

Leicestershire - 10/02/2019

Summary

Good 30+ scores from Alan & Nick, Mike & Rob and the Lintotts, with several other pairs making good contributions and 10 pairs in positive territory.

The 3rd set was the most interesting one. In the 'B' this was the last set and changed a 9-11 loss into a 18-2 win with a gain of 178! Players have had quite a lot to say about these boards and I've tried to include their commentaries in full as some interesting points emerge.

Thanks to Rob, Alan, Nick, Matthew, Christopher and John for their contributions. After future matches, I would encourage each pair to send in some comments. Not on every board but even 1 triumph, disaster or point of interest can be informative.

Chris

Results

Boards

Board 1

Dealer North

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

As North I had a bidding dilemma. After 1♦ – P – 1♠ – P should I bid 2♦ or 2♠? I opted for 2♦ as the 6 card suit was fairly respectable. With only 5♦ and say a 3-4-5-1 shape I would auto respond 2♠. Not the best result with dummy having 1♦, 5♠ and the contract having no play.

Alan found a 2♠ reply, but they continued up to 3♠ which met with the same fate.

Scores were mixed with a predictable smattering of 110s and small penalties.

Board 2

Dealer East

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

Our disaster board with oppos bidding and play less than perfect but resulting in their 11 IMP gain non-the-less. Bidding was 2♠ – 2N / 3♦ – 6♠! 3♦ showed good trumps and weak points, but many would rate the hand weak-weak.

Matthew led a trump and after cashing the second one, declarer led a small ♥ from dummy. Seeing no point in rising with Q, it went 8-9-K. Matthew now fired back ♥2 and after a long think declarer rose with ♥A to drop my Q. If you reverse the defenders' ♥ holdings, a slam cold on split ♥ honours has just been dumped. The correct line is to ruff ♦s twice (including one boss) so you can take a double finesse in ♥.

The Lintotts were the only other pair in 6♠ but I'm sure they played it correctly. Well done.

Board 3

Dealer South

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

We missed the opportunity to pull back for B2, by playing in only 5♠ after


1♣ – 1♠ / 2♣ – 3♦ / 3♠ – 4♣ / 4♦ – 4N / 5♥ – 5♠

I was slightly concerned that with a 2-3-2-6 shape Matthew might have supported my spades, so missing 1 keycard and the ♠Q I played safe.

Alan & Nick bid 2♣ (Precision) – 2♦ (ask) / 3♣ (10-12, 6♣ no 4M) – 3♠ (Nat, GF, more usually 5♠ rather than 6) / 4♠ – P. Both thought they might have done more.

Board 4


Dealer West

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

Fairly routine 2♥ for N-S sometimes with 1 over.

Board 5


Dealer North

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

Routine 3N usually making 4, or 5-6 in the C team where defences must have trying a bit too hard.

Board 6

Dealer East

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

Matthew played quietly in 3♣ + 1. Where N-S stretched to 3N, -50 was the result.

Where South plays the hand, W must be careful not to lead a H.

Board 7

Dealer South

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

A big hand with a big misfit.

Rob & Mike report - South opened two spades showing spades and a minor. Mike passed hoping for a re-opening double from me, but North preferred to play in a minor so bid 3♣ (pass or correct). This presented me with a problem as 6♥ or 6♣ might be good if their suit is diamonds. Partner must have spades to explain RHO's 3♣ bid. Somewhat reluctantly I decided to show my hearts, bidding initially 3♠ and then 4♥ over Mike's 3NT. (Chris - I feel Mike should be congratulated on judging he had the spades stopped!). This ended the bidding and we were fortunate that South had a void club as otherwise 6♥ would have been cold.

Alan & Nick's oppos bid 1♠ - 2♥ / 3♠ - 4♣ / 4♠ - 5♦ / 6♠, and Nick refrained from doubling, fearing oppos might be able to do better in ♥ or NT.

Christopher & Mary-Anne bid to 6♠ and then after a X retreated to 6N (mercifully undoubled). -6 was the result for a rare -600 not involving a making contract.

At our table oppos bid

1♠ - 2♥ / 3♠ - 4N! / 5♠ - 6♠!

which went for 200 undoubled.

Surely East has to down-grade his hand with a ♠ void? Over 3♠ a new minor will be a cue (yes definitely not a second suit - this includes you Mr Williams!) so I think East should bid 4♥ or 5♥ (and I prefer the latter).

Board 8

Dealer West

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

Alan & Nick kept oppos out of the bidding with 1♦ - 1♠ / 2♠ end.

