to them for not getting 'rattled' by the efforts of their illustrious opponent. The board proved a very useful gain for us, though Michael had the last laugh as his team eventually won their section.

### Apologies and Congratulations

Sorry for the report in October on the standings in the Northern Counties League, which made it sound like we were doing badly in all the divisions. I was given incorrect information by the league organisers, so I hope nobody was panicking. The final round took place on October 22nd and the A team are to be congratulated for producing an excellent performance. They easily won the final round and topped their division for the season overall by a huge 15vps. The final standings in the B division left us a disappointing 5th out of 7 teams and sadly the C team got the wooden spoon in their section.

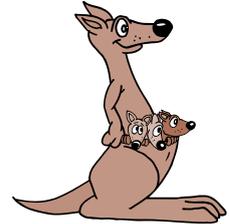
The A team will now represent the Northern Counties in the National Counties League finals on July 8th. They will be up against the winners from the other 4 similar events run throughout the EBU. Good Luck to them in that competition.

## HAND FROM DOWN UNDER

By Tim Bourke

On this deal the auction was straightforward after North's first bid promised a sound raise to four spades

Dealer South. N/S Vul.



	♠ 9 7 6 4 2		
	♥ A K 4		
	♦ K 9 5 4		
	♣ 6		
♠ 10 3		♠ J	
♥ J 9 6 2		♥ 10 8 5	
♦ 8		♦ Q J 10 6	
♣ K Q J 10 7 4		♣ 9 8 5 3 2	
	♠ A K Q 8 5		
	♥ Q 7 3		
	♦ A 7 3 2		
	♣ A		
<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
			1♠
3♣	4♣	5♣	5♦
Pass	5♥	Pass	6♠

As East did not double five hearts, West tried the king of clubs as his opening lead. After winning this with his bare ace, declarer proceeded to draw trumps in two rounds. Now all that he had to do was hold his diamond losers to one and the best way to tackle that problem was to gather more information about the distribution of the defender's hands - especially West.

So declarer cashed his three heart winners, ending in dummy. When both defenders followed to all three hearts, declarer could place West with a probable 2=3=2=6 or a 2=4=1=6 shape. There would be no problem with the former, as the diamonds would then be 3 - 2. Accordingly, the dangerous case was when West had a singleton diamond. Declarer found a neat way to solve the problem, he led the four of diamonds from the dummy and when East produced the six he covered this with the seven. Poor West took the trick with his singleton eight of diamonds and then had to concede a ruff-and-discard for declarer's twelfth trick.

Of course, if West still had another diamond the suit would have broken 3-2 and the suit would play for three tricks. Nor would it have done East any good to insert the ten of diamonds on the first round. In that case declarer could win with the ace, dropping West's eight and then continue with a low diamond to the nine. After winning with the jack, East would have to concede an extra trick in diamonds or give a ruff-and-discard himself.

## The Llangollen Swiss Teams by Bob Pitts

This year's Llangollen Swiss Teams was again held at the Bryn Howel Hotel which is just a couple of miles outside of Llangollen. The venue and timings make this an event not to be missed. The Hotel lay on food which makes it possible to have sensible start and finish times with only short gaps between sessions. Players who had travelled up from South Wales to play were expecting to be home by 9:30pm on the Sunday which is excellent - up to a few years ago they would be lucky to be back before midnight from a Congress in the North. The dates for next year are yet to be confirmed but I suggest that you keep the third weekend in November free.

There were many challenging hands during the weekend but that was part of the fun. For example, in the last match I picked up an 11 count with 6 spades and 6 diamonds. Of course partner opened one heart and jumped in clubs on the next round as he also had a 6/6 hand. Thank goodness they don't occur too often (and in case you are interested we did not reach a sane contract).

This defensive problem from the second match caught my eye.

