

Oxfordshire vs Staffordshire

1. Summary

A team	Alan & Nick Rob & Mike Alex & Ian Liza & Nigel	9-11 
B team	Chris & John Steve & Claire Christopher & Mary-Ann Michiel & Peter	15-5 
C team	Alastair & Lorna John & Helen Gillian & Nigel David & David	15-5 

2. Clap-o-meter



Congratulations to the following top scoring pairs (x-imps in own team/through all three):

- Alastair and Lorna (+38/+53)
- David and David (+40/+15)
- Chris and John (+42/+34)
- Steve and Claire (+22/+17)
- Liza and Nigel (+17/+33)



3. Gold stars

Here we mention pairs/individuals who've done great things (and have let us know in their comments as we are not fortune-tellers).

- Claire McDonagh for saving the day and stepping in to play in the B team last minute
- Mary-Ann and Christopher for bidding and making 4H on board 11 (see page 3)
- Alastair and Lorna for bidding and making 3NT on board 29 (see page 4)
- Alan and Nick; Mary-Ann and Christopher for bidding and making a slam missed by at least one of the opposition's pairs (on board 12, see page 8)
- Liza and Nigel for the comment about light openings (open hands with hearts but not hands with spades, page 12)

4. BEST and WORST boards

- Most pairs played in 3nt making their contracts with no or one overtrick (despite there being 10 tricks from the top). Staffs bid and made the 6c slam once, whereas both Oxon pairs who bid the slam went two off. The winning line is to ruff just one spade as the lack of entries to hand implies that declarer might struggle even with a 3-2 trump break.

17

♠ J104
♥ Q985
♦ 63
♣ 6543

Dlr: N
Vul: None

♠ A
♥ AK64
♦ 109752
♣ KJ8

♠ KQ865
♥ 73
♦ K
♣ AQ1072

3
15 14
8

♠ 9732
♥ J102
♦ AQJ84
♣ 9

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	6	1	3	5	4
W	6	1	3	5	4

- We did, however, shine on board 22 where East had to appreciate (but not too much) their red suit two loser powerhouse. Two games undoubled and two doubled making for Oxfordshire and only one for Staffs. Some sensible folks rebid 3d after getting rescued by the protective double in the passout seat, and their partners felt they couldn't take that further. One should consider that a simple 2d rebid would have shown extra values (why bid when partner could have a zero count ...) so a jump rebid is close to game forcing. Three card support and a singleton seems enough to raise to 4d and then game will be reached. That being said, game is not laydown especially if hearts are breaking badly and opps attack trumps.

22

Dir: E
Vul: E-W

♠ AQ63
♥ 105
♦ A6
♣ KQJ87


♠ J109754
♥ 4
♦ 1087
♣ 954

♠ KQJ763
♥ KQJ542
♦ KQJ542
♣ A

♠ K82
♥ A982
♦ 93
♣ 10632

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	4	-	-	1	1
S	4	-	-	1	1
E	-	5	4	-	-
W	-	5	4	-	-

16
1 16
7



5. Declarer play corner

- Several -50 scores on board 11 indicate that declarers went off in 4h (or 4s where the two spade losers are inevitable). How should one declare 4h (assuming a weak NT opening and a K of diamonds lead)? We know North has between 5 and 7 points, and at least one club honor since South didn't lead from an AK-headed suit. Thus, South is pretty much marked with the A of spades. We need to lead spades early to establish the suit before the defenders start forcing us with diamonds so declarer can simply lead a spade towards dummy at trick two.

11

Dir: S
Vul: None

♠ Q9
♥ J4
♦ 8652
♣ K9742

♠ KJ10854
♥ KQ97
♦ 7
♣ 65

♠ 32
♥ A1083
♦ AJ94
♣ QJ10

♠ A76
♥ 652
♦ KQ103
♣ A83

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	2	-	-	-
S	-	2	-	-	-
E	-	-	4	3	-
W	-	-	4	3	-

6
9 12
13



A gold star to Mary-Ann and Christopher for being the only pair to bid and make 4H

- The next board is 16 where a lot of pairs ended up in 4s. How should one declare it on the Q of clubs lead?

