

GCBA NEWSLETTER

Season 2023-24

November 2023

GCBA RESULTS

Series 23 of the 9-High Swiss Pairs was won by Derek Boreham and Moya Jackson, well clear of Jim Berry and Cyril Green in second place.

Winter Teams

After 3 rounds (6 matches) of this Swiss Teams event, Richard Butland's team leads Patrick Shields' team by 17 VPs, with teams led by Allan Sanis and John Cuncer close behind.

Everett Cup

This event was a successful fund raiser, run in aid of the Sue Ryder Hospice. Over £700 was raised, much of it coming from the raffle, for which we must thank Allan Sanis, who managed to organise some very attractive prizes. The event was won by the team of Ian and Wendy Melvin, playing with Tony Hill and Alan Wearmouth.

County League (D1,D2)

In the third round of matches, teams captained by Ashok Kwatra, John Cuncer, Alan Wearmouth and Mike Wignall all registered wins.

TOLLEMACHE QUALIFIER

Gloucestershire, represented by Paul Denning, Dan MacIntosh, Alan Wearmouth, Ron Davis, Ben Ritacca, Peter Waggett, Richard Butland, Rob Stevens, Graham Cornell, Richard Chamberlain and Garry Watson achieved a third-place position in their qualifying group with four teams to go through. They will therefore be eligible to play in the final in February, in what looks on paper to be the strongest field in many years.

Congratulations to the whole team. Gloucestershire were leading their group overnight, but the first board against Cambridge on the Sunday morning did not produce the desired result.

♠ J42	
♥ A832	
♦ 98	
♣ Q965	
♠ KQ97	♠ AT863
♥ 5	♥ 964
♦ K653	♦ AQT
♣ AT83	♣ K4
♠ 5	
♥ KQJT7	
♦ J742	
♣ J72	

Both Cambridge pairs bid the hand to 6♠ by East, a trivial make by taking two heart ruffs on the table. Both our pairs (along with 19 others) failed to progress beyond game, resulting in a loss of 44 imps on the board. There are two ways of approaching the West hand facing 1♠ from partner.

One way is to show an immediate splinter in hearts. This is just what East wants to hear – good trump support and a singleton heart encourages East to merely check on keycards before bidding the slam.

The West hand is a little strong for a splinter in many pairs' methods, and hence they would approach via a Jacoby style 2NT bid to show four card support and at least game try values. Development of the auction after this start has many variations, but sensible methods should allow either hand to show shortages, the essential feature of slams making on minimal values, and on this hand, West would show his heart shortage, allowing East to push on.

Most of the time, East would be dealt a hand with wasted heart values, in which case the bidding would die in game.

MIDLAND COUNTIES LEAGUE

Gloucestershire continued their winning ways in the latest match against Staffs and Shropshire. The Dawes team won 15-5, the Porter won 20-0, and the Markham won 18-2. This puts the Dawes and Porter teams leading their divisions with the Markham team in second place in theirs. Congratulations to all participants – keep it up!

SUCCESS ABROAD

Congratulations to Patrick Shields on finishing third (out of 246 pairs) in the three-session Open Pairs at the Madeira International Bridge Festival.

IMPROVER'S CORNER

This hand was played in a recent pairs event, and it was disappointing to see so many declarers fail in the popular 4♣ contract.

♠ AT2	
♥ 943	
♦ AJ763	
♣ A5	
♠ 975	♠ 4
♥ KT7	4♠ by ♥ QJ62
♦ 92	South ♦ KQT8
♣ QJT96	♣ K843
♠ KQJ863	
♥ A87	
♦ 54	
♣ 72	

West invariably started with the obvious club lead. A count of tricks shows 6 spades and 3 Aces, and clearly the extra trick you need must come from diamonds. The first thing to appreciate is that you should win the first club, else a switch to hearts would lead to your defeat.

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I suspect that some declarers played Ace and another diamond. East would have won this trick, cashed a club and then switched to hearts. Declarer can win and play a top trump, then cross to dummy's ten of trumps to ruff a diamond high in hand. Unfortunately, the diamonds are not breaking 3-3 and two further entries to dummy are required to set up and enjoy the fifth diamond, but dummy has only one more entry.

Another line might be to cross to hand with a spade at trick two and play a diamond to the Knave. You would be alright if East cashed his club and then played hearts as you could win in hand, play Ace and another diamond, ruffing and still have two further trump entries to dummy to set up and enjoy the long diamond for a heart discard.

However, an astute defender would have led a club to his partner for a second spade lead and this would have knocked a vital dummy entry out of dummy and beaten the contract. The correct line is simply to play a low diamond from dummy at trick two. South now has all the necessary entries to set up and enjoy the long diamond however the defence plays.

The thought process should be this: in order to succeed, declarer must lose one diamond, ruff two (if the suit breaks 4-2) and get back to make the fifth. This means three entries to dummy are needed. As the Ace of clubs has gone at trick one, these entries have to be two trumps and the Ace of diamonds and declarer must be careful to use them in the correct sequence. As ever, timing is the key.

SOLUTION TO OCTOBER PROBLEM

♠ AK
♥ AKQJ54
♦ AK92
♣ A

♠ 942
♥ T3
♦ T4
♣ T97652

North	East	South	West
	Pass	3♦	x
Pass	4♣	Pass	6♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

North leads the ♣K against your slam. Given that North would have led a diamond if he had one, can you see a way of making 12 tricks?

You can always make 12 tricks provided East has no more than two clubs. After winning the ♣A, you should cash the ace of trumps and lead a low trump to dummy's ten. Next you ruff a club back to hand and play two more rounds of trumps. When East did begin with one or two clubs, such as on this full deal:

♠ QT763
♥ 9762
♦
♣ KQJ4

♠ AK
♥ AKQJ54
♦ AK92
♣ A

♠ 942
♥ T3
♦ T4
♣ T97652

♠ J85
♥ 8
♦ QJ87653
♣ 83

the ending shown in the next column will come about. When you play the ♥J, throwing a club from table, South is in trouble. You know he began with seven diamonds, a trump and hopefully two clubs. If East reduces to three diamonds, you will play the ♦A, ♦K and another diamond.

♠ QT763
♥
♦
♣ QJ

♠ AK
♥ J
♦ AK92
♣

♠ 94
♥
♦ T4
♣ T97

6♥ by West

♠ J85
♥
♦ QJ87
♣

South wins the trick and has to return a spade, allowing you to take the last three tricks with the top spades and the ♦9. Whenever South keeps four diamonds, and so only two spades, you will counter by cashing the two high spades, reducing South to ♦QJ87.

This allows you to make three of the last four tricks by leading the ♦2 to dummy's ten. When South takes the ♦10 with the Jack or Queen, he will be forced to lead a diamond, allowing your ♦9 diamonds to take a trick. Two more high diamonds will get your trick total to 12.

You should see that it was vital to ruff a club on the above layout, for otherwise South could defeat you by coming down to two spades, three diamonds and a club in the endgame. After winning his diamond, he would be able to play a club to his partner.

NOVEMBER PROBLEM

♠ KQT87
♥ 95
♦ KJ
♣ A872

4♠ by West

♠ AJ95
♥ 832
♦ AQ
♣ QT54

North	East	South	West
1♥	x	Pass	4♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

North starts with three top hearts. Plan the play.