

Get the Best out of this Hand

Cheltenham Congress

Saturday Afternoon 23/08/25 Hand No. 46

Dlr: East

Vul: Love all

Bidding

W	N	E	S
		P	1D
P	2C	P	3D
P	6NT	P	P
P			

How to Play

The Cheltenham Congress was held over the weekend of 23/24 August at Dean Close school and a good time was had by all players. A very friendly event with excellent playing conditions.

The hand here comes from the Swiss Pairs event on the Saturday and the scoring format did affect the hand. The bidding is short and sweet. North must surely have enough values for a slam after their partner's three diamond rebid so the practical pairs bid is six no trumps and you receive the lead of the jack of hearts. When playing any slam first start by counting your tricks very carefully. You have four spades, two hearts, two diamonds and three clubs. That's eleven so where do you look for your extra trick, diamonds or clubs? On the actual hand either suit works, but the correct choice is to start with clubs. If that suit breaks three-three or there is a doubleton J10 you have thirteen tricks. If the suit breaks four-two as on the actual hand then play the fourth round of clubs and let your opponents win their one and only trick. If you find that the clubs unkindly break five-one then you can change tack and switch to diamonds to make your extra trick. Playing small towards the jack on the first round of the suit gives you the best chance of the extra trick as you will have three diamond tricks either when the queen is with west or if the suit breaks three-two.

Two pairs in the event somehow managed to find their way to six spades on the hand. I haven't asked them how. This looks to be a disaster as the slam looks almost certain to make, but you will be scoring +980 when all those in six no trumps will be scoring +990 or +1020 if the clubs break three-three. To get a good score you have to hope that the clubs break four-two and you can ruff the third round and make all thirteen tricks that way. You may endanger your contract, but you have much more to gain than you have to lose. On the actual hand scoring +1010 was an excellent score even if it was a bit undeserved. Of course, if you had been playing in a teams event you should just draw trumps and play the hand as you would do in no trumps to set up your twelfth trick.

	♠ A Q 9 3										
	♥ A 6										
	♦ J 5										
	♣ A Q 9 6 3										
♠ 8 6 5	<table><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 10 7 2
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