16		♠ A9743		<i>Dir: W</i>	
		♥ 1076		<i>Vul: E-W</i>	
♠ A8654		♣ QJ542		♠ KQ93	
♥ KJ5				♥ Q6	
♦ QJ				♦ A543	
♣ A87				♣ 963	
7		♠ J1072		♣♦♥♠NT	
15 11		♥ 1082		N 1 - 2 - -	
7		♦ K982		S 1 - 2 - -	
		♣ K10		E - - - 2 1	
				W - - - 2 1	

Assuming we can bring in the trumps, we have to lose 1 heart and 2 clubs (if they are not blocked) plus potentially a diamond. We need to play the spades carefully, if they break 4-0 and North has JTxx, we must start with the A in hand, and lead twice towards the KQ9 in dummy. So, on a club lead, we start by taking the A of clubs (ducking only helps if clubs are 5-2 with the A of hearts in the short club hand), and playing the A of spades – if North turns up with 4, we play the Q of diamonds (might not have enough time to do it later) – assuming North covers, we go back to hand with a diamond and lead the first spade towards the K in dummy. Low heart (not the Q as they could duck) and hopefully South having the A of hearts will be enough to reach the W hand in order to pick up the trumps. Of course, in the actual deal, once North shows out in trumps, it is damage mitigation time. Luckily, the club blockage implies we will end up with 9 tricks (they can hold it to 8 only on a small club lead). The third club can be discarded on the A of diamonds or on the K of hearts.

- Finally, we look at board 29 where only one pair managed to (bid and) make 3NT.

29		♠ 9		<i>Dir: N</i>	
		♥ 97		<i>Vul: Both</i>	
♦ K1073		♣ J87542		♠ Q1075	
♠ K432				♥ KJ3	
♥ A82				♦ QJ	
♦ 9865				♣ AK109	
♣ Q6					
4		♠ AJ86		♣♦♥♠NT	
9 16		♥ Q10654		N - - 1 - -	
11		♦ A42		S - - 1 - -	
		♣ 3		E 1 - - 2 2	
				W - - - 2 1	

Assuming a 1NT opening by East (15-17) and possibly (a very risky) bid showing both majors, EW could

end up in a 3NT contract played by East. This goes off easily on a diamond lead (or even a club) but can be made on a spade or a heart lead. A few declarers faced a fourth highest heart lead. A quick trick count gives us 1 spade, 3 hearts and (potentially but very likely) 4 club tricks. So we need a 9th trick from the diamond suit or, alternatively, a spade endplay (since we have the T). How should declarer proceed? A diamond exit seems reasonable (T could drop doubleton) or the defenders could get confused and do something helpful. Or, a simple spade towards the K (which we know South must duck as otherwise we win 2 spade tricks). Let's start with a spade to the K, and now is the time to eliminate South's diamond cards by leading a diamond towards the QJ. Regardless who wins the diamond, they will try to clear the hearts. We must win with the K and continue the attack in diamonds. If North won the first diamond, the hearts will be cleared by now but North has no spade or heart left, so we simply play the 9 of diamonds establishing the 8 while we can still reach dummy with the Q of clubs. If South won the first diamond, and played a heart, North has no heart or spade when in with the K of diamonds, thus he has to exit a club which we win with the Q in dummy. We play the 9 of diamonds (remember we won the heart with the K, not with the A so we still have that as an entry) and establish the diamond trick. A good lesson to learn from that is to avoid overcalling a strong NT with mediocre hands as you'll either be doubled or, alternatively, tell declarer how to play the hand.



A gold star to Alastair and Lorna for being the only pair to bid and make 3NT

6. Defence corner

- Board 1 presented most defenders with a choice of what to do at trick 3 against a 3NT contract.

1	♠ 10732	<i>Dir: N</i> <i>Vul: None</i>																														
	♥ KJ3																															
	♦ A7654																															
	♣ 8																															
♠ J954	♠ AQ																															
♥ AQ94	♥ 85																															
♦ Q8	♦ 102																															
♣ K65	♣ AQJ9432																															
	♠ K86																															
8	♥ 10762																															
12 13	♦ KJ93																															
7	♣ 107																															
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	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT																											
N	-	3	1	1	-																											
S	-	3	1	1	-																											
E	4	-	-	-	2																											
W	4	-	-	-	2																											

The auction that we can anticipate is 1c – 1h – 2c – 3nt. Let's face North's dilemma once a diamond is led (5 would be the fourth highest), South wins with the K and plays the J of diamonds back (the correct return smothering the T if North has led from Axxx). There are two options – duck or win. If we duck, we hope that partner has only 3 diamonds and therefore declarer has Qxx. If we win, we hope that

partner has 4 diamonds. For the duck to be successful, we require that declarer not have 8 remaining tricks from the other suits – so considering the A of spades in dummy and the 7 clubs, we are asking South to have the K of clubs. From the auction, West has shown a decent hand to bid game and therefore 11+ points. With the lower range he could invite with 2nt unless he has a supporting card in clubs. The conclusion is that, if W doesn't have the K of clubs, he will have all remaining high cards. He's bid hearts first so we can give him at most 4 spades (KJxx), and therefore 4 spade tricks, one diamond, one club and one heart, making his hand look like this:

