

Bulletin Number 2:

The hands today were just as interesting as yesterday and, as usual when a lot of pairs are playing there were a wide variation of results on the slam hands, with some pairs contriving to go minus where you might have thought it impossible.

This was hand 15 from match 2 on the Saturday morning and saw a lot of vastly different contracts reached.

Dealer South NS Vul

♠ 4  
♥ K7  
♦ AK53  
♣ AKJ752

♠ KQJ93  
♥ Q106  
♦ 10972  
♣ 10

♠ 10874  
♥ J32  
♦ 86  
♣ 8643

♠ A65  
♥ A9854  
♦ QJ4  
♣ Q9

With 7NT lay down you could be forgiven for thinking that conceding 13 tricks in 6C would be a reasonable score for EW, but no, -1390 was worth a paltry 35%.

Two pairs went minus in hearts (6H off one and 5H off one) whilst two pairs played in part-score, and there was one penalty of 500 for NS.

Then a whole host of players played in game. This was one such unsuccessful effort:

1H - 2C

2NT - 3D

3NT - 4NT

P

Having shown 12-14 balanced The South player might have looked favourably on his Qx of partners first suit and QJx in his side suit. Given that South has already denied 4 diamonds it is pretty clear

that partner has only bothered introducing the suit to show a shapely hand, so passing 4NT deservedly scored only 28%.

Having said that perhaps 4C as North might have been clearer, assuming you have the mechanism to stop in 4NT if partner has an unsuitable collection such as KQ10x, AJ9xx, Qx, xx.

A slightly more enthusiastic auction was this one by Mike Bell / Ben Norton, who having started the day 2nd have now ended it in joint 3rd, in no small part due to this board:

<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>
1H	1S	2C	2S
P	P	X	P
2NT	P	3S	P
3NT	P	4C	P
4H	P	4NT	P
5S	P	5NT	P
6C	P	6NT	P
P	P		

Getting to 7 looked impossible here as South was unaware of just how important his diamond holding was.

Their opposition might have been hoping for a few match points when declarer claimed 13 tricks but +1470 was worth a whopping 93% to NS.

As mentioned yesterday Ben has recently returned from the Junior European Championships where he partnered Shazaad Natt, who was one of only 4 pairs to bid a grand slam. His auction was:

S	W	N	E
1H	1S	2C	3S
P	P	X	P
4C	P	4S	P
4NT	P	5D	P
5NT	P	7C	P
P	P		

When Shahzaad bid 4S over 4C his partner Ian Pagan went into the tank and emerged 7 minutes later (in fairness that is above average speed for him) with 4NT, appreciating that he had the right major suit cards facing shortage and that his minor suit honours were filling a gap. When he subsequently bid 5NT Shahzaad knew he was facing both aces and the queen of clubs, and his extra values would be either AQJxx hearts, QJ diamonds, or both red queens, all of which would make a grand slam lay down.

Facing Ax, AJxxx, Qxx, Qxx 7C would be all but lay down (either trumps 2-2 allowing you to ruff the 4th round of diamonds or ruff a 5th heart good) whilst 7NT is more tenuous, so he sensibly chose 7C.

3 other pairs bid 7C and 6 bid 6NT, all of whom were rewarded with the lion's share of the match points.

Another slam deal in match 10 proved crucial in determining who was leading overnight:

Board 19 Dlr S EW Vul

♠ 102	♠ 953	♠ 8
♥ J92	♥ Q85	♥ K107643
♦ 8543	♦ 972	♦ Q106
♣ J1042	♣ AK98	♣ 653
	<div style="display: inline-block; border: 1px solid black; background-color: #00FF00; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin: 5px;">             N W E S           </div>	
	♠ AKQJ764	
	♥ A	
	♦ AKJ	
	♣ Q7	

With 13 top tricks, the key was to play this hand in no trumps as opposed to spades, the crucial ten extra points proving to be the difference between an average board (54% for 1510) and a great one (81% for 1520).

The leading pair (Ian Draper and Jeremy Willans) zoomed into 7NT against Alistair Gidman and Joe Fawcett which contributed handily to their 18-2 win to move them to the top of the table.

Meanwhile there were fun and games going on at table two:

S	N
2C	3D
3S	?

NS were Frances Hinden and Jeffrey Allerton (previous winners of this event) who were playing the modern and snazzy "2C is either GF or a weak two in diamonds". The 3D response was pre-emptive and 3S confirmed the game forcing hand type with spades.

At this point a small flaw in the system was exposed as it wasn't obvious how to agree spades and issue a slam try, 4C having the air of ambiguity about it.

In the end (and it was getting late at this point) Hinden took a shot at 6S, expecting it to have decent play whatever partner had.

This elicited a 7NT response from Allerton (!!!), which caused a fair amount of amusement, but with 14 and a half top tricks EW couldn't really complain. (I mean I would, but then I always complain if my opponents bid a slam against me).

Unlike the previous slam 27 pairs managed to get to 7NT, whilst a further 12 got to 7S. 4 Pairs attempted to stop on a pinhead by bidding 6NT and the rest played in 6S, with the exception of 3 pairs who got all the way to 4S.

I am pleased to report that no-one played this grand slam in a part-score, and neither did any NS pair go minus.