Ours got in but we pushed them to 3♥ which went 1 off.

Board 9

Dealer North

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

Afraid having pushed them to 3♠, we allowed it to slip through. Matthew doubled 2♠ and I showed my ♥, which tempted partner into leading one. Scores were mainly 110 to E-W or 100 to N-S.

Alan reports 1N= E -90. Nick got the defence off to a good start with ♦2, to J K and A. Declarer led ♠K, which Nick took with A to play a second D to my 9. Now I switched to a low ♥ rather than J and declarer did well to play low. If I know partner has 3♥, and that they include ♥8, then I do better to switch to a high ♥ and declarer won't have time to make 7 tricks.

Emily says: East opened a strong no trump, and North protected with 2♥. I should have made a take-out double to get to 2♠.

Board 10

Dealer East

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

Rob reports - Mike played in 3NT on a club lead to the ace and after a long thought a club return. He won this with the king, spurning the finesse because of concerns about a heart switch. Should he now run his six diamonds or try to get a spade duck? He went for the latter and North cashed out. If he goes for the former North has to decide to keep all his clubs. It will be easier to see that this is the right thing to do if South makes an early club discard. Either choice would work if clubs are 4-4 of course.

Declarer tried the same thing against both Alan and me, but since he had also tried the finesse on the second round of clubs and seen me set up the suit, it wasn't hard to defend correctly.

3N was made 4 times and went off 5 times.

Board 11

Dealer South

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

When West can open a weak NT that will normally buy it, normally going 1 off as the defence prioritise getting it off. Otherwise N-S will play in part-score ♥ or NT making 3N or 4♥ on the favourable lie of the hearts. No-one bid and made the thin game.

Emily says: this rather summarised the set for us, where it felt like North had been bidding on almost any 13 cards. On this board they found a take-out double after 1♣ - 1♠ - 2♠. With responder still unlimited and only 7 cards and 2 points in the unbid suits, this could have gone horribly - but South has something, the diamonds are blocked, and suits lie favourably. Sigh.

Board 12

Dealer West

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

We overbid a tad to 4♠ with 15 losers between us. Went -2 after I ducked the club lead to give the contract a chance and West set up his heart ruff.

Alan & Nick bid to 2♠ and then passed oppo 3♣, -2 for +100.

Board 13

Dealer North

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

Alan reports 3N-3 South -300. I opened the N hand with a Precision 2♣ (normally 10-15 points, but with such good shape I felt 9 was OK), and Nick jumped to 3N. This does indeed have 9 tricks, but oppo get first go, and made no mistake in taking the first 5 tricks in spades. Fortunately they then took ♦A and another, rather than starting by leading to ♦K and then through the Q!

Board 14

Dealer East

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

Our oppo bid 1♣ – 1♦ – X – P / 1N passed out. Evidently the 1N rebid showed 15-17 but after the intervention and X he wasn't sure. Grrrrrr! I would have enjoyed entering the hand for the 2019 Bols Defence of the Year award by cashing the 5 diamonds having played the big ones first.

Alan begs to differ as he opted for the lead of the 4th highest against 3N, expecting there to be a stop. What sways me against this is my 13 count, leaving little room for partner to have much when 3N is declared.

At last a word from our Chief C-Team Correspondent "CC-TC". John Slater reports on a very respectable card but with 2 unusual scores – Here we achieved our first -250 of the day. After 2 passes, the W 1NT was announced as 12-14 (John isn't sure whether devalued flat hand or counting failure!). Helen bid 2♦ (Aspro) and E passed! I bid 2♥ (what else? - would have liked to bid 2♣ and then correct to 2♥) and Helen bid 3♦ which again was not doubled so was passed out. She should make 5 tricks but got overruffed at some point (Chris - however this would have spoilt the story as you'll see later).

Board 15

Dealer South

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

Rob & Mike felt that both could have beaten 5♦. The bidding was 1♦ – 2NT (clubs and hearts) – 4♦ – P – 4♥ (cue). Now Mike doubled to show a strong end hand, passed round to South who redoubled and North thought for a long time before settling for five. Defence failed to find the trump switch to restrict declarer's ruffs.

Afraid I wimped out on this one. Bidding went: 1♣ – 1♥ – P – P / X – 2♥ – P! I should bid 3♦ as partner won't get too excited after my first-round pass.

Alan reports on 3♦+1 N +130. Nick opened an off-shape 14-16 NT as S, and somewhat to my surprise W came in with 2♥ showing 5♥ and a 4+ minor. I saw no need to compete over this, but Nick had the perfect shape for a TO-X, and I duly bid 3♦, which ended the auction.

