

GCBA NEWSLETTER

Season 2020-21

September 2020

GCBA RESULTS

The third season of six Swiss teams rounds was won by Stephan Lindfors, Rob Lawy, Sally and Harry Anoyrkatis, just 1VP clear of Paul Denning's team, with Series Two winners Patrick Shields' team in third place.

Series Two of the 9-high Swiss Pairs was won by Hylary Kingham and John Polhill. Second place went to Martin and Andrea Pegler. This is a remarkable repeat of Series One's result and shows great consistency from the leading pairs. Series Three is now underway, with Richard Williams and Janet Miles setting the early pace.

In the friendly match against Avon, sad to say that the only Gloucestershire team with a positive overall IMP total was Steve Betterley and Helen Morris playing with Cath Jack and Lynn Edwards – well done to them.

Good Defence

The following hand comes from the final round of Series Three of Swiss Teams which matched Stephan Lindfors' team against Val Constable. The following hand (Board 1) swung 10 IMPs to Lindfors, who won the overall competition by a single VP; it featured a sparkling defence by Sally and Harry Anoyrkatis.

| | | |
|-----------|--------|----------|
| ♠ AQ2 | | ♠ JT6 |
| ♥ | | ♥ Q95 |
| ♦ AQJT984 | | ♦ K765 |
| ♣ 752 | | ♣ K63 |
| ♠ 98543 | | ♠ JT6 |
| ♥ AK83 | 3NT by | ♥ Q95 |
| ♦ 3 | South | ♦ K765 |
| ♣ J98 | | ♣ K63 |
| | | ♠ K7 |
| | | ♥ JT7642 |
| | | ♦ 2 |
| | | ♣ AQT4 |

The bidding with E/W silent had been 1♦ - 1♥ - 3♦ - 3NT and West led of 8♠. Declarer won in hand and finessed a diamond which held. On the next 2 rounds of diamonds, West discarded 2 clubs and East chose to win and played...?

You can count 9 tricks for South and must therefore take 4 more tricks immediately if you are to beat the contract. South could have started with a fairly tenuous club stop but once West discards 2 clubs, it simply won't be possible to take 4 club tricks, so you need to find your tricks in hearts. Which heart should you lead at this point? If you are to get 4 tricks in the suit, partner will need a strong holding and you will need to lead through South twice. The ♥9 is the correct card. South covers but West cooperates by winning and returning a low heart to your Queen. Then a heart through completes the rout – well done indeed.

Lady Luck Smiles

Bridge players constantly bemoan their bad luck, but sometimes the Bridge Gods (and opponents) are on your side. A recent EBU evening game produced these two deals.

| | | |
|---------|--------|----------|
| ♠ xxx | | ♠ Kxxx |
| ♥ Axxxx | | ♥ xx |
| ♦ Q | | ♦ AJxxxx |
| ♣ AQJx | | ♣ xx |
| ♠ xx | | ♠ Kxxx |
| ♥ QJxx | 6NT by | ♥ xx |
| ♦ Tx | South | ♦ AJxxxx |
| ♣ xxxx | | ♣ xx |
| | | ♠ AQJx |
| | | ♥ Kx |
| | | ♦ K9xx |
| | | ♣ Kxx |

You overbid to a slam but West comes to your aid with the ♦T lead to East's Ace, who equally

helpfully returns a diamond, your 9 winning the trick. Now prospects are not too bad. You need the spade finesse and then either spades 3-3 or a spade diamond squeeze on East or a spade heart squeeze on West. You cross to dummy with a club to take a spade finesse and then again with a heart for a second spade finesse. Once East fails to produce the King of spades on this trick, the major quit squeeze on West is no longer in the frame so just cash the red kings and then the clubs to finish East, who cannot hold both his spade and diamond guards. The next hand sees this collection.

| | | |
|---------|-------|----------|
| ♠ Txxxx | | ♠ J |
| ♥ Jxx | | ♥ Txxxx |
| ♦ xx | | ♦ Ax |
| ♣ Axx | | ♣ Txxxx |
| ♠ K | | ♠ J |
| ♥ KQxx | 6S by | ♥ Txxxx |
| ♦ JTxxx | South | ♦ Ax |
| ♣ KJx | | ♣ Txxxx |
| | | ♠ AQxxxx |
| | | ♥ A |
| | | ♦ KQxx |
| | | ♣ Qx |

The bidding starts 1♠- 4♠ and flushed with success from the previous board, you hope for a couple of useful cards in dummy, you decide on an undisciplined bash at 6♠. West leads a top heart and you win and cash the Ace of trumps and lead a top diamond. East wins and leads a heart hopeful of beating the contract. Now you just hope that West has the King of clubs. Ruff your losing diamonds on the table and run your trumps. In the end position, West cannot keep his heart winner and club guard so you make two slams on consecutive boards both on squeezes, coincidentally both missing the ♦A and both featuring a mis-defence by the player when he won that card.

