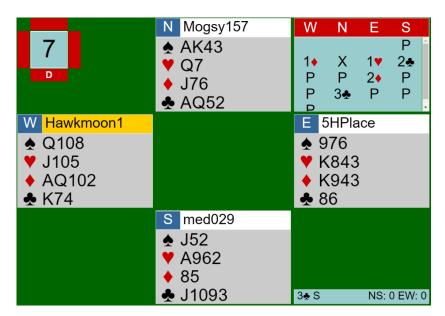
16/11/2020 Hand of the Week 39: Halifax vs Halifax round 2

We had another good turnout for out international match against Halifax, Nova Scotia, a total of 18 tables. Honours were evenly split again, with Moira & myself winning NS, and the Canadian pair of Trish & Diane winning EW. The contrasting bidding styles were evident on this board which lead to a wide variety of final contracts:



Playing a strong NT, our Canadian opponents opened 1 ◆, Moira doubled and after a 1 level bid from East I was able to show my club suit. This allowed us to find the contract of 3 ♣.

The J♥ was lead, to the Q-K-A. After the club finesse works, I lead low towards the J♠ which loses to Wests Q♠. The 10♥ was followed by a second spade. When the suit breaks 3-3, I was now able to make 4 clubs, 3 spades, a heart and a diamond ruff for 9 tricks.

Some North's chose to overcall 1NT, which is a little risky without a diamond stop, but with the suit breaking 4-4 the contract can make. Other EW pairs competed to 2♥.

With Yorkshire pairs sitting EW, there is a weak NT open for East. The successful defence is the A♠ lead by North. South follows with a low card indicating an odd number, which allows North to continue and establish the suit. EW make their 4 diamond tricks, allowing North to signal their entry in clubs. When South gets in with the A♥ and switches to the J♣, NS should make 4 clubs, 3 spades and the heart for 2 off.

Now to hand 10, what do you open with this?

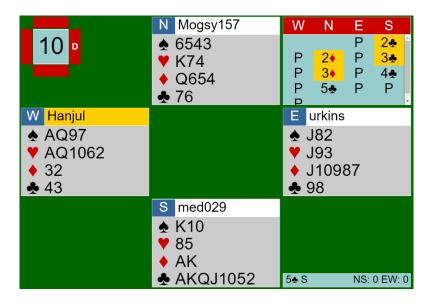


With 10 playing trick I chose to go with a game-forcing 2♣. Partner shows a weak response and after rebidding 3♣ partner bids 3♦. There is now a bit of a dilemma! Are you going to accept a part score, or go for game- either 3NT or 5♣?

There are 9 tricks off the top in NT but the hand looks very vulnerable to a heart lead. In 5♣ you have to make 2 more tricks and are unlikely to have any entries to table to take the spade finesse.

3 pairs took the gamble in 3NT, 9 played in 5♣ and 6 took the part score.

The full hand:



Partners K♥ proves to be a lifeline, and declarers K♠ is protected from the lead by West.

3NT proves to be the best contract with the A♥ onside, and can make 11 tricks.

In theory 5.4 can go off if East can find the courage to lead hearts, as it removes the entry to the Q.4 but understandably no-one found this at the table.

We are planning to arrange another contest in the new year. Thanks to everyone who supported the match on both sides of the Atlantic!