Board 16

Dealer West

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

No-one made it to the making heart game.

Now to the set where everything was happening.

Board 17

Dealer North

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

Dennis & Kathy were unlucky that oppo were the only pair to reach the making 3N; bad luck. Elsewhere part scores and small penalties.

At our table bidding went

P – P – 1N – 2♦* / X – P* – P – 2♥ / X all pass

2♦ showed H and another and the pass over my X showed D tolerance. West thought for a long time before bidding 2♥ and was a bit miffed not to have passed. 2♥-X went 2 off for +300.

Comment - In the interest of simplicity and avoiding misunderstandings, we play all Xs after our opening or overcall NT as penalty interest with values. After an opposition NT we play Xs of conventional suits as showing that suit or the first move on a strong hand that wants to make a second X for penalty – leaving a second round X after a pass as take-out. You can never cover everything, but I think on the whole this works OK.

Board 18

Dealer East

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

Rob & Mike benefitted from oppos bidding misunderstanding when

P – P(!) – P – 1♥ / X – 2♠

was passed out

Some play a jump shift after a X as weak, but most prefer to show a fit jump, as it would be without intervention by a passed hand.

At our table Matthew opened the South cards (correctly in my view with 6 losers and easy rebids) and it proceeded

1♠ – 2♣ / 2♥ – 3♦ / 3♥ – 4♣ / 4♦ – 4♥ all pass

I fear one of both of us has not done enough and we were fortunate the 6♥ spot was doomed.

Only one pair reached slam and Emily / Diana collected + 200. After 3 passes the bidding went 1♥ – 4♦ / 4N – 5♦ / 6♥. After a ♠ lead declarer tried a ♦ finesse. Surely a ruffing finesse is a better line?

There were 2 part-scores and 9 games making.

Board 19

Dealer South

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

Rob comments - This was one of two 3NT contracts where a different choice of plays might have been successful - but equally might not! I think this was probably the one where the leader (North) led the queen of hearts from QJ doubleton. Double dummy the play is to duck at least once and then cash three top spades and two top clubs throwing North in with the club queen to lead away from the diamonds.

Alan unfortunately led a diamond, so presenting the ninth trick.

Christopher & Mary-Anne's oppo North led ♥Q against 3NT, followed by ♥J, and then switched helpfully to a club so 9 tricks resulted. (Alan - South is surely at fault by not overtaking ♥J).

Against 3N, I led ♥Q ducked then ♥J, Matthew overtaking and declarer ducking again, no doubt thinking I'd led from QJxx and Matthew was unblocking. Now we cleared the suit and declarer is stuck with just 8 tricks, not finding Rob's double-dummy line. The play is easier if you duck just one heart but not easy to find this.

Board 20

Dealer West

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

Rob reports - Partner passes, RHO bids 2♥ (weak) and you hold QJxxxx, QT9, void, QTx. Do you bid on this round or come in later? You are unlikely to be missing game as partner has passed but may well be happy to sacrifice in spades over their game contract, so I passed. LHO made a 2NT enquiry and to my surprise Mike doubled (take-out of hearts and a maximum pass). RHO showed a lower end weak two by bidding 3♥ and I bid 4♠. LHO bid 6♥. Hoping that you have a surprise trump trick it seems worth the risk of passing even though the insurance bid must be 6♠. +100 showed this was right on this deal - it won't always be. (Alan - Well done! It is nice to be able to leave oppo with the last guess, but not easy I agree when 6♠ must be cheap).

Christopher & Mary-Anne - Our auction was 1♣ - (1♥) - 1♠ - (4♥) / 4♠ - (5♥) - 5♠ - (X). South kicked off with ♥5, and Mary-Ann cross-ruffed the first five tricks, the last with ♠K, and then advanced ♠T. North needs to dive in with ♠A, play a club to his partner's ♣A and collect a club ruff, but he failed to find this defence. (Alan - Well done! I'm not sure why you are X-ruffing immediately, though. If you play a trump at T2 you have given N a bit less to go on since he doesn't know you have a ♦ void. We were defending 6♠X, and I went up with ♠A at T2 and switched to a ♣. Nick did well to give me the ruff rather than to try to cash ♦A first - perhaps he hoped I would put him back in with ♦A and get another ruff. TBH, I think N should have got the defence right at your table - you surely aren't beating the contract unless partner has ♣A!)

