

Bridge Andrew Robson

British Bridge lost one of its greats last month. Bob Rowlands of Surrey, who passed away in Eastbourne aged 82, may have retired from international competition in 1977, aged only 34, but his list of domestic achievements is extremely impressive — including the Gold Cup, the Crockfords Cup, the Spring Foursomes and the Lederer Memorial trophy.

Rowlands gave back much to the game he loved. He was awarded the Diamond Award in 2016 for his many successes, but also for his support of junior bridge. I recall him back in the Eighties encouraging me as a young man finding my way.

Rowlands was a lovely man who loved to chat. He had a dry sense of humour, very common among top bridge players. He played less in later years, primarily because of the bad back that dogged him most of his adult life — indeed perhaps a contributory reason for his early retirement from international bridge. “My problems are behind me,” he would say, drolly.

Watch Rowlands showing his flair on this deal from way back in 1961, shown to me by his then-partner Brian Cowley. After an auction reminiscent of the day, he declared the distinctly optimistic 6♥.

Avoiding the fatal diamond lead, declarer won the trump lead in dummy, crossed to the ace of clubs, returned to a second trump (East discarding a spade), ruffed a club then crossed to a third trump (East discarding another spade) to ruff a third club, West discarding a spade. The 5-2 club split may appear to render the slam

Dealer: North, Vulnerability: Both

Teams		Advanced	
♠ KQ5		♠ J1032	
♥ K109		♥ 7	
♦ Q3		♦ AJ4	
♣ KJ742		♣ Q10865	
♠ 9874			
♥ 653			
♦ K876			
♣ 93			
♠ A6			
♥ AQJ842			
♦ 10952			
♣ A			

S(Rowlands)	W	N	E
3♥	Pass	1NT	Pass
6♥	End	4♥	Pass

Contract: 6♥, Opening Lead: ♥3

unmakeable but West had made a fatal error to let go of a spade.

Declarer cashed his last heart, throwing a diamond, and followed with the three top spades. On that third spade, East had to discard from ♦AJ and ♣Q10. If West had kept a long spade, the ace of diamonds discard would have beaten the slam (West would have a spade to cash after he won the king of diamonds).

As it was, East discarded the jack of diamonds and was promptly thrown in with the ace to lead from ♣Q10 round to ♣KJ. Slam made.

Note, letting go of the ace of diamonds would not have helped East (although he should have tried it in case West held ♦K10), as West would then beat dummy's queen-exit with the king (perhaps after declarer cashed the king of clubs) but have to give declarer the last trick(s) in diamonds. RIP Bob.

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