

ECBA Warboys Trophy 2018 Session 2/8 21 March 2018.

Commentary. (To see the deals, refer to attached print-outs.)

Scoring by Butler IMP

Board 1

Only a combined balanced-ish 24hcp for EW but the good controls and five card suit led many into 3NT; a contract which the gods were not smiling on. Best defence will hold it to seven tricks, achievable without help from declarer when Diamonds are led on the go and are persevered.

Results: 3NT was unsuccessful in all seven attempts across the two sections.

Board 2

If you are playing a weak no-trump then the East hand can handily be opened 1C with an easy rebid at the 1-level if partner responds in one of your doubletons. Strong no-trumpers will either have to chance opening 1C and rebidding 1NT over a 1S response or open 1NT slightly "off-shape". That's what happened at our table; the consequence of this was a partnership misunderstanding when I wheeled out our defence to 1NT and shortly found out that partner was not playing the same one. An unfortunate accident that cost us at least 11imp. If you have bids to show one and two major suits over 1NT then on this South hand you have a choice. The problem with treating this shape as two-suited is that with Hearts as trumps you are likely to get forced and never get to enjoy your Spade tricks. On balance I think treating this as an overcall in Spades is best.

When East does open 1C, South has a straightforward 1S overcall and North should have in his armoury a bid to show four card support and modest values. This will be all the encouragement South needs to bid 4S. However, a 1C opening by East may pave the way to a very cheap sacrifice for EW.

Results: 4S was left in peace five times, pushed to 5S once for 1 off. Two pairs played in the cheap 5C. There seems to have been a lot of action at many tables probably induced by a 1C opening.

Board 3

A combined balanced 26hcp for EW and an obvious 3NT deal. The gods were still in a bad mood; losing finesses and points duplication dooming declarer.

Results: Everybody bid 3NT, nobody made it.

Board 4

This time a combined, truly balanced, 31hcp for EW. 3NT the obvious resting place. The gods were dozing this time, contract no problem. The defence needed to be awake and not discard their Spade guard. The only other way an East declarer can make twelve tricks is strictly double dummy ie playing for Kx of Hearts off-side. If West is declarer North may lead the Jack of Hearts, then declarer may decide to duck the first one and play the Ace on the second round.

Results: Every table played 3NT by East. A couple managed 12 tricks.

Board 5

A standard 3H pre-empt for North even at red vulnerability. No doubt East was hoping for a take-out double from his partner. Very difficult for EW to get to a slam after this start. There is something to be said for playing a cue bid of 4H to show a solid Spade suit and side values, then East has no problem pushing to slam. However, most would play this cue bid as a strong two-suiter; it's a case of deciding in your partnership which application is the more useful.

Results: One pair reached 6NT for +990. One took 500 and another 800 against 3H Doubled. Everyone else made game in Spades.

Board 6

An opening 1S by South is likely to be passed out unless; 1. West risks a 1NT overcall or 2. North has a forcing 1NT response available. In either case NS may settle in the excellent 3D once South has introduced his Hearts, but they will have to be disciplined to get a plus score.

Results: Three EW pairs in each section managed to play in Heart part-scores but only two, in the B Section, were successful. Playing in 1S-1 lost NS 3IMPs. Seems a little harsh.

Board 7

Any NS pair that managed to stop in 2H or 1NT will score well; unless South advances with his decent 9hcp over North's announced 15-17, after all it is IMP scoring. However, the Heart suit break and lack of intermediates will disappoint them.

Results: Of the five pairs, all in the A Section, who tried 4H only one made it. Significantly perhaps it was played by South; this siding may have caused a misdefence.

Board 8

Another frustrating board for NS; only by leading Diamonds, dummy's first bid suit, on the go, will NS be able to engineer the setting trick via a Diamond ruff.

Results: Curiously, on only two of the four times that a Diamond was led against 4H was it defeated. Only in the A Section did NS "save" in 5C (three times).

Board 9

An obvious 3NT for EW. With a combined 27hcp they would expect an overtrick or two but the black suits are not obliging and neither defender is genuinely squeezed so nine tricks should be the limit.

Results: Pancake day again. Flat as. EW+600.

