

Gloucestershire 14 Jan 24

Team line up and results were:

A Team Won 15-5

Alan Wilson and Nick Smith

Aleks Lishkov and Ian Angus

Diana Nettleton and Ollie Burgess

Jon Green and Tom Rainforth

B Team Won 19-1

Abbey Smith and Rob Procter

Chris Wilson and Matthew Covill

Christopher Whitehouse and Mary-Ann Sheehy

Gillian Lonsdale and Nigel Wilkes

C Team Lost 4-16

Amr El-Kashev and Martin Illingworth

Finn Clark and Stuart Forsyth

Krys Kazmierczak and Sandra Nicholson

Malcolm Currie and Peter Litchfield

The pairs with cross-imps over +0.5 were:

Abbey & Rob	1.67
Alan & Nick	1.24
Nigel & Gillian	1.07
Diana & Ollie	0.73
Matthew & Chris	0.66

The county is now well placed in all divisions.

Thanks to all who played and to those who've contributed comments.

MC and I have a strict partnership agreement to the effect that on the morning of county matches we each have at least 3 Shredded Wheat for breakfast, each of which entitles us to overbid on one hand. How successful is this strategy? Please form your own conclusions by the end of the commentary.

Board 1		♠ A2	
Dealer N		♥ QJ4	
None Vul		♦ KQ5	
		♣ KQ932	
♠ QJ9			♠ 63
♥ K105			♥ 973
♦ A962			♦ J10873
♣ A86			♣ J107
		♠ K108754	
		♥ A862	
		♦ 4	
		♣ 54	

Nick commented:

We got 4S played by the 'wrong' hand North, and I say that not just because Alan is N! (Editor's note: Nick has often seen Alan as declarer though!) However E failed to find the necessary H lead, preferring DJ. West rose with DA and played a C back, hoping to give our AW a choice. But CK held so Alan could cash SA, DK for a club pitch, and finesse S7, later conceding one H. 10 tricks safely gathered. On a H lead from E, the defence gets a trick in each suit.

Rob:

After 1N (strong) – 2H – 2S – 3H – 3N should South pass? Doesn't 3NT end all auctions? It did for Hamman, so that should be good enough for the rest of us. But not on this occasion as our opponent chose 4S.

3NT would have been straightforward, but 4S was a different matter.

I ducked Abbey's lead of the jack of clubs, knowing that if I took the ace I would also have to cash the diamond ace before the singleton diamond got discarded on a top club. So declarer won and cashed the spade ace followed by a small spade towards table. If he plays king and another I am end-played and the contract will scrape home, but fortunately he played the ten and I was able to cash my two minor suit aces and exit with my last trump locking him in dummy and guaranteeing that I would make the heart king as the setting trick. Double dummy it requires a heart lead to assure the defence of always defeating the contract but no-one found this. But 1-0 to Hamman.

Chris Wil: As South I decided I knew much better than the mighty Bob and pressed on to 4S. After the DJ lead and defence cashing 2 Aces there were 10 tricks for Matthew.

Christopher & Mary-Ann were unlucky to be the only pair to receive the killer H7 lead.

4S made at 6 tables.

Board 3		♠ AQJ1074	
Dealer S		♥ 4	
EW Vul		♦ 643	
		♣ J96	
♠ K98652	♠ 3		
♥ 8	♥ AKQJ5		
♦ K92	♦ A107		
♣ K82	♣ A754		
		♠ —	
		♥ 1097632	
		♦ QJ85	
		♣ Q103	

We had some fun on this one. My 2D opener as South showed a weak 2 in a major. Normally we need a better suit than this, but at green with the extra shape I was very happy to bid. North's 2H was pass / correct and East decided he knew exactly what was going on when he ventured 4H. Matthew doubled this based on his excellent spades and knowing I had 6H and it drifted 2 off for 500.

Rob again:

South opens a multi 2D. North bids 2H passed round to you. Partner is marked with some values but will they be much help to you in spades? Having reflected for a while on the subject of a recent commitment to bidding more aggressively (Editor's note – try Shredded Wheat) I decide to risk 2S and start to think perhaps I shouldn't have done when I saw 3NT from Abbey. Remembering Hamman and board 1, I can just reflect that I am pleased it is Abbey playing it and not me. But then I see a small diamond lead and partner's hand! When the first trick is won cheaply that is nine solid tricks, ten when the clubs break.

What would you have bid over 2D P 2H? Pass waiting for the opener to show his spade weak 2 seems eminently sensible. So I guess that is why my hand has to protect on meagre values. Oh, and by the way 2-0 to Hamman.

