

GCBA NEWSLETTER

Season 2019-20

August 2020

GCBA RESULTS

The second season of 6 Swiss teams rounds was won convincingly by the strong squad of Patrick Shields, Dan McIntosh, Diane and Filip Kurbalija. A cluster of teams, captained by Stefan Lindfors, Alan Wearmouth, John Cuncer and John Arblaster occupied the minor places. Season 3 is now underway and with 3 rounds completed, Paul Denning's team leads with Stefan Linfors' team in second place.

Season 1 of the 9-high Swiss Pairs was won by Hylary Kingham and John Polhill. Just one point behind, David Glover partnering Michael Lewis, and Andrea Pegler with husband Martin tied for second place. Well done to all. In season 2, Hylary Kingham and John Polhill are on track to do the double, leading after 5 rounds. A great achievement by them in a field of 22 pairs.

OUTSIDE RESULTS

Congratulations to Roger Williams, Mike Wignall, Mike Lewis and Malcolm Green on winning the Somerset Masters Swiss Teams tournament last month.

The EBU Summer meeting (on-line of course) started this weekend. A quick scan of the results so far show very little Gloucestershire participation and no successes to report at this point. Why not consider entering one of the many event formats being held over the forthcoming week and fly the flag for Gloucestershire.

A Sure Thing

The following hand cropped up in a recent EBU evening game. You play in 4♥ as South after East has opened the bidding with a weak 2♠ and North employs a transfer over your 2NT overcall. How do you play on the lead of the ♠9?

♠ 9	♠ Q54	♠ KJT863
♥ 5	♥ 9876432	♥ T
♦ KJT9432	♦	♦ A75
♣ AJT2	♣ K96	♣ 875
	♠ A72	
	♥ AKQJ	
	♦ Q86	
	♣ Q43	

At the table, you obviously don't know the East/West hands, but you can fairly safely assume that West has led a singleton spade and in that case you are certain of 10 tricks. Win the lead with the Ace and ruff your 3 diamonds in dummy using your boss trumps as entries. Now you can play clubs in any way you like. Neither opponent can lead a spade when they win a club trick (West because he doesn't have any and East because he sets up your Queen). So you just lose 2 clubs and then either get a ruff and discard or a spade trick. Not too difficult and no guesswork required yet when this hand was played, 30 players only managed to make 9 tricks in hearts.

With so much on-line bridge taking place, I cannot know how people are faring unless they let me know. If you have any interesting hands that you have played or bid please send the details to me for inclusion in a future newsletter

Can You See It?

Stan Powell kindly sent me the following puzzle hand which he came across when surfing the net.

♠ A65
♥ QJT
♦ 5432
♣ QJT
6♦ by South
♠ 432
♥ AK
♦ AK9876
♣ AK

You play in 6♦ after West has opened a weak 2♠. The lead is the K♠. How do you play? (Solution at the end)

Double Dummy

Double dummy competitions were once popular, but they have virtually disappeared with the advent of computerised solving capabilities. Most 52 card layouts are difficult to solve, but with just 6 tricks remaining, the possibilities are much reduced so why not give this problem a try.

♠ 86	♠ A2	♠ 7
♥ T	♥ AQ2	♥ KJ4
♦	♦ K	♦
♣ K53	♣	♣ AQ
	♠ 3	
	♥ 3	
	♦ Q	
	♣ 642	

Diamonds are trumps and South is on lead, needing 5 tricks.

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THE PART-SCORE BATTLE – Part 3

In my previous articles, we looked at the need to compete the part-score battle whenever both sides have an 8 card or longer fit.

So how do you get into the auction?

Suppose opponents make a direct raise e.g. 1♥-2♥ and this is passed back to you. Our mantra is to not let opponents play unmolested at the 2 level when they have announced a fit.

The opponents have denied the values for game, so we should be even more inclined to stick our necks out. Bidding in this position is called 'protecting' or in some circles 'balancing'. You should be bidding 2♠ at any vulnerability on as little as ♠Jxxxx ♥xx ♦Qxx ♣Axx. You don't have to worry about attracting a poor lead from partner as you can make your own poor lead against a heart contract. Also, you didn't overcall on the first round, so partner will not be expecting much. If you are 3 suited with short hearts, then a take-out double in the protective seat is recommended. With values in the minors and no spade length, then 2NT would be the order of the day and indeed most tournament players are already familiar with these methods. However, what would you do in the pass-out seat with a hand such as:

♠Jxx ♥Kxx ♦Qxx ♣Axxx or
♠Qx ♥xxxx ♦Qxx ♣Axxx

Protecting on these hands does not look anything like so attractive as you don't have a suitable hand for a suit bid, and

offering a choice to partner might lead to disaster.

There is a solution to this dilemma that many top players use. It is reliant on the player with a shortage in the opponents suit to take action, and this will often be the player in the direct seat i.e. immediately behind the 2♥ bid in our example. This is often called pre-balancing.

In the pre-balance position, actions can be very light. The partner should have a good sense of humour and assume nothing more than that the intervenor is merely trying to push the opponents up a level, and is not trying to bid constructively. A suit overcall in the pre-balance seat might be made on as little as:

♠KQTxx ♥xx ♦Kxx ♣xxx.

It won't often be doubled by opponents who have a known major suit fit, and you get partner off to a good lead.

When you are short in the opponents suit, you will generally be 2 or 3 suited (at least 443 in the unbid suits) and here you would make a take-out double. You probably need around 9-10 points as a minimum for this bid. If you hold

♠Jxxx ♥x ♦Kxxx ♣Qxxx.

you have an ideal shape but it would be silly to bid. You are so weak that opponents are very unlikely to be about to stop at the 2 level and you are not going to win this auction. Announcing a heart shortage will merely assist declarer in the play of the hand. When you double, how does partner continue? He may be able to pass with values and a good heart holding, or to bid his longest suit, but occasionally he

will be stuck with a 3433 shape and insufficient values to pass for penalties. With a hand like:

♠Kxx ♥xxxx ♦Kxxx ♣Jxx.

he will have to bid 2♠ and hope to survive. On layouts like this, you may well go for 800 to save a part-score, and you need the partnership temperament to withstand the odd bad result as adopting the pre-balancing style will bring in lots of gains which more than make up for the bad boards. We will look in more detail at how to develop these auctions next time.

'Can You See It?'

The lead has removed your entry, so how do you get to dummy to cash your 2 winning Queens in order to discard your spade losers? There are 3 missing diamonds, and you have to hope that East holds at least 2 of them. Cash the Ace of trumps (say that both follow) and then take both your AK doubletons. Now play a small trump from both hands. If East wins the trump he has no more spades and must give you access to dummy with a heart or club. Both your losing spades now go away.

Double Dummy Solution

Play a spade to the Ace and ruff a spade. East must discard his Ace of clubs else he is thrown in with a club and must concede 2 heart tricks. Now play a club from hand. West must rise with his king else East is end-played as before. Ruff in dummy and lead a low heart. If East wins, he has to lead a heart to your tenace. If West wins, West is similarly end-played in clubs.