Board 10

A number of different auctions to be expected, starting with whether East opens 1C or not. At our table East passed, I opened 1D, West 2H, North 2S, East 3H. South 4D all pass. I got a Club lead and a Heart switch. I made eleven tricks by ruffing two Clubs in dummy. As East pointed out, a trump switch at trick 2 would prevent this, however the lucky lie in Spades would have resulted in 12 tricks. The only guaranteed way of holding declarer to eleven is to lead Spades at trick1 (and cash AC after ruffing the third Spade); not a likely happening.

Results: A lot of action at the 4 and 5 level; NS scoring badly when they did not bid one of their games.

Board 11

It seems likely that EW are headed for 2S or 3S. The defence to hold East to eight tricks is a little odd as it requires a trump lead at trick1, followed by a trump promotion. If Diamonds are led on the go East can effectively cross ruff the hand, eloping his two low trumps in hand on Diamond ruffs. On a trump lead he has to use his Ace of Clubs as re-entry, to avoid another trump lead, but this creates the opportunity for north to lead Clubs through declarer thereby promoting South's trumps.

Results: The one time 4S was bid by EW it was doubled and rightly so; it's just hard to see how the defence let it make.

Board 12

EW will likely play this in some number of Hearts; those in game and favoured with a non-Spade lead, as is very likely, will do very nicely thank you. Another hand where leading dummy's suit is the winning, non-obvious, tactic for the defence.

Results: Plenty of EW pairs bid 4H, not all were successful in spite of getting a favourable lead.

Board 13

Playing in either major, EW will find just about everything wrong for them and the duplication in Diamonds not helping. They will do well to muster nine tricks.

Results: Anything from 6 to 10 tricks were made by EW playing mostly in Hearts or No-trumps. 3NT, bid in spite of two 4-4 major suit fits, was made once.

Board 14

At our table EW had a good, disciplined auction, 1S-2H-3H-P. Nine tricks duly made. Assuming normal defence, game in Hearts requires both the King of Spades and the Jack of Clubs to be well placed. One out of two just not enough.

Results: Usually EW stopped, successfully in 3H, one lucky pair made 4H after a Spade lead and the defence did not find its three Club tricks.

Board 15

There seems no reason for EW to get higher than 1NT, or possibly 2NT. With everything behaving eight tricks are straightforward. Computer says nine tricks in Hearts; not many will play in that denomination.

Results: No-trump part-scores were very popular; the odd IMP changing hands depending on the overtrick count.

Board 16

A real part-score battle. If West opens 1D his side will subside in 2S which will be punished -200 on best defence. Another possibility is if South makes a take-out double after 1D-1S, though he may be sweating when his partner doubles 2S for penalties. If he pulls to 3C or even 3H he will survive but his partner may not be amused. If West does not open then NS may subside in 2H; if West protects he gets into choppy water despite the 4-4 Spade fit. Any score better than -200 for EW is likely to show a small profit for them.

Results: All but two NS pairs got plus scores declaring or in defence.

Board 17

Although we play a 15-17 no-trump we tend to avoid it when holding a decent five-card major, especially with a maximum and six controls. We then treat it as a bit stronger. So after 1S it's a question of whether East chances 2D; I think on balance it is unwise as it is more likely to cause problems for partner than for the opposition. At our table partner opened 1S East passed and I bid 1NT. West bid 2C and my partner invited with 2NT. I think that was a good assessment of my likely shape in respect of red suits and as I was not anywhere near maximum I had no trouble passing. In spite of some rather uninspired declarer play I couldn't avoid making eight tricks.

Results: Quite a few EW pairs got into trouble in Diamonds right up to the 4-level. Only three contracts, all low level, were successful.

Board 18

Once again the South hand is too good to open 1NT; my 1S got a take-out double passed to East who must have surveyed his collection without much hope. It is best to have a partnership policy on what to do in these circumstances. Agree to bid 1NT with very little (this rarely works out well) or to bid your lowest 3+ card suit, not a bad option when you have ruffing potential. East tried 1NT and played there. I led the King of Spades and switched to the Queen of Diamonds. Lucky me, that led to a two trick defeat and +4IMP.

Results: 2C, the best spot for EW, was only bid twice and only made once, though one EW pair reached 3C and made it.

