

County Captain Rick Hanley reflects on the first two Suffolk matches in the Eastern Counties league in 2021, and discusses a lead problem from one of them.

After a gap of well over a year, the Suffolk team played its first Realbridge matches of the new season in the Eastern Counties League on Sunday June 27th v Norfolk and on Sunday July 4th v Northants.

Unfortunately, several members of our A-team squad were unavailable for a variety of reasons. Some dislike online bridge in general or Realbridge in particular. Others prefer to do other things on summer Sundays such as participation in a walking football tournament! Sadly, our counterparts in other counties have shown less reticence and we have encountered opposition A-teams operating at full strength. The outcome has been defeats by 16-4 (Norfolk) and by 18-2 (Northants).

The picture is brighter as far as the B-team is concerned. Suffolk has many pairs who are highly competitive at B-team level. Victories were achieved by 15-5 (Norfolk) and 13-7 (Northants). Excellent cards have been produced by Helen Mason & David Mathews, by Michael Sherer & Paul Whetton, and by Cathy Rowland & Din Gudka. There have been promising debuts by John Gan & May Li and by John Pearson in a new partnership with David Willson. Pauline and Con Hanson also contributed to the win against Norfolk.

So far, the C-team has been largely populated by players with relatively limited experience of playing for the County. There have been debuts for the partnership of Sarah & Nick Farr, for Susan Nisbett, and the forthcoming match against Essex will see Bill Bethell make his debut. Despite 15-5 and 20-0 defeats, there is a lot of enthusiasm in the team and I am optimistic that results will improve as our players become more accustomed to competition at this level.

The full results and team members can be found on the Results section of the SCBA website.

Here is a tough lead problem from the first deal of the Northants match. At love all, you hold:

S Axxx
H Jxx
D 10
C KQ109X

Your partner opens the bidding with 4H, your right-hand opponent bids 4S. You bid 5H, left-hand opponent doubles and right-hand opponent ends the bidding with 6D. Quite an opening auction! *What do you lead?*

The lead at the table was KC. Was that your choice? If so, perhaps you hoped that AS would eventually provide you with an entry to cash QC. Sadly, your right-hand opponent's shape was 6 spades, 6 diamonds and a singleton club, and your left-hand opponent held AC. Declarer won the club lead and took 5 spades and 6 diamonds for plus 920. A heart or trump lead would also produce 12 tricks for declarer. However, a lead of the ace and another spade defeats the contract as partner has a singleton spade! Six spades is cold, by the way, but nobody bid it.