We bid

1♣ - 1♥ - 1♠ - 2♣ / 3♠ - 4♥ - 4♠ - 5♣ / P - 5♥ - all pass


I like Matthew's 5♣ bid as both invites the slam and puts oppo off competing further. I had 7 losers and thought I'd probably shown this already.

I believe a 3-0 split offside is exactly 11%, so we were very fortunate the slam doesn't make.

Only 4 pairs made game (3 B + 1♣) with everyone else understandably getting too high and being unlucky.

Board 21

Dealer North

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

Matthew did extremely well here. After 2 passes he opened 4♥, which I think is a great pressure bid. If you're left to play it, the defence have no idea what type of hand you hold.

The play matched the bidding, as Matthew reports:

Lead was 8♥. You need to ruff two clubs in dummy, but you only have an entry back to hand to ruff one club. If you do this, you make it obvious for the opponents to take out the remaining trump in dummy. So you have to make it look as if you are setting up spades. I won the trump lead in hand and played a spade towards dummy. West went up with K♠ which he has to in case I have Q♠. Then he knocks out my A♣ entry to dummy, but in doing so I can now get back to hand twice through A♦ and a spade ruff.

This was a great board for the county with +620 4 times and only one -620 against Emily / Diana.

Board 22

Dealer East

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

Rob reports – I opened 1♣ (can be short), 3♦ overcall by South, double from Mike (both majors), 5♦ from North. I understand one Leicestershire player now doubled on the same sequence. Surely 5♠ is right with such good clubs and three diamonds to the jack? Mike raised to six. Diamond lead, ruffed, ace of spades disclosing the bad trump break, club off dummy. This was not ruffed by North but it makes little difference when he chooses to ruff - you always have a trump and a heart ruff to get back to hand. You can ruff all three diamonds and get back to hand to draw two rounds of trumps and then run clubs to chalk up the slam.

Now back to our CC-TC. John reports - At our table after 1♣ 3♦ 3♠ 5♦ E just bid 5♠ after a long hesitation and so it ended there. The play in 6♠ (or 7) is more interesting - the right line is surely to reverse dummy - ruff ♦ in hand and pick up the trumps rather than to ruff hearts as our declarer did - nearly went off in 5. So, ruff ♦ lead, A♠, spade towards dummy. When the spades fail to break you can only ruff 2♦ and still pick up the spades so if in 7 you need the ♥ finesse! In 6 maybe just settle for the 12 tricks.

Christopher and Mary-Anne report - Our auction was

1♣ - (1♦) - 1♠ - (2♣) / (*) - 4♠ - (5♦) - 5♠ / (X).

I was afraid we might have been the victims of a stripe-tailed-ape double when dummy went down - on which basis I should perhaps have played for two overtricks rather than just one, but +1050 didn't score too badly.

(Alan - 1♣ (3♦) X (5♦) seems to have been a commoner start in the A team).

At our table it went

1♣ - 2♦ - X - 5♦ / P - P - 6♣! - all pass

With a ♣ void I was happy to leave oppos there, having forced them to guess at a high level.

Matthew led a small ♦, ruffed, trump to hand revealing the 4-0 break. Another ♦ ruff, cashed ♣J and then returned to hand with a spade, ruffed by South! With no trumps left in dummy there was still a D to lose, so 6♣ -1 for +100.

Not that easy to see the best line in 6♣.

6♠ was only bid twice, by Rob & Mike and unfortunately against Nigel & Liza.

Board 23

Dealer South

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

Our opponents were a bit shell-shocked by now and they undercooked this with

1♣ - 1♠ / 2♣ - 2♥ / 3♣ - P

At no point has E shown the strength of his hand. My vote would go to a jump to 3♣ as the rebid. The distribution of games bid (all made) is interesting: A-3, B-2 and C-1. I feel the key is East understanding the playing strength of his hand.

Christopher advises (sic) - Mary-Ann received a diamond lad against 3NT and immediately played a spade to ♠J. (Chris - Whether she kept the diamond lad on or put him back has not been revealed).

Board 24

Dealer West

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

At Christopher / Mary-Ann's it went 1♦ - (X) - 3♦ - (4♠) / P - (P) - 5♦. North was itching to double but, mindful that the next number in the sequence 20, 22... is 24, managed to refrain. Given that his opening lead was ♥K, this was probably the best decision he took all set as now 5♦ rolled in.

Alan reports - After a 15-17 NT opening from W, E bid a conventional 2♠ and Nick doubled. Now when they ended up in 3N I led ♠2 and Nick went in with ♠K to return 9. Declarer had to decide whether he was underleading ♠A at this point, and got it wrong by playing ♠Q.

