

Brian's Brighton – Part Six

Avoidance

This deal from the Seniors Pairs semi-final featured both poor play and worse defence.

Board 10. Dealer West. All Vul.

	♠	K 5 2		♠	Q 9 4
	♥	K 5 3		♥	10 8 2
	♦	K Q 9 6 5		♦	J 4 3
	♣	7 6		♣	A 9 5 2
♠	A J 7 3				
♥	A Q J 9				
♦	A 10				
♣	K 10 3				
	♠	10 8 6			
	♥	7 6 4			
	♦	8 7 2			
	♣	Q J 8 4			
West	North	East	South		
1♣	1♦	Pass	Pass		
1NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass		

The One Club opening could have been a doubleton in the style which is becoming more and more popular when playing strong no trump and five-card majors. East might have doubled, showing both or neither four-card major, but didn't like his hand very much and knew that, if his side could make something, partner would bid again. Sure enough, West rebid 1NT, 18-19 balanced, and now East could raise to game. Had North led a diamond, the defence would have been well-placed, but he chose instead to lead the seven of clubs, hoping to see partner gain the lead at some point to push a diamond through, thereby avoiding giving declarer a second diamond trick.

The opening club lead went to the queen (a fairly obvious falsecard) and king, and declarer led a spade towards dummy's queen. North went in with the king and exited with a second club. Declarer played low so South won the jack and returned a heart. Declarer finessed, losing to the king, but had the rest for ten tricks and +630.

South made a serious error when he failed to return a diamond when in with the second club. Indeed, it is hard to understand why he should imagine that a heart could be a better play. Had he led a diamond, the defence would have established the suit before declarer had knocked out the heart king.

But declarer also erred. He could not afford an early diamond through his ace-ten doubleton so should have risen with the club ace on the second round and run the ten of hearts. The point is, of course, that this is a type of avoidance play, losing the lead to the safe hand, the one that cannot hurt you, rather than to the dangerous South hand. North is powerless - if he switches to a diamond declarer has two diamond winners and ten in all but, if instead North defends passively, returning a major-suit, declarer can win and now it is safe to establish the third club winner, again coming to ten tricks.