

Rob writes:

Every July the bridge fraternity trudges up north to the delightful town of Scarborough for the summer congress. This year the event was splendidly run by Oliver Cowan, the accommodation and food sublime thanks to Dan's father and Meg, and for once on the North Sea the weather was fabulous too. Could the bridge be as good? In fact, it was, as we managed to finish fourth in the A final of the teams (mainly down to our teammates) and joint first in the pairs.

North		NV
♠ K 9 8 4 3 ♥ K 10 4 ♦ K 7 6 ♣ Q 4		
West	v	East
♠ A Q 10 6 ♥ A 3 ♦ A 10 ♣ 9 8 7 3 2		
♠ J 5 ♥ Q 9 7 5 2 ♦ J 3 2 ♣ A J 6		
South		D NV
♠ 7 2 ♥ J 8 6 ♦ Q 9 8 5 4 ♣ K 10 5		
		HCPs
		11
		14 9
		6

NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
 1NT (12-14)
 Pass 2D Pass 2H
 All Pass
 Lead Diamond 6

The above hand was the very last of the 84 hands in the pairs. After an up and down match we needed a good board.

Dan did very well to pass as North (not sure I could have resisted). With 2S failing, if we could beat 2H we would have done well. What would you lead? This is a horrid hand to lead from. A club is best but not obvious. Dan decided that if a diamond was wrong we may still come to the trick. As he had five spades it's less likely if a spade was wrong. So he selected the diamond six, declarer played low and screams of the third player plays high suggested the queen from me, but keeping the queen over the jack looked better so I hoped Dan had the ten and played low. This was not a great start for the defence! Declarer cashed a diamond and saw a chance for total glory (maybe a bit too greedy). If the spade finesse worked he might get all dummy's clubs away. So he crossed to dummy in clubs and ran the spade. Dan won and exited with a diamond, declarer cashed the heart Ace and tried his spades to pitch dummies clubs. I ruffed with the eight as the six of clubs was discarded. What now?

A lot of players hate counting at bridge. It's tedious and tiring but it is also important, especially when you haven't defended too well up to this point. Declarer had shown Ace Hearts, A&Q Spades and Ace Diamonds and had opened a 12-14 NT. Dan must have the club queen. Confidently I under led my club king to Dan's queen and he played another spade promoting my jack. A diamond exit stuck declarer in dummy and Dan made two more trump tricks, 1 off and 70% which pushed us up to 15-5 and a tie for first place. Phew! An exciting finish.

The Swiss format means that if you are leading you play other leading pairs. In the penultimate round Dan and Rob came up against international pair Hackett and Sansom.

Dan takes up the story:

Board 27 was a big one for Jason Hackett declaring 3NT against us on the penultimate round:

Hand diagram for Board 27:

North	West	East	South
♠ Q 6 3 ♥ K 8 6 ♦ Q 9 ♣ Q J 10 3 2	♠ K 7 2 ♥ A 4 3 ♦ A K J 4 3 ♣ 9 7	♠ A 10 8 4 ♥ Q J 9 2 ♦ 7 2 ♣ A 8 5	♠ J 9 5 ♥ 10 7 5 ♦ 10 8 6 5 ♣ K 6 4

HCPs:

10	
15	11
4	

Bidding was

W	N	E	S
1NT	P	2C	P
2D	P	3NT	All P

2C was ordinary Stayman

I led QC and he held up to the 3rd round, pitching a spade on the 3rd club. He then paused for ages before playing Ace and another heart. I rose with the King and cashed 2 clubs for 1 off. This was 21% for us as most were trying the diamond finesse and subsequently losing a heart or a spade (or both in some cases) after losing the clubs. This helped them to a crucial 11-9 win against us, giving them a chance to catch us on the last round. Jason quietly said something about most people not playing the percentages properly in pairs.