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THE PART-SCORE BATTLE – Part 4

In Part 3 we considered the concept of pre-balancing, i.e. taking direct action in 4th seat after for example 1♥ P- 2♥. We saw here that it pays to overcall with 2♠ on as little as:

♠KQTxx ♥xx ♦Kxx ♣xxx

and to compete with a double whenever you are short in the opponents suit and have at least 9 points e.g.

♠KQxx ♥xx ♦Kxxx ♣QJx.

Let's consider how your partner might continue if opener passes at this point.

With ♠Axx ♥xxxx ♦Qxx ♣xxx, we saw that he just bids 2♠ and hopes for the best. On a good day this might even cost 500 to save a part score but that is a price you pay for aggressive competition and in the long run, it is a price worth paying.

You might think that this is a Lebensohl situation, where responder bids with values and goes through 2NT as a puppet to play in a suit at the 3 level, but logically, Lebensohl is not appropriate. Remember that partner is already a passed hand and won't have any sort of game forcing hand. He will only have passed 1♥ when strong in hearts as well as having values and if that is the case, he will now pass your double.

2NT will rarely be your optimum spot on this auction start, and it is better to use this bid as a scramble without spades. If you hold:

♠Jx ♥Qxx ♦QJxx ♣Kxxx

then bid 2NT as a take-out for the minors. This is better than guessing which minor to bid. You can also bid 2NT with 4 diamonds and 5 clubs, getting to play in a 4-4 diamond fit when the doubler is 4-3 in the minors.

After a direct double of 2♠, 2NT as a more general take-out (not only minors) is similarly valuable. In essence, 2NT asks for partners help in picking the strain. The doubler should show his lowest 4+ suit, even if he has to bid 3♣ with a 1354 shape Examples: after 1♠ - P - 2♠ - X, bid 2NT on any of:

- ♠xxxx ♥Qxx ♦Jxx ♣Kxxx.
- ♠Txx ♥Qxxx ♦Qxxx ♣xx.
- ♠Qxxx ♥Kx ♦Qxx ♣Qxxx.

On (a) you will always find a 7+ fit. On (b), whilst you probably have a 4-4 heart fit, if you follow the above guidance, you will locate an eight card fit whenever he has doubled on a 2344, 2353 or 2443 hand. Although 3♥ might score more, remember your prime goal is to find a playable spot. On (c), there is no rush to bid 3♣ as partner will always bid the suit himself with 4, else he will bid diamonds, leaving you no worse off.

If the opener redoubles in front of you, then it is best to play pass as rescue-neutral – over 1♥-P-2♥-X-XX then Pass would deny 4 spades or a 5 card minor.

The 2NT overcall

What about when you hold 2 suits but are nervous of doubling? E.g. after 1♠ - P - 2♠ doubling isn't comfortable if you hold ♠xx ♥QJ9x ♦xx ♣AQJxx as you may reach a silly 3♦ contract when partner has a 3343 shape. The solution is to

overcall 2NT, which should simply show two places to play. Partner should bid the cheapest suit that he can stand playing in, choosing 3♣ with say:

♠Qxx ♥KTx ♦QJxx ♣Kxx

In summary, after 1♥ P- 2♥, the scrambling 2NT shows the minors as we wouldn't by-pass spades if holding the suit, whereas after 1♠ - P - 2♠, we want to be able to compete with 2NT when holding any of these shapes: 2245, 2254, 2425, 2452, 2524, 2542, as well as 5/5 shapes of course.

If 2NT gets doubled, the opponents are after our blood, but fortunately the double does give us some extra wiggle room. One playable method is that a suit bid shows 5+. Redouble shows 4 cards in the highest of the unbid suits and a pass requests partner to bid suits up the line. There are more complex methods than these that a super-serious partnership might want to investigate.

The key message from this series is that it is vitally important to compete vigorously for the part-score whenever both sides have a fit, and to some extent, your point count is irrelevant. Your focus should be to get to a playable spot rather than necessarily the highest scoring contract.

If you have suggestions for topics you would like discussed in future editions of this newsletter then please contact the editor.

'Hand of the Day' has now restarted on the GCBA website, so do please have a look at that.