Finn:

An amazing range of results. There were three doubled spade contracts, two by West and one by North. (None of them brought joy to anyone except the defenders.) Also a truly shocking 5C by East, that outrageously and absurdly succeeded.

I held the West hand. Firstly, if South opens 2H, on normal systems it must be wrong to overcall 2S. (Weak overcalls of strong bids and strong overcalls of weak bids. You have a nine-count with revolting spades.) If you do decide to overcall 2S, though, don't then make your mistake even worse by pulling partner's 3NT to 4S. (A certain kind of player might do so in an attempt to "catch up" for their previous incorrect bid, but that argument is usually wrong. If you thought the hand was worth a 2S overcall, stand by your earlier judgement and trust partner's bid - Pass.)

Alan & Nick

Nick: I opened a Multi 2D and West bid an innocent 2S - well, he does have a 6-card suit! East has an obvious 3N call but bid 4S instead for some reason. Alan decided he could 'safely' axe that one wrong! E must surely get the message and remove to 4N which, bizarrely, cannot be beaten; the S hand is endplayed (to a degree) on the opening lead. Say I lead H10; declarer needs to duck the 1st or 2nd round of clubs. He *might* get away with CK then CA against some oppos but I'd be pitching the Q under the ace, so N can win the 3rd C and switch to a small D, thereby wrecking the entries. That's no good if declarer ducks the 2nd C to N. He runs the D return to J and ace, crosses to CA and runs the H suit, throwing S in with H10 to lead away from DQ. Not sure how many 4NXX= (as it surely would have been) scores?!

As it was, E passed out 4SX (just bizarre), and our Alan led a H. Declarer won on table, led a trump and, when I showed out, uttered a slightly unbridge-like series of exclamations. He needed to avoid playing a trump to get out for two off but now all roads lead to 3 off.

Alan: It is a curious hand in a way because any of S, W or N might potentially open a multi. In fact, I had already decided that if the auction came round to me with 2 passes that I would open 3S rather than 2S – routine in 3rd seat NV, I think. As some other auctions showed, opening 3S can actually be safer than opening 2S! Over 3S East is a bit short of space, and I sympathise with a choice of 4H. Over 2S there is more room, and East can double first before bidding hearts. West, of course, will pass this double....

5 pairs reached the making 3N spot with 3 penalty results in 4M-X yielding 500, 800 and 1100.

Board 4 Dealer W All Vul	♠ A6	
	♥ A5	
	♦ A10843	
	♣ Q1095	
	♠ KQJ54	♠ 92
	♥ Q1072	♥ K963
	♦ 76	♦ J9
	♣ 43	♣ AJ872
	♠ 10873	
	♥ J84	
	♦ KQ52	
	♣ K6	

Nick: Suitably encouraged, we bid to a pretty thin 3N on #4 and Ron Davis found C8 to present Alan with 9 tricks and another 9 X-IMPs.

Ollie & Diana also found this spot and made on the same lead.

Well done both pairs.

Board 6
Dealer E
EW Vul

	♠ A65	
	♥ A87654	
	♦ AK9	
	♣ K	
♠ 102		♠ J874
♥ KJ109		♥ 3
♦ Q1043		♦ J852
♣ A72		♣ QJ103
	♠ KQ93	
	♥ Q2	
	♦ 76	
	♣ 98654	

Only 1 pair made a contract here, Stuart & Finn's oppos making 11 tricks in 3S.

We found our way to an off-centre 3N which got what it deserved for -200. After 1H – 1S Matthew chose 2N (18-19) which I raised to 3.

Peter commented:

N has a tricky hand. Bidding goes P-P-P-1H P-1S-P. I want to show my 18 points. I don't think my H suit is good enough to say 3H so I bid 3D partner bids 3H and I go to the impossible to make 4H along with 2/3 of the room most of whom have either bid 3H or 3D. However in a comedy of errors I was given the chance to make it.

E led the QC and W ducked his ace (error 1) letting my singleton K make. I led a H to the Q losing to the KH. W played the AC which I ruffed. On the AH E discarded the 10C (error 2)! I led a S to the Q and played 9C E played the 7C. I am thinking that E can't possibly have another C since they can see that if they discard the 10 I can set up dummies clubs by ruffing. So I think W has ducked and I discarded 9D (error 3). If I ruff dummy's C are good.

