

Our third match was an early-season 'clash of the Titans' against our joint-leaders across the M62.

We got off to a poor start with a 16-imp deficit on the first round, the only plus score being on Board 3 where Chris & Pauline made 6D, Paul & Ingrid went one off in the same contract and, fortunately for us, only one opponent bid 3NT with the other pair stopping in 3D making 12 tricks (+6 imps). All six minus scores were based on cardplay with Board 8 being by far the costliest as Chris & Pauline were the only pair to fail in 3NT (-11 imps).

After lulling us into a false sense of security with mainly straightforward hands in the first round the computer went into overdrive in the second round with some truly amazing and in some cases positively-vindictive hands to play. Board 10 was a prime example, placing a two-point hand with six Clubs, four Hearts and three Spades opposite a 2NT opener. All but Val & Ann passed 2NT but their raise to 3NT went five off for -500 (-9 imps) when there was a play for 5C. Board 15 was the computer's 'piece de resistance' placing AKQJ8654 Hearts opposite 10973 N-S and AK1076432 Spades and 73 Diamonds opposite 8 singleton Spade and AQ109854 Diamonds E-W. The expected fireworks produced 5S making once each way, Paul & Ingrid profiting from 6D going one down and Kevin & Chris making just 200 for getting 5H two off (+6 imps).

Unfortunately both our N-S pairs forgot the gambling 3NT bid ideal for Board 9 (-13 imps) but Kevin & Chris more than compensated for this with an excellent 7H on Board 12, with 6H bid twice elsewhere and Paul & Ingrid's opponents stopping in 4H (+14 imps). We nevertheless lost another 6 imps on the round for a 22-imp halftime deficit.

Fortified by an excellent tea including homemade quiches, sandwiches, salad, scones, cakes and cheese and biscuits, for which we were extremely grateful, we made the smallest-possible gain (+1 imp) on Round 3 to leave us still 21 imps behind overall. We lost 11 imps each on Boards 17 and 23, the former as Val & Ann failed to make game and the latter as Paul & Ingrid's escape from 1NTX was itself doubled, Val & Ann unfortunately allowing 1NT to make. Paul & Ingrid gained us an invaluable 13 imps on Board 20 by defeating 3NT when it had made nine, eleven and twelve tricks on the other tables. For the only time in the match most of the small swings went our way on this round.

The final round was unfortunately lost by another 11 imps for a 32-imp overall defeat, despite the fact that we outscored our opponents by 460 points on the round. The outstanding board of the match was the very last one played, with Chris & Pauline making 3SX (+530), Paul & Ingrid doubling an erroneous 6D bid (+1100), the other two scores being a modest +100 and -140 for a 17-imp plus on the hand. Unfortunately Kevin & Chris had their only poor round of the match and a series of small-to-medium deficits more than made up for this one outstanding board.

You might say that we were unlucky to lose 14-6 when the overall team deficit in points was only 240 for the whole match, but when you consider that we only had 10 plus scores against 19 minus scores you can see clearly that Hull were more consistent and the better card players, so thoroughly deserved their win. Despite their final round Kevin & Chris were again our best pair on the day but we all 'had our moments' and enjoyed the contest.

BRIGHOUSE B PAIRS	1st ROUND	2nd ROUND	3rd ROUND	4th ROUND	TOTAL
Chris & Pauline	+1490	-2150	-730	-640	-2030
Val & Ann	-1540	+830	+590	+1040	+920
Paul & Ingrid	+360	-660	-1050	+270	-1080
Kevin & Chris	-960	+1820	+1300	-210	+1950

