

Eden Cup 2024

Ten pairs entered the County Pairs Championship for the Eden Cup played on RealBridge on Feb 4th. This represents an increase on last year's entry but is still a disappointing turn out. However, it was refreshing to see some new faces competing for the first time. Let's hope for more in future.

Congratulations to Northampton BC pair John Blakesley and Malcolm Orr-Ewing who won the trophy and along with Rob Miller / Dan Baines and Mark Tilley / Don McFarlane qualified to represent Northants in the Corwen Trophy in June.

John and Malcolm scored a top on this board reaching the optimum contract of 6C with the rest of the field in 3NT.

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|--|---|---------------------|-------|------|---|---|-------|---|--|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|---|---|---|-------|
| Dir: South Vul: E/W | ♠ 9 6 4 ♥ K Q 9 ♦ Q 9 6 3 ♣ 9 6 4 | Optimum NS -1370 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ♠ A K ♥ J 6 ♦ A 8 4 2 ♣ A K 8 7 2 | <table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="background-color: #008000; color: white;">NORTH</td><td style="background-color: #800000; color: white;">EAST</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: #800000; color: white;">WEST</td><td style="background-color: #008000; color: white;">SOUTH</td></tr> <tr><td colspan="2" style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">19</td></tr> </table> | NORTH | EAST | WEST | SOUTH | 19 | | ♠ Q 10 8 2 ♥ A 5 2 ♦ 10 7 ♣ Q J 10 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| NORTH | EAST | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| WEST | SOUTH | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 19 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="width: 20px; height: 20px; text-align: center;">7</td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 20px; height: 20px; text-align: center;">19</td><td style="width: 20px; height: 20px; text-align: center;">9</td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 20px; height: 20px; text-align: center;">5</td></tr> </table> | 7 | 19 | 9 | 5 | ♠ J 7 5 3 ♥ 10 8 7 4 3 ♦ K J 5 ♣ 5 | <table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td colspan="4" style="text-align: center;">♣♦♥♠N</td></tr> <tr><td>N</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>E</td><td>6</td><td>2</td><td>1 3 4</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>6</td><td>2</td><td>1 3 4</td></tr> </table> | ♣♦♥♠N | | | | N | - | - | - | S | - | - | - | E | 6 | 2 | 1 3 4 | W | 6 | 2 | 1 3 4 |
| 7 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 19 | 9 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ♣♦♥♠N | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| N | - | - | - | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| S | - | - | - | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| E | 6 | 2 | 1 3 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| W | 6 | 2 | 1 3 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Second in hand sitting W, John opened 1C and with the opposition silent their auction proceeded 1C – 1S; 2D – 4C. A Blackwood enquiry now found partner with the missing A and 6C was duly reached.

N led the HK which John won in the dummy followed by the A, K of spades, a club to the Q and the SQ pitching his last heart. John then ducked a diamond and could ruff his other 2 diamonds in the dummy. Well bid and well played.

Leading after the first session, John and Malcolm had Rob and Dan hot on their heels in the second. They faced one another in the penultimate round playing the board below.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|--------------------|-------|------|--|---|-------|--|--|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|---|---|---|-------|
| Dir: West Vul: N/S | ♠ Q 7 5 4 3 ♥ 9 7 ♦ 7 5 3 2 ♣ Q 6 | Optimum NS -400 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ♠ K J 2 ♥ J 4 ♦ A K 9 8 6 ♣ J 5 3 | <table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="background-color: #008000; color: white;">NORTH</td><td style="background-color: #800000; color: white;">EAST</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: #800000; color: white;">WEST</td><td style="background-color: #008000; color: white;">SOUTH</td></tr> <tr><td colspan="2" style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">44</td></tr> </table> | NORTH | EAST | WEST | SOUTH | 44 | | ♠ 10 9 ♥ K Q 10 8 2 ♦ Q J 10 ♣ A 10 7 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| NORTH | EAST | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| WEST | SOUTH | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 44 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="width: 20px; height: 20px; text-align: center;">4</td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 20px; height: 20px; text-align: center;">13</td><td style="width: 20px; height: 20px; text-align: center;">12</td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 20px; height: 20px; text-align: center;">11</td></tr> </table> | 4 | 13 | 12 | 11 | ♠ A 8 6 ♥ A 6 5 3 ♦ 4 ♣ K 9 8 4 2 | <table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td colspan="4" style="text-align: center;">♣♦♥♠N</td></tr> <tr><td>N</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>E</td><td>1</td><td>3</td><td>3 - 3</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>1</td><td>3</td><td>3 - 3</td></tr> </table> | ♣♦♥♠N | | | | N | - | - | 1 | S | - | - | 1 | E | 1 | 3 | 3 - 3 | W | 1 | 3 | 3 - 3 |
| 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 13 | 12 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 11 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ♣♦♥♠N | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| N | - | - | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| S | - | - | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| E | 1 | 3 | 3 - 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| W | 1 | 3 | 3 - 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

John and Malcom sat EW with Rob and Dan NS.

| West | North | East | South |
|------------|-------|------|----------|
| 1D | P | 1H | P |
| 1N (12-14) | P | 2C* | X** |
| 2D*** | P | 3N | All pass |

*Checkback

**Suggesting a C lead

*** Denying 3 hearts or 4 spades

Dan takes up the story.

3N was the standard contract. Holding declarer to 9 tricks would give us a top and the Cup. N led the CQ won by the A and declarer led a low heart from dummy. South went for broke, winning the A and firing a small club back but to no avail. Declarer rattled off 11 tricks for a top and. in so doing. secured first place. What if, instead, S switched to a low spade. Now declarer must rise with the K to make 11 tricks but if he tries the J he makes only 9. The result of the competition would have hinged on his decision.

Without the lead directing double, maybe N would try the risky spade lead to South's A and a spade back. Declarer must play the J to block the suit. N wins the SQ. Now what? A passive spade continuation would lead to the standard 10 tricks but a club switch sets up a club trick for the defence before the heart A is knocked out. The club trick along with two spades and a heart gives the defence 4 tricks and a top.

Fascinating stuff.