Board 7
Dealer S
All Vul

	♠ K105	
	♥ AJ63	
	♦ K7542	
	♣ 3	
♠ Q4		♠ 73
♥ Q10872		♥ K9
♦ 98		♦ AQ3
♣ AJ108		♣ K96542
	♠ AJ9862	
	♥ 54	
	♦ J106	
	♣ Q7	

Matthew remembered his Shredded Wheat, so after I'd shown a weak 2S with 8-9 he punted 4S played by North, which went the expected -1. To be fair he did ponder before bidding it, perhaps wondering if he was worth a slam try? I'm awarding 4S an exceptional 2 S-Ws.

Board 8
Dealer W
None Vul

	♠ 543	
	♥ AQJ84	
	♦ K9	
	♣ AJ9	
♠ KQ10982		♠ A76
♥ 6		♥ 93
♦ AQ4		♦ J763
♣ 1087		♣ 6542
	♠ J	
	♥ K10752	
	♦ 10852	
	♣ KQ3	

Finn

West opens 1S, North overcalls 2H, East raises to 2S and South jumps to 4H. West now bids 4S. No one's vulnerable.

You're North. Should you push on to 5H or not? The key factor is your three small spades, which on this auction means partner must have a singleton or void in the opponents' suit.

As it happens, eleven tricks are trivial and 5H is the winning bid.

Chris Wil: At our table it went

1S – 2H – 2S – 4H

4S – P - P - 5H (CW awarded 0.5 S-Ws)

Board 9
Dealer N
EW Vul

	♠ 1054	
	♥ A	
	♦ K8752	
	♣ A732	
♠ KQ83		♠ A76
♥ J4		♥ Q1087652
♦ A109		♦ Q6
♣ 8654		♣ 9
	♠ J92	
	♥ K93	
	♦ J43	
	♣ KQJ10	

Our auction was 1D – 3H – 3N (another 0.5 S-Ws)

HJ to Ace, C to King then D to King.

D to Q then East cleared the Hs. I exited with my last D East throwing S6 (rev.att.). Anyone for H8?

Then time stood still, was I going to make it or go 6 off?

Eventually West led a club and I could claim a fortunate 9 tricks.

Board 13
Dealer N
All Vul

	♠ J96	
	♥ Q84	
	♦ K942	
	♣ J105	
♠ K10		♠ A8753
♥ AK10532		♥ 9
♦ J		♦ 85
♣ Q876		♣ AK943
	♠ Q42	
	♥ J76	
	♦ AQ10763	
	♣ 2	

With the help of no bidding from us, at our table it went

1S – 2H

3C – 3H

4C – 6C

A 2D overcall from me may have helped the cause, but when Matthew supports my D, it may become clear to oppos that playing with a 30-point deck.

Only us and Martin / Amr were unfortunate to face a 6C contract.

Jon:

1S – (2D) - 2H – (3D)

P – P – X – P

4C – P - 5C

We probably should have got to slam here though it is a perfect fit. After 4C from Tom, 4D initially choice of games then 5C (now slam try) is better from me and with three key cards and fifth club Tom would bid six. The opponents bidding also helps suggesting that perfect fit.

Finn:

Old-fashioned Acol players sitting East would open 1C and have a huge advantage. (5-5 in the black suits = open clubs and then rebid spades twice.) The bidding after that start might continue 1H 1S 2D (fourth suit forcing) 2S (5-5 in the blacks) 4C (Minorwood if you're playing it... four of an agreed minor is Blackwood-like) 4H (or whatever response shows 0/3 in your system) 6C.

However, 1C on the East hand appears to be out of fashion. 1S was the normal opening, so I'll give the auction Stuart and I had.

1S (5-card majors) 2H (game-forcing) 2S 3C 5C slow pass.

What should the 5C bid mean? Most pairs probably won't have discussed this particular auction.

Should it show or deny extra values in an auction that's already game-forcing? 4C gives the partnership more room to explore than 5C, after all. Whatever you assume, West now has to decide immediately whether to play in game or slam. Your hand is lovely. You have a singleton diamond and a gorgeous side-suit in hearts, but on the other hand you're missing four key cards (including the trump AK) and your clubs are nothing to write home about.

I'd suggest that the 5C jump should show significant extras of some kind or other. (No point getting too prescriptive. There's not much room for delicacy by this point.) If you start insisting that all minimum opening hands should leap to 5C in this auction instead of only raising to 4C, you'll just create all kinds of trouble for yourself. The jump could be the actual East hand (which crucially has all its points in key cards), or a good 16-count, or anything along those lines. If we go with that assumption, 6C starts looking like a good gamble. It can't be denied that it's a gamble, but it's one worth taking. Especially at IMP scoring with a vulnerable slam bonus.