*Dealer East E/W vul.*

	♠ Q 10 7	
	♥ K	
	♦ K Q J 6 5 3	
	♣ 10 5 2	
♠ A 5 3 2		♠ 8
♥ 8 6 4 3		♥ Q 10 9 5 2
♦ A		♦ 10 4 2
♣ A 9 4 3		♣ Q J 7 6
	♠ K J 9 6 4	
	♥ A J 7	
	♦ 9 8 7	
	♣ K 8	

After North/South had an unopposed auction of 1 spade - 2 diamonds - 2 spades - 4 spades, West had to look for his best chance of beating the contract. We all have an aversion to underleading aces; perhaps it is the diet of pairs events that make us reluctant to give a way a potential overtrick, but at times it can be the only option. Here at trick one West cashed the diamond ace and noted his partner's play of the two. It was hardly sensible to be giving count in this situation, so West assumed that East had something useful in clubs, indeed this looks like his best chance anyway. So West played his ace of clubs and led another hoping that his partner would win and return a diamond for a ruff. However he was disappointed as declarer won the second round of clubs with the king and knocked out the trump ace, eventually arriving at ten tricks. West bemoaned his luck, but he was distracted by the club ace. He should appreciate that if East has the club king, the contract can be beaten by leading a small club to the king on the first round of the suit, as West should then get his ruff. In fact if declarer has only one club, this play is essential. Additionally, the underlead of the club ace allows for the situation that exists here. Whilst South can win the first club with his king over East's jack, once West takes the spade ace (he can afford to duck the first two rounds of spades to get a signal from East to confirm his entry card), he can cross to the club queen for that vital ruff.

Is this defence so difficult to find? Well apparently it is, as the most frequent contract was 4S and it was never beaten, and there were several excellent players sitting West. A few N/S pairs played in 3S or no trumps, but the only plus scores recorded for E/W were against 3NT once, 3D once and 3S once, each of which went one off.

The winners had travelled all the way from Hampshire for the event - Mike Kinsey, Mike Fithyan, Christine and Richard Ray. They only lost 2 of their 12 matches and finished 3 vps ahead of their nearest rivals. Stuart Matthews and Alan Stephenson finished in second with teammates John Salisbury and Mike Tedd, well ahead of third place.

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## Calendar

All events here are correct at time of publishing but you are advised to take the precaution of checking with the organisers in all cases.

### January

9th/10th/11th	BGB simultaneous pairs	Clubs
21st/22nd	Chester Congress	Deva BC

### February

5th	County Trials	MBC
12th	Merseyside & Deeside Cup	MBC
19th	Jean Keen trophy (women's teams)	MBC

### March

8th	Charity Challenge sim. pairs	MBC
11th	Eric Howarth Cup (GP swiss teams)	Deva BC

### April

10th/11th/12th	BGB simultaneous pairs	Clubs
15th	Charity teams	MBC
22nd	Preece Rosebowl	Bl. BC

*Note—the Preece Rosebowl is the county ladies pairs event held at Blundell-sands BC and pre-entry is required as the entry fee includes the buffet tea. Contact Doris Coltman on 0151 924 1712*

\*\*\* Chester Congress — January 21st Pairs, 22nd Teams. Don't miss out.\*\*\*

## “A comedy of Errors” but “All's well that ends well”

by Paul Roberts

Playing a match in the outer reaches of the Manchester Teams League, with a partner who I only play with occasionally, third in hand at love all I picked up:

♠ 10 x ♥ K Q x ♦ A J x ♣ A Q T 8 x

Partner opened 4D. I could see slam possibilities if partner had a spade control, so cue bid 4H (our style is to cue 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> round controls) to see if he could show something in spades.

Unfortunately this wasn't a sequence we had discussed, and partner didn't read my cue bid and passed, with neither opponent even considering rescuing me at this stage.

LHO led a small club, and dummy went down with:

♠ K J x ♥ x x ♦ A T 9 8 x x x x ♣ void.

Whilst my brain was trying to come to terms with a diamond ace in each hand partner suddenly spotted he'd mis-sorted his hand, and moved his 'ace of diamonds' to it's correct place in the heart suit.

I discarded a small spade from dummy, and won the club in hand with the ten, beating RHO's nine.

For want of anything better to do, I laid down my diamond ace, dropping right-hand opponent's king, then continued with the diamond jack, to left-hand opponent's queen. RHO clearly decided we couldn't be stupid enough to be playing in hearts, so discarded a small heart! When it was pointed out to him that he'd won the trick, he cashed the ace of spades and exited with a small spade to dummy's king. I was now able to draw the remaining trumps in 3 rounds – trumps now being 3-3 – and claim 11 tricks! This proved to be a gain of 8 IMPs compared the part score at the other table.