KJxx AQxx Qxx xx or a slightly worse version KJx AQxx Qxx xxx (now he only has 3 spade tricks)

Considering there is pretty much a unique hand for which ducking the diamond wins, I think we should win the A of diamonds and continue the suit. Finally, we note that an alternative auction (not implausible) in which East jumps to 3c on the rebid presents much bigger problems for the defence. Now W could bid 3NT on many low HCP hands with stops in the other suits hoping that E is up to strength. Ducking the diamond has more merit there as South could have substantial holdings in the other suits and is likely to have the K of clubs as well.

- We continue with board 4 where an endplay forces the defenders to open a suit and give a vital trick away to the opposition. There is, however, a neat trick which puts declarer on a guess.

4	♠ 98 ♥ J43 ♦ 984 ♣ KQ542	D V
♠ KJ53 ♥ K962 ♦ 1065 ♣ 108	♠ AQ76 ♥ A107 ♦ AK73 ♣ 76	
6	♠ 1042 ♥ Q85 ♦ QJ2 ♣ AJ93	N S E W
7 17		
10		

Assuming EW are in a 4s contract and a top club is led, there is little the defenders can do to stop the elimination of the hand – declarer plays a club when next in hand and takes three rounds of spades, and three rounds of diamonds from the top. South is forced to win this trick (unblocking Q and then J will present declarer with 4 diamond tricks, 2 hearts and 4 spades), and has to lead a heart! Now comes the interesting part – South should lead the Q of hearts to give declarer the losing option of winning with the A and then finessing South for the J. If South exits a small heart, declarer simply lets it run to the J and A, and then has no other choice but to finesse South for the Q (or play North for QJ blank which is not very likely). By the way, the alternative Q of diamonds or a small trump leads all result in 10 tricks too as South cannot avoid the endplay.

- The last hand in our defence rubric features a 3NT contract and we hold a suit headed by the AKQ. Has Christmas arrived (i.e. we take the first 5 tricks) or do we need to find a cunning move?

10		♠ AQ762	<i>Dir: E</i> <i>Vul: Both</i>																															
		♥ 86																																
		♦ A98632																																
		♣																																
♠ K98			♠ 1054																															
♥ AKQ43			♥ 109																															
♦ QJ7			♦ 105																															
♣ 85			♣ A96432																															
	10	♠ J3	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>♣</th> <th>♦</th> <th>♥</th> <th>♠</th> <th>NT</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>N</td> <td>1</td> <td>3</td> <td>1</td> <td>3</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>S</td> <td>1</td> <td>3</td> <td>1</td> <td>3</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>E</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>W</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	N	1	3	1	3	-	S	1	3	1	3	1	E	-	-	-	-	-	W	-	-	-	-	-
	♣	♦			♥	♠	NT																											
N	1	3			1	3	-																											
S	1	3			1	3	1																											
E	-	-	-	-	-																													
W	-	-	-	-	-																													
	15	♥ J752																																
	4	♦ K4																																
	11	♣ KQJ107																																

The auction proceeds 1C – (1H) – 1S – (pass) – 1NT (12-14) and then some sequence of bids results in a 3NT contract played by South. One can comment on the auction (does S have an opening and should they rebid 1NT – I guess the suit quality of the club suit and the fact that opps are put in defensive bidding mode justify the upgrade ...). What should we lead against 3NT from the West hand? A small heart will (or might) give away a trick but once we get in, the run of the hearts will set the contract one off. So we should weigh in the chances of declarer having 8 tricks elsewhere. We stop the diamonds so give declarer two tricks there, the K of spades is likely to be badly placed for us but the presence of the 9 and 8 implies we only need partner to hold the T or J to give us a trick there. Finally, we are short in clubs so partner's holding there will constitute a stop. All of these point towards leading a small heart in which case we will emerge with 5 or 6 defensive tricks and there will be no story to tell. Let's assume W leads three rounds of hearts (hoping for the best) and then a fourth one. South wins the trick and leads the K of clubs. What should E do? If he wins that club, he will be giving declarer a chance to make the contract. In fact, E should duck the first 3 top clubs played from South to have a chance of defeating it! Now, that would be a top class defence! Why does declarer succeed if East wins the first club? East leads back a diamond (best) and South plays A of diamonds, K of diamonds and finishes off the three clubs. East must guard the 9 of clubs and therefore must have come down to a doubleton spade before the last top club is cashed by South. West must now guard both the third K of spades and the diamond and he gets squeezed on the lead of the last club. If he pitches a spade, declarer keeps AQx of spades in dummy and if he pitches a diamond, declarer keeps AQ of spades and the 13th diamond.