Board 19

Getting to the right game is quite difficult for EW; if South happens to open a mini-no-trump it gets really tough, though they may get +300 compensation if East allows any penalty doubles to stand. Mostly, West will open 1S and East may respond 1NT, or maybe not. In the latter case South may protect with 1NT and come to regret it. Left to their own devices EW may proceed 1S-1NT-3D-5D. At our table West rebid 3NT. We managed not to do anything foolish in defence and 3NT fell one trick short.

Results: Only two EW pairs, both in the A Section, reached the making 5D.

Board 20

4H seems inevitable for EW. Eleven tricks can always be made but if the defence cashes two spades and switch to Clubs the declarer has to guess the Queen of Diamonds. He may get some idea which way to go by cashing four trumps and three Clubs first. When the defence starts with a Club then declarer can guarantee eleven tricks via an elimination but may be tempted to guess the Diamond Queen in the hope of setting up a discard for one of his Spades. Even if he mis-guesses the Diamond Queen he may still make eleven tricks if South believes declarer's Ace of Clubs at trick one and doesn't switch to Spades.

Results: Every EW pair, bar one, reached 4H.

Board 21

We had a nicely controlled auction, 1C-dbl-1S-p-2C-p-2NT all pass. Though, to be fair, 3NT only requires the club suit to come in.

Results: 3NT was only attempted twice and both times it failed. No reward for enterprise here.

Board 22

After a Pass from East I opened a classical 3NT. Partner bid a classical 6C. Although we got a favourable lead, Ace of Diamonds, the contract always makes. Declarer can set up the fifth Spade provided he manages his entries correctly. If 3NT is passed out West has a lead problem. There is a good case for not leading Hearts; considering that South has announced three short suits and North is content to pass 3NT implying he is not missing guards in two suits. Add West's 6-card Hearts to maybe 3 or more in the North hand and 1 or 2 with South it does not leave many with East. Therefore a Heart lead is unlikely to bear fruit. There is an inference that East does not have 5 or 6 Spades, having passed as dealer. Hence a lead of the Queen of Diamonds is not so far-fetched. You just have to think of it at the table. Life gets complicated for NS if East opens a weak 2D.

Results: Slam was reached only three times. There seems to have been a variety of opening bids by South (and maybe East) as Spade contracts appeared several times.

Board 23

East played in 2NT after showing a balanced-ish 20-22 with a five-card major. I led fourth highest of my long suit and duly conceded -150, losing 6IMP. Unlucky.

Results: EW Heart contracts were almost universal in the A Section, all but one failing. Hearts were mostly avoided in the B Section which was a lot healthier for EW.

Board 24

We were a bit unlucky, again, here. Partner opened 1S and East ventured 2D; not everyone's cup of tea. I bid 2S and West 4D. This was passed out and proved to be optimal for EW. We can "save" in 4S which is only -100 if doubled, not likely. I wonder if West would save in 5D, after all he may reasonably expect his partner to have six trumps. Minus 4IMP for us.

Results: 4D was only played twice; usually NS were left in peace to play their Spade part-score.

Board 25

We were luckier on this board. EW subsided in 2S, after 1S-1NT-2H-2S. If you are playing 2-over-1 as 8+hcp then you will have to try 2NT on the second round. On this deal it works out OK, but take the King of Spades out of the West hand and it's not so comfortable. Better to play 2-over-1 as good 10+, then after a descriptive 2S West can push on; of course you must treat 3C by West now as forcing. 3NT by West is trickier to play on a high Diamond lead: declarer would be unlikely to that suit right.

Results: 3NT was only reached four times, once West was declarer and failed after the lead of the King of Diamonds.

Board 26

We landed in 4C; it was hard to judge we could take 200 against 3S doubled. It was even harder to envisage that (if the defence doesn't help you) to make 4C you have to cash one top trump then lead the Queen (or Jack) of Diamonds. If West takes the King you can use the 9 on the third round to gain entry to dummy to finesse in trumps. If he doesn't take the King you can give up a trump trick to the Queen and use dummy's last high trump to gain entry to take the finesse against the King of Diamonds. You don't even need the King of Hearts. Bet you spotted that line straightaway.

Results: Club contracts were almost universal; nobody who bid game made it, though many made 10 tricks, likely due to helpful defence.