

NIC Final – B Division, commentary by Chris Wilson

Pleased to report Oxfordshire won with 59 VPs ahead of Norfolk with 53 and Hants with 52. We won 3 matches, drew against Herts and then unluckily lost our final match against Yorkshire.

Cross Imps were:

Matthew & Chris	+1.65
Finn & Stuart	+0.02
Mary-Ann & Christopher	-0.10
Gillian & Nigel	-0.46

Matthew and I rode some good fortune, but all the pairs played well and made a good contribution to the win, as you'll see from the commentary.

Board 3 Dealer S EW Vul	♠ Q10986	
	♥ 952	
	♦ A98	
	♣ 105	
♠ AK52		♠ 73
♥ Q8		♥ A643
♦ J54		♦ 1073
♣ AK98		♣ Q763
	♠ J4	
	♥ KJ107	
	♦ KQ62	
	♣ J42	

A NT contract rolled home at 3 tables, but Stuart used a 2C bid over West's strong NT to show 2 suits with at least 3 clubs. North then brought home the 2S contract for a useful swing.

Board 4
Dealer W
All Vul

♠ Q1095	♠ 83	♠ KJ6
♥ A9	♥ 1087	♥ KQJ6
♦ AJ1096	♦ K743	♦ Q8
♣ 32	♣ KJ95	♣ AQ104
	♠ A742	
	♥ 5432	
	♦ 52	
	♣ 876	

Unfortunately, M-A and Christopher got too high in 6N-1 on this one with DK wrong.

Board 6
Dealer E
EW Vul

♠ 9876	♠ 53	♠ K1042
♥ QJ6	♥ 7	♥ K109543
♦ AJ4	♦ 109876532	♦ Q
♣ QJ2	♣ 76	♣ A9
	♠ AQJ	
	♥ A82	
	♦ K	
	♣ K108543	

Most played in 4H going down, but quite out of character we managed to stop in the making 3H by East:

1H – 2C – 2N – 3D

3H all pass

My 9 loser West didn't look promising.

Some poor defending allowed +1.

Board 7
Dealer S
All Vul

♠ AKJ54	♠ Q9	♠ 1072
♥ 87	♥ K94	♥ 5
♦ K98	♦ Q65	♦ AJ32
♣ AQ4	♣ KJ1073	♣ 98652
	♠ 863	
	♥ AQJ10632	
	♦ 1074	
	♣ —	

Our auction went:
3H – 3S – 4H – 4S

A heart to the Ace then a small spade back. Placing South with short trumps, I ran this and North won and continued trumps. I ruffed my last Heart and led a Club to hand which surprisingly South ruffed. He continued hearts, but when diamonds behaved, there was no need for the club finesse.

One oppo pair languished in 3S and another allowed Nigel and Gillian to play in 4H (West deciding to X 3H rather than bid 3S), this was worth +40 imps.

First match (vs Norfolk) over and 17 VPs.

Board 11
Dealer S
None Vul

♠ A543	♠ J86	♠ K102
♥ J853	♥ 964	♥ K10
♦ KQ6	♦ 875	♦ A42
♣ Q10	♣ 8762	♣ AKJ43
	♠ Q97	
	♥ AQ72	
	♦ J1093	
	♣ 95	

Finn and Stuart got too high in 6C-1 which had no chances with HQ wrong.

Board 12
Dealer W
NS Vul

♠ 876	♠ A93	♠ KJ10
♥ J86	♥ A10973	♥ Q42
♦ 1098	♦ AQ4	♦ K53
♣ K864	♣ Q10	♣ J952
	♠ Q542	
	♥ K5	
	♦ J762	
	♣ A73	

We managed to take 3N-1.

Matthew led C2 to my King and I returned them, my C4 showing 3 left. Declarer led a H to King, then finessed a H to MC's Queen. He then made the great switch to SJ and after a long tank, declarer ducked it, dummy's S9 ensuring that MC couldn't continue spades from his assumed J10. Now MC could switch back to clubs and cash the 4th one when in with DK. Well played pard.

The moral of the hand (and others later) is that if you give oppos a chance to go wrong, they often will.

Against Hertfordshire (last years winners) we were a few IMPs down with 1 board to play.

Board 16
Dealer W
EW Vul

♠ —	♠ 9873	♠ KJ64
♥ AQJ864	♥ 107	♥ K532
♦ AQ1052	♦ 94	♦ 86
♣ A3	♣ KQ954	♣ 876
	♠ AQ1052	
	♥ 9	
	♦ KJ73	
	♣ J102	

I must confess that I forgot that a Kokish sequence (2C-2D-2H-2S-3D) would enable me to show a GF hand with the red suits, so instead opened 1H. The auction was a bit odd,

but suffice to say that MC showed a H fit and then doubled 4S, which I took out to 5H. South doubled this for no apparent reason and 12 tricks rolled in for +1090.

The oppo pairs had bit 4H and 6H, so we were waiting for Finn & Stuart's result. If they bid the slam, we would tie the match but lose 14-6 if they stayed in game. After a wait that seemed ages, the score came through and they'd reached 6H after this auction:

1H – P – 2H* – X

4S* – P – 4N – P

6H

2H showed a 2.5H raise (as I'm sure you already knew) and 4S was exclusion key card (a very useful gadget to add to the armoury).

Well done!

The match was tied 10-10.

