

## Eastbourne Bulletin 5 – Mixed fortunes

By Michael Byrne

The Mixed Pivot teams is traditionally an exciting event, if only because to win it you need such a high score in imps that means you have to shoot games and slams on every set and double everything for penalties where at all possible.

This year with only 22 teams playing (down from 30 last year and 52 in 2015) and 9 rounds it meant the competition was a lot fairer, since more of the top teams played each other.

As usual the hands were thrilling with plenty of action on all of them. This one provided teams the opportunity for imps which came in a surprising number of ways:

	♠109	Board 23 Dlr South
	♥Q1095432	
	♦96	
	♣86	
♠KQJ632		♠A4
♥K87		♥A6
♦A74		♦J32
♣9		♣AKQ1043
	♠875	
	♥J	
	♦KQ1085	
	♣J752	

Most EW pairs had a free run and it gave them a chance to test their methods. (As an aside, would you overcall 3♥ as North after P 1♠? You know that the opponents have at least a game on, maybe a slam)

These were some of the unsuccessful auctions:

1♠ – 3♣  
3♠ – 4NT  
5♠ – 5NT  
6♥ – 7♣

Here East made a strong jump shift (although EW were playing 2/1 so I'm not entirely clear how that worked) and then agreed spades, well on the way to a grand slam. After 5NT, 6♥ showed the ♥K and denied the ♦K so unless the clubs were running 7NT was not likely to be a success, (although West might have had the ♥Q) so East tried 7♣ hoping the suit would be solid. Presumably this was intended as a choice of trump suit (since with solid clubs 4♣ would be bid over 3♠ and then clubs agreed for RKCB) in which case West should convert to 7♠, but the message was not received and 7♣ was the final spot.

This was one down, when spades were played at the other table it was a large swing away.

One slightly more fortunate auction was this:

1♠ – 2♣ (2/1 GF)  
2♠ – 3♣  
3♠ – 4NT  
5♠ – 5NT  
6♥ – 7NT

7NT is slightly better than 7♣ since you will make it if the clubs are 5-1 with singleton jack, it will also score more imps if both are making, you may also be able to bring pressure to a hand that has the ♦KQ and club length, or all the hearts above the 8.

Whatever the theoretical merits of the contract, on this lay out there should be no advantage since with the clubs breaking badly and South discarding after East there is no genuine pressure for South.

However – look at that ♦9 guarding the castle. On the ♦K lead if you signal with the ♦9 (or discard it) then South can be squeezed in the minors. You will run the spades throwing 2 clubs and 2 diamonds and the cash the ♥AK, and if the diamond isn't good then you hope that the clubs will be.

East was watching and when South was reluctant to throw his ♦Q away and discarded a club 7NT came rolling home. This was worth 13 imps to Jim Proctor's team when ♣6 making was the contract at the other table.

And finally one team had a short and accurate auction:

1♠ – 2♣ (2/1 GF)  
2♠ – 3♣  
3♠ – 4NT  
5♠ – 7♠

East was pretty sure that his partner would have either KQJxxx, or KQxxxxx for his double rebid of spades, since he had an easy 3♦/♥ grope on hands that didn't want to stress the spades again. Confident that the clubs would ruff good he didn't even ask for kings, 6 spade tricks 5 clubs and two aces would be enough. With clubs 4-2 the play was easy and 2210 was worth 17 imps when EW at the other table alighted in game, well bid by Manchester's John Holland and Peter Jones.

However several tables did go down, as the heart break was not made obvious in the bidding. Trying to ruff one in the dummy spelled quick defeat for several tables, but playing on clubs seems better odds. Ruffing a heart needs the hearts to break 5-3 or 4-4 which is 80%, you will go off when the suit is 6-2 unless you ruff the 3<sup>rd</sup> round high, which leaves you at the mercy of 3-2 trumps.

Playing on clubs needs clubs 3-3 or 4-2 (84%) or singleton jack (3%) so that line was the better in practice and in theory.

The really fascinating thing about this hand (and something I don't think I have ever seen before) is that this board was played by all 22 teams, and every single one gained or a lost a swing, not a single team had a flat board.....

The next board that caught my eye was board 26, again a wild and shapely hand which caused several teams to enjoy a magical mystery tour of bidding:

	♠KQ	Dealer East
	♥KJ653	Game all
	♦AQ76	
	♣QJ	
♠A87		♠1052
♥AQ874		♥1092
♦KJ94		♦ -
♣7		♣AK108542
	♠J9643	
	♥-	
	♦108532	
	♣963	

If East starts with a pre-empt, what will happen then? What about if East passes?

Let's see a few successful and unsuccessful auctions:

E	S	W	N
3♣	P	3NT	P
P	P		

On a low heart lead declarer didn't have much play for his contract. After two rounds of clubs revealed that the gods were smiling on him he claimed ten tricks for +630. A big swing in for his team?

No, at the other table West passed and now NS got into trouble:

E	S	W	N
3♣	P	P	X
P	3♠	P	3NT
P	4♦	P	5♦
P	P	X	

Norths double and then bid 3NT was an intelligent attempt to convey a bit of doubt to his partner about the final strain, and South correctly took it out. 5♦ was simply too high and West had his reward for bidding his time. 5♦ was -800 and 5 imps to team Goldenfield.

Only two NS pairs got a plus score, one from defending 4♣ one down, and the other from doubling 6♥ (!) by West.

The best EW result was achieved by the pair that were doubled in 3NT (a very dubious decision with that club holding) for +950 but the only player to take ten tricks as EW was John Holland, who made 4♥X on the lead of the ♠K. He carefully ruffed a diamond at trick two before playing three rounds of clubs. North ruffed and played a trump, but when dummy's 9 won declarer could ruff a spade, ruff a second diamond and endplay north to make ten tricks.

The only other pair to make ten tricks was Anne Catchpole and her nephew Liam, who achieved this in defence! After 3♣ P P North bid 3♥ and went 6 down. After two rounds of clubs and a spade to West's ace North went up with the ♦A on the diamond switch, and now the ♣10 to allow West to pitch her second spade left North with no resource, he made just 3 trump tricks. +600 was worth 3 imps when the same contract ONLY went 5 down at the other table.

This hand proved to be the critical one in the match that decided the trophy, between the two teams going into the final round lying 1<sup>st</sup> (Wolfarth) and 2<sup>nd</sup> (Willans)

At one table they pre-empted, the other table didn't which resulted in an unfortunate coincidence.

With Wolfarth NS the bidding went

E	S	W	N
3♣	P	P	3♥
P	P	P	

This went the usual 5 off for 500 to Willans. At the other table the East player felt the hand was too powerful to pre-empt and chose to pass.

This resulted in a fairly normal auction:

E	S	W	N
P	P	1♥	1NT
2♣	P	2♦	P
3♥	P	P	P

This made 140 for EW and swung 8 imps to Willans as well as a sad reminder that it is rarely right for the same team to play in the same contract at both tables. When Willans gained another game swing on the next board it was clear the trophy was theirs.

The final scores were:

Willans: +73  
 Holland +56  
 Wolfarth +51