7. Bidding corner

- We start by looking at board 12 where a slam was missed by most pairs.

12	♠ A654	<i>Dlr: W</i>	
	♥ 962	<i>Vul: N-S</i>	
	♦ A108		
	♣ 875		
♠ KQ87		♠ J103	
♥ AKJ73		♥ Q1054	
♦ 65		♦	
♣ 102		♣ AKQJ64	
	♠ 92		
8	♥ 8		
13	♦ KQJ97432		
6	♣ 93		

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	3	-	-	-
S	-	3	-	-	-
E	6	-	6	5	-
W	6	-	6	5	-



A gold star to Alan/Nick and Mary-Ann/Christopher for being the only Oxon pairs to bid and make the slam

I presume most Wests started with 1H and East shows either the clubs or some sort of a good or game forcing raise in hearts, South might or might not interfere in diamonds (vulnerability ...). Mary-Ann and Christopher produced the following auction:

1H – 2NT (good raise)

4H (accept, <15) – 5C (cue bid)

5H (denies D cue) – 6H (partner must have good spades now as he can't have clubs and diamonds)

The other approach (introducing the source of tricks first) which worked for Alan and Nick was:

1H – (Pass) – 2C – (2D!)

X – (3D) – 4D – (Pass)

4H – (Pass) – 5H – (Pass)

6H

The main features of this auction are the double by West and the 5H bid by East. Considering the 4D cue on the previous round, 5H would ask partner to go to slam with good hearts and partner is happy to oblige holding AKJxx.

One might wonder why I didn't mention a diamond splinter as a possible approach – well, a diamond splinter doesn't bring across the source of tricks, nor leaves enough space for exploration (typically 4D). Starting with the good raise bid (2NT) or introducing the clubs (2C) is much more likely to lead to the desired outcome. Finally, the South hands should really be a lot more active in the bidding – 2D or even 3D are very cautious and leave a lot of space for constructive bidding by the opps.

- Another slam deal – board 17. We featured this in our WORST board of the match rubric as the two Oxon pairs that bid the slam went off. And the only Staffs pair that bid it, made 12 tricks.

17

Dir: N
Vul: None

♠ J104
♥ Q985
♦ 63
♣ 6543

♠ A
♥ AK64
♦ 109752
♣ KJ8

♠ KQ865
♥ 73
♦ K
♣ AQ1072

♠ 9732
♥ J102
♦ AQJ84
♣ 9

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	6	1	3	5	4
W	6	1	3	5	4

3
15 14
8

Modern systems such as 2/1 have no trouble on this deal. A sample auction:

1S – 2D

3C – 3H!

4C – 4H!

4NT – 5D

6C

Note how the game forcing nature of the 2D bid allows both parties to show their shape without concern for showing extra values.

Acol or non 2/1 systems where the 2D response could be a 9 count will be hurt by the inability to bid 3C by East (unless East is keen to upgrade his poor hand somehow – 5-5 is a great shape but no fit for diamonds and two small hearts are not prime values, not to mention the poor spade suit without intermediate cards).

The typical auction could be:

1S – 2D

2S – 3NT

Where West's values are in the unbid suits and the primary asset – the diamond suit - is poor.

- The final bidding corner hand would be one we already looked at in the declarer play section. We will look at the bidding assuming EW play ACOL (weak NT).

29	♠ 9	<i>Dir: N</i>
	♥ 97	<i>Vul: Both</i>
	♦ K1073	
	♣ J87542	
♠ K432		♠ Q1075
♥ A82		♥ KJ3
♦ 9865		♦ QJ
♣ Q6		♣ AK109
	♠ AJ86	
4	♥ Q10654	
9 16	♦ A42	
11	♣ 3	
		♣♦♥♠NT
		N - - 1 - -
		S - - 1 - -
		E 1 - - 2 2
		W - - - 2 1

A normal start to the auction would be (assuming EW play “rubbish” ACOL, in other words opening a minor with a 4 card major in hand and 15-17 points):

(Pass) – 1C – (1H) – Dbl

(Pass) - ??