Board 16
Dealer W
EW Vul

	♠ Q	
	♥ KJ1062	
	♦ 10854	
	♣ A108	
♠ KJ92		♠ A10843
♥ 9		♥ A743
♦ A9		♦ 76
♣ KQ7542		♣ J9
	♠ 765	
	♥ Q85	
	♦ KQJ32	
	♣ 63	

Diana:

1C – 1H – 1S – 3D

4H – 5D – X

This was quite a useful use of the fit jump at the 3 level showing decent 3 card support and a good 5-card side suit (note all values are in both suits) and we are green so looking for sacrifice.

Went for -500 but an extra 4 imps and pressure on the opps.

At all other tables E-W were allowed to play in 4S making. Well done D & O.

Board 17
Dealer N
None Vul

	♠ 106	
	♥ KJ102	
	♦ Q9543	
	♣ 108	
♠ KQ8532		♠ 94
♥ 983		♥ Q6
♦ 8		♦ J6
♣ A32		♣ QJ97654
	♠ AJ7	
	♥ A754	
	♦ AK1072	
	♣ K	

Making games or 5C X -2 was the norm here. 2 Glous Souths were allowed to make 3N after East was silent.

Board 19
Dealer S
EW Vul

♠ J85	♠ A72	♠ Q94
♥ AQJ7	♥ K64	♥ 9853
♦ K732	♦ J10985	♦ A64
♣ J2	♣ K8	♣ Q54
	♠ K1063	
	♥ 102	
	♦ Q	
	♣ A109763	

Diana:

We have the option to double as a passed hand to show a hand with 5minor and 4Major...which I did on this hand. LHO opened a weak NT, and as our style is to try not to let opps play in 1NT, I doubled in the pass out seat and Ollie did well to convert this to a penalty...not to say I wasn't a bit anxious but the worst damage was likely to be minus 180, but in the end it was 2 off for plus 500 and gained a few imps for the team.

Chris Wil - Nice understanding – worth adding to your armoury.

Board 20
Dealer W
All Vul

♠ J1076	♠ AK983	♠ 5
♥ K5	♥ 86	♥ AQ97432
♦ J76	♦ A104	♦ K98
♣ Q754	♣ 1082	♣ A3
	♠ Q42	
	♥ J10	
	♦ Q532	
	♣ KJ96	

Jon:

The auction is interesting. I would have opened the North hand. After 1H - 1S the auction is not clear cut but it proceeded 3H – 3N – 4H.

I bid 3NT as I thought nine tricks may be easier than ten and in practice I think I would prefer to be in 3NT but it is close and 4H gave Tom the opportunity to shine in the play!

South led the D2 and North won the Ace, cashed a top spade, and switched back to diamonds. Tom could then run hearts ruffing a spade on route and end play South in diamonds for the tenth trick in clubs. South may have been better to bare the CK as Tom may then play him for Queen third rather than Queen fourth in diamonds (providing North discards spades to support this view). North does no better to switch to a club as then the end play works in reverse in the minors. However, not cashing a top spade at trick two or playing D10 at trick one (neither so easy!) looks better for the defence.

Abbey & Rob were also in 4H making.

Board 22
Dealer E
EW Vul

♠ A1095	♠ Q763	♠ KJ82
♥ A432	♥ J7	♥ KQ
♦ AK3	♦ 754	♦ QJ106
♣ A4	♣ 9532	♣ K107
	♠ 4	
	♥ 109865	
	♦ 982	
	♣ QJ86	

We were fortunate in that oppos had a silly auction where East misunderstood a Baron 2N reply by W to the opening 1D. They languished in 4N when natural bidding takes you to 6S / 6N comfortably.

Board 23
Dealer S
All Vul

♠ —	♠ J64	♠ AK10985
♥ 10965	♥ AKJ87	♥ Q4
♦ AQ1094	♦ 876	♦ 3
♣ A543	♣ 96	♣ KQ107
	♠ Q732	
	♥ 32	
	♦ KJ52	
	♣ J82	

Only 2 pairs found the making 3N. Well done Sandra and Krys.
 The most common result was 5C -1.

Jon: The bidding and play was of note. Debatable whether I should open the West cards. Useful to know your default with minimum hands in fourth suit forcing auctions (I was trying to slow the auction down and willing to treat diamonds as six but 2NT may be better than 3D). North cashed two top hearts (reverse count from South but note no 1H overcall from North so I did not read this) then switched to the D8 to the J and Q. Trump entries are awkward to establish either spades or diamonds. I tried to set up spades by playing a club to the King then two top spades and a ruff, club to the ten (if holds, spade ruff high, ruff a diamond and draw last trump)

Chris Wil: At our table oppos had a confused auction where E had shown spades with either a strong hand or spades + clubs. West used a 'Minorwood' 4C (new one on me) and the 5C reply showed 2KCs + void or maybe confirmed he had clubs, who knows. Anyway, they were lucky to end up in a fit, even though it goes -1.