Board 25

Dealer North

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

3N was bid and made twice in each team. We reached it by

P – P – 1♥ – 1♠ / X – P – 1N – P / 3N

With 1N showing 15-17 and my stiff K♥ opposite Matthew's suit, I thought I was worth the leap at teams.

Board 26

Dealer East

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

Passed out 4 times with a smattering of part-scores and small minuses elsewhere.

Board 27

Dealer South

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

Ours went

1♣ – 1♠ – 2♣ – 4♠

which went 1 off when the defence cashed. A few 130s / 140s but mainly -50s.

Board 28

Dealer West

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

Rob reports - 1♠ from Mike, 2♦ from me, 2♥ from Mike, 3♣ (FSF), 3♠, 3NT. South had been listening to the bidding and led the heart king. Winning with the ace I led the club ten to South's king. He now needs to switch to a spade, but as his partner had encouraged in hearts he continued the suit. I was surprised when the eight won the next trick! Now all I had to do was decide which pointed suit to finesse. Deferring this finesse to the last possible moment to minimise undertricks should it be wrong, was my argument for going for the diamond finesse rather than the spade finesse. So I cashed the clubs and the spade ace before taking the winning diamond finesse.

(Alan - They bid the same way against us, except that 3♠ was raised to 4♠. I confess I don't really understand using FSF if you are going to bid 3N next - that should show a bit if doubt about the C stop, shouldn't it?)

Board 29

Dealer North

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

Back to our CC-TC again. John reports - Letting 3N though by not leading a spade was a triumph for the Strong NT as E has to open a D and so W bids a spade and that makes it very hard to find the lead after the inevitable subsequent 1N - 2N - 3N.

Game was bid and made 7 times. Our oppos languished in 2N by W somewhat inexplicably and I thought this would be a bad board as my spade lead was obvious, having not been bid.

Board 30

Dealer East

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

Our CC-TC again (now hogging the report methinks)! John advises - I decided to open the S hand 1♦ and quickly found myself in 4♠ undoubled. It has 3 top losers plus however many spades. W did not bid over 1♦ but did bid 2♣ over 1♦ - 1♥ - 1♠!

The lead was the 2♦ (obvious singleton) and the K♦ won in dummy. This is a pretty hopeless contract but the best I could think of was to play towards the Q♣ - which lost to the A and then a club was returned, so away went a heart on the K♣ and at this stage a third club discarding the second heart best. But a bright idea came and so I ruffed the third club in hand and advanced the A♥ hoping that W would ruff - she did - so overruffed and came down to (having lost one trick):

A63 98x
 QT432 J
 - QJT8
 - -

If spades are now 22 then you make 4♠ by playing A♠ and another - whereas anything else leads to a promotion for the oppos. The good thing is that the position of the K♠ does not matter. If they are not, however, once you have cashed the A♠ you are doomed to lose the rest of the tricks and go 5 down. Even with the K♠ coming down there is no alternative. From the carding W started with 6♣ and 1♦ so 3♥ and 3♠ originally is not implausible. I went for it. -250 OOPS!

However, there is a silver lining. Both John and Helen have been invited to join the prestigious "2x-250" club by the Life President and current sole member, a certain Mr Lishkov. The aforementioned (who says he's qualified on numerous occasions) does advise that he prefers to achieve qualification when there's a game on the other way.

I played in a more modest 2♥ with ♣10 led to A and a small ♠ returned. I rose with A and saw the K drop. I played ♦K overtook and cashed ♦Q, but ruffed and over-ruffed. I now ruffed a C and led ♥J which W took with K perforce. He now led ♠J to Q and E discarded a D. I cashed ♣K and could now see that E held all the reds and W the blacks, so I exited with a trump and E had to lead into dummy's ♦s after cashing his trumps. Just made for a small swing.

Board 31

Dealer South

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


Rob reports - South opened 1♥, Mike bid 2♦, North bid 4♥. What to do on east's hand? I chose 4♠, was doubled and played there getting away with -800. 5♦ can also be taken for 800. So the answer should have been to pass. What did others do?

(Alan - Not convinced by 4♠. But I suspect your doubles are more penalty orientated than mine, and my probable choice of a double looks like it would have worked out at least as badly. I don't think you can be expected to pass, even if it is the right answer on this hand).

The answer to Rob's question appears to be to play quietly in 4♥/5♥, done everywhere else except for the Lintotts who were -100.

Board 32

Dealer West

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

A quiet part-score. I played 2N tick. After a ♦ lead I played to keep W off lead, leading ♠Q and ducking when E rose with K.