

GCBA Newsletter

Season 2024-25

Dec 2024

In an attempt to reach a wider audience, this is the first GCBA Newsletter to be distributed via e-mail. Many of us will be acquainted with Mel Barlow and John Arblaster from when they lived in Cheltenham. You may find this article of interest <http://bridgewinners.com/article/view/spirit-of-the-game/>

GCBA RESULTS

Autumn Teams

After four rounds of Swiss, the leading four teams played 16 boards against each other, from which the winners to emerge were:

[Kanwar Rahim, John Stirrup, Steven Sasanow and Nick Haynes.](#)

Second place went to:

[Richard Butland, Roy Collard, Paul Denning, Ben Ritacca and Garry Watson.](#)

The remaining 9 teams had four more matches in Swiss format, after which the results were:

1st [Steve Bunker, Allan Sanis, Judy Sanis and Brian Goalby.](#) with 90 VPs

2nd [John Councer, Mark Rogers, Alison Pritchard and Roger Miles,](#) with 89 VPs.

County League

Round 4 saw wins for teams captained by Richard Butland John Councer. Patrick Shields and Jim Simons. Currently the Butland team leads the division, with teams captained by Patrick Shields and John Councer in second and third.

Please do visit the [GCBA website](#) – it has a new look and a new ‘puzzle hands’ section that has many articles to help us all improve our game.

MIDLAND COUNTIES LEAGUE

The third round of this league was played against Staffs and Shropshire. The Dawes team won 18-2, the Porter team won 16-4 and the Markham team won 15-5.

Congratulations to all the players who took part. These results put us top of Division One, third in Division Two and second in Division Three.

HOW'S YOUR DEFENCE?

This deal occurred in the last league round. You are on lead against 3NT with:

♠K87 ♥93 ♦J543 ♣QJ42

Declarer has shown a hand of 18+pts and club length, and dummy's bidding has indicated 5/4 in the majors.

Since you are the hand with the club entries it seems right to try and set up tricks in diamonds rather than trying to establish possible hearts in partners hand, so you lead a low diamond. Dummy displays:

♠QJ932 ♥A765 ♦T92 ♣T

and the first diamond trick goes 3-T-Q-A. Declarer now plays AK and another club, partner throwing a diamond on the third round. How do you defend? Try to construct declarer's hand before deciding.

You have seen the Ace and King of clubs. There are strong indications that he also started with the Ace and King of diamonds as otherwise not only would he have probably held up at trick one, but also partner would probably not have discarded from the suit.

If declarer holds the Ace of spades, then partner's hearts would be very strong, and he could have afforded to make a strong signal in that suit. So you should switch to a spade so that partner can win the Ace and fire back a diamond, enabling you to set up the suit whilst you still have another club entry.

This way you make two diamonds, two clubs and two spades in defence. Well done to the two defenders (from eight) who got the defence right.

IMPROVER'S CORNER

Consider your play on this deal on the lead of 7♥

♠ 962
♥ A2
♦ Q942
♣ J943

3NT by
South

♠ AK
♥ T965
♦ KJT5
♣ AKQ

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You have two spades, a heart, three clubs and three diamond tricks once you have knocked out the ♦A. If you duck the first heart, win the second round and play on diamonds, you will be OK if the hearts break 4-3 and also OK if the hand that wins the diamond has no more hearts, so your chances are good.

However, the contract is safe. If you win the ♥A at trick one. West cannot logically have a suit headed by the KQJ or he would have led one of those cards. There is no problem if the suit divides 4-3 but if the suit breaks 5-2, then East must hold a doubleton honour.

Now you can see the effect of playing the Ace at trick one. The defence can later only take two heart tricks as the suit is blocked. Notice that it will not be good enough for East to unblock his honour on the first round as your T9x remaining will prevent the run of the suit.

Many players would go wrong on this example:

♠ Q72
♥ A853
♦ QJ6
♣ A52

3NT by South

♠ AK5
♥ K64
♦ AT93
♣ J74

You receive the lead of the ♣6. To make the contract you will have to take a diamond finesse towards West, who may then be able to take four club tricks.

This will happen if you play a low club from dummy. East wins with the Queen (say) and returns the suit. The Ace is forced out and when in with a diamond, West can cash his winners.

If you rise with the ♣A at trick one, then the defence will only be able to take four club tricks if the lead is from KQxxx. However, not only is it more likely that the honours will be divided, but there is the further point that from KQTxx or KQ9xx, West would have led the King, and from KT9xx he would have led the ten, so playing the Ace only loses if West holds precisely KQ86x.

The following deal features another type of blocking play.

♠ 85	♠ QT2	♠ AJ976
♥ T87	♥ K53	♥ 62
♦ A8	♦ KT94	♦ 7632
♣ AJT982	♣ KQ5	♣ 64
	♠ K43	
	♥ AQJ94	
	♦ QJ5	
	♣ 73	

West led the ♠8, South tried the ten and East covered with the Knave. Declarer won, drew trumps and knocked out the ♦A. Unfortunately, West won this trick and a further spade through dummy gave East two spade tricks with a club to come to beat the contract.

South should have read the lead more carefully as likely being from small cards. If South had played dummy's Queen at trick one, then East

could win but would have been unable to return the suit to his advantage. East would have to switch, and this would give South time to knock out the diamond whilst still controlling the spade suit.

SOLUTION TO NOVEMBER'S PROBLEM

♠ K52	♠ 643
♥ AK9752	♥ QJT4
♦ A6	♦ K52
♣ 94	♣ AQJ

4♥ by West

How do you play to maximise your chances on the lead of ♦Q from North?

Counting your winners gives you six hearts, two diamonds and two clubs. Counting losers gives you three spades and a club if all the cards lie badly for you. Clearly your contract is in danger if South gets the lead in clubs.

You can circumvent this quite simply by ducking the diamond lead at trick one. Win the continuation and draw trumps. Now you can pitch a club on the top diamond and then take a ruffing finesse in clubs to throw away a spade. This limits your losers to one diamond and two spades.

DECEMBER'S PROBLEM

♠ AK3	♠ QJ2
♥ KJ9872	♥ A3
♦ 5	♦ A83
♣ AQT	♣ KJ953

6♥ by West

You play in the heart slam after South has opened the bidding with 3♦. How do you play on the lead of the ♦9 from North?