Board 24
Dealer W
None Vul

♠ A93	♠ KQ4	♠ J765
♥ A53	♥ 107	♥ 98
♦ 754	♦ AKJ8	♦ Q10932
♣ AK95	♣ QJ108	♣ 63
	♠ 1082	
	♥ KQJ642	
	♦ 6	
	♣ 742	

We had an auction where we needed to be holding each-other's hand (in the bridge sense I mean). It went:

1C – 1N – P – 2D

P – 2H – P – 3H

P – 3N

MC thought I should pass 2H as bidding on uses up a whole S-W. I thought just worth it at teams as I have 5 tricks and all finesses through W should be working.

I thought MC should pass my invitational 3H. However, I tend to lose these arguments – just like being at home!

Alan: Maybe I should consider the shredded wheat diet, too. West opened 1N (15-17), which made my choice (as North) a little tricky. I decided there was no sensible bid, so passed. This went round to Nick who decided to protect with 2D (single-suited with a major). What should I do now with my 16-count? Having skipped the S-W, I decided 2H was enough! If partner had corrected to spades then I would have invited, but as it was I was able to play comfortably at the 2-level.

Board 25
Dealer N
EW Vul

♠ J6	♠ AK952	♠ 4
♥ A964	♥ QJ2	♥ K1085
♦ 532	♦ 109	♦ 74
♣ J982	♣ Q53	♣ AK10764
	♠ Q10873	
	♥ 73	
	♦ AKQJ86	
	♣ –	

This was the big board. We went

1S – 2C – 3D – P

3N – P – 5C – P

5S – P – 6S

My 3D was a fit jump and MC's 3N was discouraging. We've had Exclusion Key-Card on the card for several years without it ever coming up and I couldn't resist using it. 5S showed 2 without SQ.

Deciding that worrying about 2 cashing honours being missing was for wimps, I ventured 6S (using another whole S-W). Fortunately, East led a top club so MC was claiming 13 in short order. Armed with the info that I was void in clubs and surely had a very good D suit for my drive to 6S, perhaps should get East to the winning H lead. Perhaps a better tactic from me was to punt 6S over 3N which might increase the chance of a C lead. Again, who knows?

Christopher: It was demoralising to have a disciplined auction to 5S on board 25: 1S – (2C) – 4C(*) – (P) – 4S – (P) – 5C – (P) – 5S (denying a first- or second-round control in diamonds or hearts) – pass – only to discover that every declarer in slam has made it apart from the one who mis-clicked.

At Nigel and Gillian's table N-S got to the unlikely spot of 7S after oppos had a confused and misleading auction. CA was led. After drawing trumps declarer miss-clicked to lead QH and was -100 instead of + 1510. Justice was done. Phew!

Board 27		♠ KQJ6	
Dealer S		♥ AJ743	
None Vul		♦ 8642	
		♣ –	
♠ A	♠ 8743		
♥ Q865	♥ 9		
♦ 75	♦ KJ109		
♣ AQJ986	♣ 10532		
	♠ 10952		
	♥ K102		
	♦ AQ3		
	♣ K74		

Peter: Bidding goes 1C-P-1H-P 1NT-2C My hand is a textbook example for New Minor Forcing which we play rather than checkback. But what happens in the undiscussed event when the opposition bids 2C? I thought NMF would still be on. Partner didn't and passed 2D which made but so did 4H or 4S. What do others think?

Christopher:

S	W	N	E
1C (2+)	P	1H	P
1NT	2C	2S	3C
3S	P	4H	All pass

I was North. 4H was not without risk as partner was liable to read me as 6-4, but I felt 4H might play better than 4S if we had a 5-3 fit since my high trumps could be burned through too quickly in 4S if I was forced in clubs. East led C2, which I ruffed. Prospects looked fairly bleak if DK was wrong, so I finessed DQ straightaway and then ruffed another club, west putting in the queen. Next a diamond to the ace, followed by a third round of diamonds. Happily, west decided I was trying to score DK before the rats got at it, ruffed in, and was now toast. After cashing SA, he tabled CA but I could afford to ruff and, having reversed the dummy, draw two rounds of trumps and play spades until the cows came home.

Matthew had a difficult decision to make in the play of 4H.

West had shown good values and a good club suit. He then turned up with 4H. In the end game, MC must decide whether to finesse DK or play DAQ to throw in West to lead away from CA. Unfortunately, he played for the throw in.