

Eastbourne Bulletin 8 – Swiss Teams Session 1

By Michael Byrne

The first three matches of the Swiss teams was fast and furious, with no fewer than 6 slam deals in 24 boards, plus a few where some players bid a slam with little justification.

This hand was a particularly bitter pill to swallow for some teams, including my own:

	♠ 105	Board 11 Dealer South Love all
	♥ KQ1054	
	♦ AQ92	
	♣ 87	
♠ 6		♠ J9843
♥ 92		♥ A86
♦ J8653		♦ 10
♣ Q10432		♣ J965
	♠ AKQ72	
	♥ J73	
	♦ K74	
	♣ AK	

6♥ is beaten on a spade ruff, found at a few tables but not all of them. Sitting NS were Fu Zhong (on his way to Lyon for the Bermuda Bowl where he will represent China) and Paul Hackett. Their auction was:

2NT - 3♦
3♥ - 4♦
4♥

Whether 4♥ was intended as regressive or forward going I can't really tell you, but that's only because the opponents didn't seem to know either. -480 had potential for a swing in but at the other table Justin and Jason Hackett had no problems leading a spade and taking a ruff for one down and 11 imps to Hackett.

It's hard to believe but only ten tables found the ruff to beat 6♥, compared to 31 that didn't!

Is it really so hard? Sitting East partner leads a spade and you win the ace of trumps. Where is the setting trick coming from? Assuming South has opened a 20-22 2NT (or similar) and your 9/Jack has lost to a big honour you know declarer has got the red suits sorted (that singleton ten is an inauspicious holding) so even if partner held the King of clubs that would leave declarer with ♥J, ♠AKQ, ♦KJ, ♣AQ (which is a minimum incidentally) and any club losers are about to vanish on the top spades. A ruff is the only hope and should be found. I dare say West should play the 9 of trumps on the first round as suit preference but East should get it right anyway.

6NT however was an excellent contract and several pairs (11 to be precise) reached it. You can never be sure if it was well bid or the heart fit remained unseen but I like to assume those pairs involved had a scientific auction which involved converting to

6NT late in the day once the heart fit had been diagnosed and a grand slam discounted.

One auction which did not involve science but pure judgement was this however:

S	W	N	E
2NT	3♦	X	P
3♠	P	6NT	P
P	P		

No, this isn't a misprint. West (like many of the players here) was well onto her third glass (bottle?) of wine and elected to make things hard for her opponent by intervening over 2NT. North was former junior international James Paul (playing with current junior international Toby Nonnenmacher) and he started with double, take-out but hoping partner might be able to pass. It was no surprise when partner took it out to spades and now "knowing that the diamond finesse would be right" he tried 6NT. His logic can't be faulted, as even with West overcalling on a 5 card suit the bad breaks are what sink 6♥.

6NT made for 990 to NS, and a swing to the young team...?

Sadly their team-mates were one of the many pairs who let through 6H (yes they did lead a spade) and EW got away with a flat board.

3♦ goes for 1700 of course, since the defence can deny declarer any club tricks. They start on hearts and force the long trump from West, then draw trumps and have enough winners to cash.

Only two tables went for a penalty on this hand, one pair found the club fit and lost only 500 in 5♣X (the defence need to lead hearts and force the West hand to stop the diamond being set up) whilst one pair played 3♠X as East. This time the defence made no mistake and held declarer to 2 trump tricks and the ace of hearts for 1400 to NS and a salutary reminder that crime doesn't always pay.

Hand 9 EW Vul Dealer South

	♠6	
	♥KJ874	
	♦AJ875	
	♣105	
♠KQ853		♠109
♥105		♥AQ93
♦K4		♦Q3
♣KQ76		♣A9842
	♠AJ742	
	♥62	
	♦10962	
	♣J3	

This looked like a relatively straight forward hand to me, surely most EW pairs would be able to get to 3NT and take a few finesses to make it?

Apparently not, in the second round match Cooper vs Allerton all of the players were having a little fun in the auction:

N	E	S	W
P	1♣	2♠	P
P	P		

Frances Hinden, (never to be described as a blushing violet) tried a weak jump overcall of 2♠ after a 1♣ opening on her right (“I was at green facing a passed partner for goodness sake”) and this stole the pot. East should surely re-open with a double since it is inconceivable that partner has anything other than a penalty pass, when he didn’t 2♠ went 4 off for +200 to EW.

If East had double North claimed he going to run, now West would probably bid 3NT rather than defend 3♦ which only goes for 300.

Was this a swing to Allerton who made game at the other table? Not exactly....

N	E	S	W
P	1♣	P	1♠
X	P	P	P

North’s second round double left South nowhere to go, apart from the 9 card diamond fit that seemed to be left on the shelf. Declarer made no mistake in the play and made the ten tricks to which he was entitled to and +760 was recorded, 11 imps to Allerton.

A lot of players did seem to struggle with this hand, including several that went down in 3NT on a diamond lead. Whilst it is never comfortable playing 3NT when the opponents clear their suit at tricks one and two, you have little play for it unless both heart honours are right. Several declarers tried cashing their clubs first and now they lacked the entries to get three heart tricks and had to go down.

By the way, did anyone notice the club pips and play this hand correctly? A 4-0 club break can only be picked up if South has 4, so the right way to play the hand was to cash the ace of clubs and then play a club to the king. Run the ten of hearts and then are you are home.

My partner took about 30 seconds to make this hand although we had life made a little easier since North had made a lead directing double of 1♥ (transfer to spades) which elicited a diamond lead anyway!

Of the declarers that got a diamond lead to 3NT 3 of them went down, but 8 remembered to play for their legitimate technical chance.

The overnight leaders are David Arundel, Andrew Bannock, Niall Igoe and Ambrose Holmes-Mackie, who with 16, 16 and 20 are just 1 vp ahead of Eddie Lucioni's team. The 8 will make the A final an the next 8 will make the B final, the rest compete for the Brighton Bowl. (Or should that be the Eastbourne Bowl?)