Board 21		♠ 65	
Dealer N		♥ AJ84	
NS Vul		♦ KQ542	
		♣ Q3	
♠ 10982			♠ QJ73
♥ K62			♥ 953
♦ 76			♦ A1093
♣ KJ76			♣ A2
	♠ AK4		
	♥ Q107		
	♦ J8		
	♣ 109854		

Everyone did well on this:

MC brought home 2N with 2S, 4H and 2D. But Nigel & Gillian took 1N by S -2! Declarer erred by cashing HA in mid game but then Gillian switched to clubs when winning HK and curtains for declarer.

Board 24
Dealer W
None Vul

♠ Q53	♠ 92	♠ KJ874
♥ Q7	♥ 10865	♥ A93
♦ AKJ1096	♦ 42	♦ 753
♣ A9	♣ Q6432	♣ 105
	♠ A106	
	♥ KJ42	
	♦ Q8	
	♣ KJ87	

We were fortunate on the final board of match 3, the auction going:

1D – P – 1S – X

XX – P – 2S – P

3D all pass

West's XX showed 3-card support, but East tanked for ages trying to work out what 3D meant then passed, so the cold game was missed.

Nigel & Gillian and M-A & Christopher made no mistake and got to 4S.

Match 3 was won 16-4 and the first time we took the lead.

Board 32
Dealer W
EW Vul

♠ Q87	♠ KJ1092	♠ A65
♥ A942	♥ QJ6	♥ K8
♦ A82	♦ J10	♦ KQ43
♣ 764	♣ KJ10	♣ A932
	♠ 43	
	♥ 10753	
	♦ 9765	
	♣ Q85	

Round 4 vs Hants was a tight affair with just a few IMPs going the wrong way on most hands, until the final board, when we trailed by 16.

3N was the contract almost everywhere, and MC was the only declarer to make it.

1S – 1N – P – 3N

South led S4 which MC allowed to win. N then continued spades to West's Q (strike 1)! MC then ducked a club and N cleared the spades, on which S threw a diamond (strike 2)! Now there were 9 tricks with 2S, 2H, 4D, 1C.

As on an earlier board, oppos went wrong when they were given a chance to. I like the club duck knowing that the spades would be cleared and South will have to find a discard not knowing which suit he needs to guard. Many declarers would have cashed the diamonds and hoped.

I have to begrudgingly admit he played this one moderately well.

A 28 IMP swing on B32 gave us a 12-8 win and a 10 VP lead with 1 match to play.

Board 33		♠ A95	
Dealer N		♥ AJ	
None Vul		♦ KQJ943	
		♣ 93	
♠ QJ6			♠ K108
♥ Q954			♥ 86
♦ —			♦ 652
♣ AQJ1052			♣ K8764
	♠ 7432		
	♥ K10732		
	♦ A1087		
	♣ —		

5D made everywhere except against Finn & Stuart

Finn's club lead was ruffed and declarer drew 2 rounds of trumps, despite the bad break revealed at T2. He then took the H finesse the wrong way (Ace then running Jack). Stuart switched to SQ and with H 4-2 there was no way to avoid 2 more losers. Well done guys.

Board 34
Dealer E
NS Vul

♠ Q973	♠ J54	♠ K
♥ KQ4	♥ J106	♥ A982
♦ KJ3	♦ A9852	♦ 764
♣ AQ10	♣ 63	♣ KJ987
	♠ A10862	
	♥ 753	
	♦ Q10	
	♣ 542	

Not so great on this one where Finn & Stuart got too high in 6C-1, leaving the match almost tied.

Board 39
Dealer S
All Vul

♠ A643	♠ QJ108	♠ 9752
♥ Q85	♥ J1093	♥ K62
♦ K64	♦ AQ2	♦ 853
♣ Q85	♣ 97	♣ K103
	♠ K	
	♥ A74	
	♦ J1097	
	♣ AJ642	

This board cost us the final match, as against us the bidding (all N-S) went:

1C – 1H

2H – 2S

2N – 3N

3N is cold but only reached at 4/12 tables and not elsewhere in our match.

The key is that North has taken a great view of his major sequences that are likely to play well in NT (and certainly did!), so upgrading his points.

Board 40	♠ K75	
Dealer W	♥ A10643	
None Vul	♦ KJ8	
	♣ QJ	
♠ 4		♠ Q8632
♥ K875		♥ J2
♦ A106		♦ 942
♣ K10974		♣ A32
	♠ AJ109	
	♥ Q9	
	♦ Q753	
	♣ 865	

At last a board where I thought I had something to crow about (but read on).

A lively auction went:

P – 1H – P – 1S

2C – X* – P – 2D

P – P – 3C – P

P – 3D all pass

The X showed 3 spades.

I made the obvious lead of S4 round to declarer's J. Club to MC's Ace and he returned S6 for me to ruff. I now cashed CK then switched to a deceptive H8 and declarer went into the tank. Deciding that he couldn't risk MC have HK and giving me another ruff, he rose with the Ace.

DJ went round to my Ace then I cashed HK which brought a sigh from declarer. A third H was ruffed and over-ruffed, then declarer lost the plot and lost another trick for -2.

Discussing the hand afterwards whilst I was basking in unaccustomed glory for my H8 switch, MC kindly pointed out that at that stage in the play, a small H was the only lead to allow declarer to make the contract! With friends like these

Despite the 14-6 loss we had 59 VPs and with the other teams locked around the average 50, a welcome win. This means we qualify automatically for next year's final.