What should East do now? 16 points and 4 card spade support seems to be good enough for a jump to 2S. No, we should restrain ourselves with poor controls, doubleton QJ which is not worth 3 points, and a generally very defensive hand. 1S seems to be enough here and if partner can't make a move, we will be happy to stay there. If East does jump to 2S, West has enough to bid game (A, K are good cards and the Q of clubs is a useful card for partner since he opened 1C). At our table the auction proceeded just like that with lots of thought by both opps:

(Pass) – 1C – (1H) – Dbl

(Pass) – 2S – (Pass) – 3S?

(Pass) – 4S? - ??

The 3S bid was VERY conservative and the 4S raise was more than optimistic (if we did upgrade our bad balanced defensive hand for our 2S jump, surely we no longer have any extras with which to bid game now?!). Partner has had enough of this bidding and doubled with the South hand. This is a very sound double despite helping the opps locate the missing spade honors – note that the bidding suggested that EW are stretching and the bad splits indicate the contract is going at least a couple off for a great 500 when NS can't even make a partscore. 4S is also very easy to defeat, unlike 3NT, so we had no problems collecting on this deal.

The main conclusion from this should be that we should evaluate our hands better – the presence of short honors, and queens/jacks/tens indicate a defensive hand, while aces and kings are offensive cards. A hand for East such as AQxx Kxx x KJxxx (only 13 points but good shape/controls) will produce game opposite Kxxx Axx xxxx Qx on most splits.

8. Big money

How does one win the “big money” these days? One option is to play and win the lottery but the chances of that are slim. Much more likely is to be able to get a large penalty after a not so carefully considered bid by the opposition. If we hold 5 or 6 cards in their suit, we should quickly contain our excitement and pass, allowing partner to reopen with a takeout double which we will convert for penalties. In this rubric, we will feature the one hand from the match which generated the largest total amount of penalties collected by either side.

9		♠ 2	<i>Dir: N</i>																															
		♥ Q10974			<i>Vul: E-W</i>																													
		♦ K83																																
		♣ 10642																																
♠ AK10865			♠																															
♥ 5			♥ KJ83																															
♦ QJ94			♦ A762																															
♣ A3			♣ KQJ95																															
		♠ QJ9743																																
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	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT																													
N	-	-	-	-	-																													
S	-	-	-	-	-																													
E	6	6	3	4	6																													
W	6	6	3	4	6																													

We had 5 scores of 1100, one of 800, and the bizarre 950. The latter is not 19 off at 50 points each but a doubled 3nt contract making 11 tricks – sadly, the recipient of this score was an A team Staffs pair (one might wonder how the editor knows all the details ...). All the other big scores were generated when East opens 1C and South comes in with a number of spades – typically 2S (which is a normal action, non-vulnerable with a 6 card suit, opposite a passed partner one might even consider 3S). Against one of our A team pairs, the opps came in with 1S (very cautious) and this resulted in a score of just 800. Is there any takeaway from all that? Sometimes you get punished for pre-empting but the number of times when it causes problems for the opposition and interferes with their bidding is considerable and far outweighs the occasional incident. Interestingly enough, across all 3 teams, this was a fairly flat board.

9. Top comments

In this section we will feature (somewhat humorous) comments by Oxon players about bidding, declarer play, game psychology, life in general, etc. I will not mention any names although a gold star is awarded to the comment I've judged to have the best bridge content that we can all learn from.

The comments in brackets are mostly mine.



A gold star to Nigel and Liza for pointing out Richard Pavlicek's analysis of world championship deals and the value of light openings in various circumstances (see Pavlicek's website for more details)

- Open light with hearts but not spades (*which you can bid later anyway*)
- I think on both bidding and odds I was right to duck (*the only way for opps to make their contract*)
- Partner made a weak bid but at red I was expecting quite a lot more (*hmm ... you haven't played with me obviously*)
- Opp said if they ducked and it was wrong, they would look silly, but would be less silly if they won and blocked the suit
- Should really be making everywhere but I dare say there are a few declarers losing their way (*more like 50% of the declarers judging by the results*)
- Opps got a bit too high as the cards lie (*two balanced hands, 21 points and an 8 card fit played at the 4 level, I would think they got too high even if all finesses were working*)
- Regulation -1100 after a weak 2S overcall (*not the only penalty of that size to be taken on this board by other pairs*)
- I did it all right except I had a brain-freeze and took another finesse. Partner heaved a quiet sigh (*a quiet sigh sometimes makes one feel worse than if partner were to shout out loud*)
- But I didn't know the man, and I took the statement at face value (*are you sure it was a man?*)
- Partner's dummies looked like what they'd bid with (*that's always very complimentary when I hear it from my partner*)

10. Farewell

The next county match takes place on 12th of November. Best of luck to all three teams – we are hoping for a triple WIN this time.