

Essex Contract Bridge Association

The Warboys Trophy 2019 Season

Report on Session held 10 April 2019

Boards 5, 24 & 26

Our first deal concerns hand evaluation. Given the IMP method of scoring, trying that little bit harder to reach game pays off in the long run. The other two deals are about declarer making good decisions early in the play.

Board 5

Bd: 5	♠ 109842			
Vul: N/S	♥ A2			
Dlr: North	♦ J98			
	♣ KQ2			
♠ Q76	N	♠ AJ5		
♥ 93	W 5 E	♥ J865		
♦ K7653	S	♦ A4		
♣ 943		♣ J1075		
10	♠ K3		♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ N	
5 HCP 11	♥ KQ1074	N 2 1 3 2 3		
14	♦ Q102	S 2 1 3 2 3		
	♣ A86	E - - - - -		
		W - - - - -		

This board caught my eye because the two contracts that seemed most likely at first glance were not favoured. It comes down to how South evaluates his hand; it's a robust 14hcp so the auction may well go 1H-1S-1Nt-2C-2H-3Nt. Although the 1Nt rebid (when playing an opening weak no-trump) shows 15-16/17 this South hand is surely worth an upgrade. When the 1Nt rebid shows 12-14 game is more justifiably missed and a resting spot of 1Nt or 2S seems probable. (With one of my partners the auction would start 1H-1Nt which looks odd but the 1Nt is conventional showing a constructive hand with Spades; South can now see game possibilities.)

Occasionally South may decide to open 1Nt which is a bit too restrained, I think. It turned out that over the two sections only two pairs (both in the A) played in 3Nt and both were successful. Like-wise only two pairs played in 2S (again both in the A) which is the most likely spot if South opens a weak Nt. At one table East threw a spanner in the works by opening a sub-minimum 1Nt (allegedly 12-14); no doubt influenced by the vulnerability. EW gained 4imps when this was passed out. It's a common enough manoeuvre, especially with two four-card suits as the prospect of an eight-card fit somewhere, should you need to wriggle out, is high. However, if you do it too often partner will have to start announcing "11-14".

Board 24

Bd: 24	♠ AQ43		
Vul: None	♥ K92		
Dlr: West	♦ Q92		
	♣ J97		
♠ J7	N	♠ K82	
♥ Q63	W 24 E	♥ A54	
♦ AK87		♦ J654	
♣ K1085	S	♣ A63	
12	♠ 10965	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ N	
13 HCP 12	♥ J1087	N - - - 1 -	
3	♦ 103	S - - - 1 -	
	♣ Q42	E 2 3 1 - 2	
		W 2 3 1 - 2	

With a combined 25hcp EW are headed for 3Nt. With West opening 1Nt the contract will be right-sided and will probably come home as North is likely to lead a low Spade and thereafter is constantly end-played. The only lead from North to give the defence a real chance is the Queen of Spades; but who is going to find that?

Where East is declarer, game is more precarious. South will probably lead the Jack of Hearts, that sets up at least one Heart trick for the defence which is all they need if they get their Spades going. East can manoeuvre to keep South off-lead but now it becomes clearer to North that Spades is the suit to attack. Indeed, at my table we defended 2Nt by East and when in with Queen of Diamonds I had one of my rare, lucid moments and switched to the Queen of Spades. Declarer won in hand but eventually had to go one off. Computer says East can make 2Nt. After a Heart or Spade lead East's first move is to duck a Club to North who can do no better than attack Spades as above. East refuses the Queen and North can do no better than continue.

Declarer will make either the Jack or King of Spades, it doesn't matter which; when East cashes three Club tricks North is squeezed in the other three suits. If he discards his last Spade he can be end-played in either red suit. A Diamond discard gives declarer four tricks in the suit and a Heart discard will see North end-played in Hearts to lead away from the Queen of Diamonds.

Whichever Spade North plays next, he will either lose communication with South by discarding one or he will have to bare the King of Hearts.

You may say this is just a double-dummy exercise but there is a good case for declarer ducking a Club to North early in the play. After all, if the Diamonds play for four tricks there is no rush to take them. In the event 3Nt was bid four times in the A and was successful twice and was bid and failed twice in the B.

Board 26

Bd: 26	♠ 10		
Vul: All	♥ K963		
Dlr: East	♦ A43		
	♣ QJ1085		
♠ K84	N	♠ A92	
♥ Q82	W 26 E	♥ J1075	
♦ J1097	S	♦ K852	
♣ 932		♣ K4	
10	♠ QJ7653	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ N	
6 HCP 11	♥ A4	N 5 1 2 4 3	
13	♦ Q6	S 5 1 2 4 3	
	♣ A76	E - - - -	
		W - - - -	

The final destination for NS on this deal will largely depend on how North evaluates his hand. After South opens 1S, North may elect to bid 1Nt if a response of 2C requires more high cards, or more fit for Spades, by his methods. Whichever he chooses South will rebid Spades. This will show six cards if North has bid 1Nt but may be as few as five after a 2C response. Depending on how far 2C is forcing, game may or may not be reached.

Let us say South eventually plays in 4S; a real possibility at IMP scoring. On the face of it, with the King of Clubs on-side and the trumps breaking 3-3 there are only three losers even on a Diamond lead; two trumps and a Diamond. Indeed, computer says "Yes", 4S makes. However, 4S is not declarer-proof.

West has a "stand-out" lead of the Jack of Diamonds. South can see that he needs trumps to be 3-3 and the King of Clubs to be on-side regardless of who holds the King of Diamonds. While it seems natural and safe enough to play low at trick one it is not actually safe at all. Allowing East to win the first trick gives him the opportunity to do something very inconvenient; namely to switch to Clubs. It doesn't actually matter which Club he plays but he is likely to produce the King. South wins in hand and plays a trump. West now has to play his part in this cunning plan of East's; West must let East win the first trump to play another Club. When South plays a high trump from hand West wins and gives his partner a Club ruff for one down. Well, you say, suppose South discards one of his Clubs on dummy's Ace of Diamonds. It doesn't help declarer; when East ruffs the third Club with the 9 of Spades, West's 8 becomes the setting trick. If South plays the Ace of Diamonds at trick one and plays the Ten of Spades immediately the defence cannot organise a ruff or a trump promotion. The lesson here is to make sure you recognise what you need to fulfil your contract and not take any unnecessary risks.

Does an initial Club lead from West have the same impact? Not at all; although EW can organise a Club ruff South's losing Diamond will park on dummy's long Clubs which will eventually be accessed via the King of Hearts. On the day no-one attempted 4S but 3Nt was bid and made once in the A and twice (with an overtrick!) in the B.