

Mike Scoltock: A Personal Tribute

Peter Lee, April 2024

I was very saddened to learn of Mike Scoltock's premature death at age 64. I knew him as a friend and team mate in the Tollemache and in Surrey team events for many years. I first partnered him in 2013, and played very regularly with him in the past seven or eight years. I found him very bright and kind, and an extremely strong and thoughtful player, with whom I have had many successes. He was aware of his impending death some time before it occurred, but took it with great fortitude, trying to fit in as much bridge as possible before the inevitable, and never complaining.

He was married to Mary for 35 years and had two children, now aged 33 and 35. He read Psychology at Hull University and only a few years ago got an MSc in Taxation at Oxford University, and worked as a tax partner. He played rugby union in his younger days, and more lately acted as a referee. Indeed I remember him explaining details of the laws to me, while we watched a game on Friday night at a hotel in the Midlands prior to playing in a national bridge final.

His national successes in the last 3 years included playing in teams winning Crockfords, the Garden Cities and the National Teams League, and winning the Corwen with Jeffrey Allerton. He was also a member of Surrey's only Tollemache winning team, playing with Paul Fegarty, in 2002. Further details of his successes can be found on the Mayfield Bridge Club website.

Below, I give details of a hand he played recently in a Surrey league match, which illustrates the strength of his card reading.

Peter		
♠ K 10 8 7		
♥ K 10 3		
♦ 10 9 7		
♣ K 5 2		
Richard Fedrick		Andrew Southwell
♠ Q 6 5 3 2		♠ A J 9 4
♥ A 2	Contract	♥ J 7 5
♦ Q 5	4♥ by S	♦ J 6 4 2
♣ Q 9 8 4		♣ 10 6
Mike		
♠ -		
♥ Q 9 8 6 4		
♦ A K 8 3		
♣ A J 7 3		

In an uncontested auction at game all, Mike opened 1♥, I raised to 2♥ (showing 7-10 with 3 hearts or a weak 4 card raise), Mike made a game try with 3♣ and I bid 4♥.

After a spade lead covered all round, Mike ruffed, played a heart to the King and finessed to the now blank Ace. After a spade continuation again covered all round, Mike ruffed, played the Ace and King of diamonds and another to the 10, and East exited with his heart, Mike winning and West discarding a spade.

At trick 9, this was the position:

Peter		
♠ K 10		
♥ -		
♦ -		
♣ K 5 2		
Richard Fedrick		Andrew Southwell
♠ Q 6	Trick 9	♠ A 4
♥ -	Four more tricks	♥ -
♦ -	needed from five	♦ 6
♣ Q 9 8		♣ 10 6
Mike		
♠ -		
♥ -		
♦ 8		
♣ A J 7 3		

Mike cashed his winning diamond and West had to discard another spade to keep the blank Queen of spades and Qxx of clubs. Mike then discarded dummy's club, cashed the Ace and King of clubs, and at trick 12 played the King of spades to pin the now blank Q and make trick 13 with the 10, East having been forced to play the 9 and J earlier.

Well played indeed. I will miss you very much Mike.