

Mike signs off in style

By Tom Townsend

Dealer North

Vulnerability North-South

<p>♠ 6 2 ♥ 6 2 ♦ K 7 4 ♣ A J 6 5 4 2</p>	<p>♠ Q 10 8 ♥ 10 9 4 ♦ Q 9 8 3 ♣ K 10 7</p>	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		<p>♠ K J 9 5 4 3 ♥ K J 8 7 5 ♦ none ♣ Q 3</p>
	N											
W		E										
	S											
<p>♠ A 7 ♥ A Q 3 ♦ A J 10 6 5 2 ♣ 9 8</p>												

West	North	East	South
pass	pass	1♠	2♦
dble	3♦	3♥	3NT
	pass	pass	pass

Contract 3NT doubled

Declarer South

Opening Lead ♠6

OUR deal is one more from February's Lederer Memorial, at the RAC on Pall Mall. West was the Surrey expert Mike Scoltock, wheeled out (literally) for London on the second day of play. Sadly, this was Mike's last significant game of bridge; he died peacefully on March 21. Condolences to his family and friends.

On the national bridge scene, Scoltock won Crockfords Cup in 2021, the Corwen Trophy in 2012, and the Garden Cities Trophy in 2022. He dominated Surrey competitions, winning more Lady Rose Trophies and Surrey league titles than anyone can count (at least 11 and nine respectively).

Mike was a tax partner at Moore Kingston Smith. They remember him "as an optimist; a positive, caring, loyal colleague and a true

wordsmith". That's very much how he'll be remembered in the bridge world too; and also as something of a bidding innovator and technologist.

Considering his circumstances, Mike performed remarkably well at the RAC - elevating London to third position. His partner was Richard Fedrick. On the basis of Fedrick's bidding here, and his own club suit and ♦K behind the bidder, Scoltock tried a double of 3NT. On this kind of speculative auction, it's important to double frequently and hard - even if unsuccessfully sometimes. Opponents need to be deterred.

Mike led the ♠6 to 3NT doubled. The Irish South played the ♠Q from dummy, and wisely ducked Richard's ♠K. That killed the spade suit. East could return a spade to clear four winners, but had no quick re-entry.

Fedrick thought for quite some time about his continuation. Could Mike have a big heart card? Probably not, he concluded, when he preferred to lead a spade. And South was not unlikely to have ♥AQ for his 3NT bid. What about club cards? West, if he didn't have the ♥A, was favourite to hold the ♣A, but what about the ♣J? He seemed to have length in this suit, so the chances were good.

Fedrick "gritted his teeth" (per the official Lederer blog) and switched to the ♣Q. South scored the ♣K in dummy, ran the ♦Q to West, and lost five clubs for 800. That was well done by both London players. In the replay, without a club attack, 3NT made an overtrick.

Ireland 3NT doubled minus three, N/S -800

London 3NT plus one, N/S +630