

## Seniors Pairs Qualifying

Monday evening saw the qualifying stage of the Seniors Pairs, with 36 pairs taking part and needing to end up in the top 22 to qualify for the 'A' semi-final. We achieved that goal easily enough, but didn't do particularly well on this first deal.

Board 11. Dealer South. None Vul.

	♠	–		
	♥	A J 9 8 3		
	♦	A Q 10 5 4		
	♣	4 3 2		
♠	A 9 7 6 4		♠	10 8 2
♥	K Q 10 4		♥	6 5 2
♦	K		♦	9 2
♣	A 7 6		♣	Q 10 9 8 5
	♠	K Q J 5 3		
	♥	7		
	♦	J 8 7 6 3		
	♣	K J		

West	North	East	South
–	Senior	–	Wolfarth
–	–	–	1♠
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♦
Dble	Rdbl	Pass	Pass
2♥	Dble	3♣	Pass
Pass	4♦	All Pass	

West had 16 HCP but no sensible action over the 1♠ opening other than to pass, which left me with a classic 'I wish I wasn't playing two-over-one moments. Either you overbid with a game-forcing 2♥ on a potential misfit, or you respond a wide-range and far from descriptive 1NT. As you see, I chose the latter, and Geoffrey rebid 2♦. Now West had the right shortage to be able to make a take-out double and I redoubled to show extra strength – there was no hurry to support diamonds and maybe I would learn something useful along the way. Doubling 2♥ was too much to resist, and would indeed have netted +500 had that ended the auction, but East ran to 3♣. When Geoffrey couldn't double that it was time to give up on thoughts of a penalty and decide how high to go in diamonds. Well, I hated the three low clubs and settled for an invitational 4♦. I can hardly blame Geoffrey for declining the invitation, but he made 12 tricks and +170 scored only 41% of the matchpoints. It seems that we would also have been able to collect +500 from 3♣ had I doubled again.

Two-over-one can be a big help on strong hands as it allows for slow and careful exploration. When responder has an invitational hand without support for partner, the method shows very poorly – that is the price you pay for the good things that happen on stronger hands. Playing Acol, North could respond 2♥ to 1♠ and, when South was forced to repeat the spades, North would bid a slightly ugly 2NT, showing the all-round strength of the hand – a GF 3♦ would be a serious overbid on a misfit. Now South could bid 3♦ and North would have to decide whether or not to bid game.

There were a couple of 5♦ doubled making with an overtrick and several undoubled games also making 12. Then we come to weird results: 2♦-1 by North, 2♠ just made and 3♠-2 by South and, maybe weirdest of all, 1NT just made by North. There must have been some seriously eccentric decisions made by various players to end up in those contracts.

We did rather better on this next deal.

Board 24. Dealer West. None Vul.

	♠	J 8 7 2		
	♥	8 7 6 3 2		
	♦	Q 10 4		
	♣	2		
♠		Q 9 6 5 4 3	♠	K
♥		J 9 4	♥	A 5
♦		J 2	♦	K 9 6 5 3
♣		10 7	♣	A Q 8 6 3
	♠	A 10		
	♥	K Q 10		
	♦	A 8 7		
	♣	K J 9 5 4		

West	North	East	South
	Senior		Wolfarth
2♠	Pass	Pass	2NT
Pass	Pass	3♠	Pass
Pass	Dble	All Pass	

I heartily approve of aggressive pre-emption, but partner does need to have a sense of humour about these things. Here, east quite correctly passed at her first turn and Geoffrey made an immaculate overcall of 2NT. That would not have been a success, but now East fell from grace with an almighty crash when she chose to compete with 3♠. I didn't have much, but jack to four trumps when partner was known to hold a top honour, plus a singleton, suggested that we should be able to defeat the contract, so I doubled.

I led the club and declarer, hoping for something good to happen, played low from dummy. Geoffrey won the jack and switched to the king of hearts to dummy's ace. Declarer played the king of spades. Geoffrey won the ace and gave me a club ruff. A heart back to the queen was followed by a third club on which declarer pitched a diamond. After ruffing, I returned the ten of diamonds to the king and ace, and a fourth club promoted the jack of spades into the third undertrick.

You might think that +500 would be a top on the board, but no. David Wing and Roland Gronau collected +800 on defence to 4♦ doubled. Once again, one wonders how that contract was reached, but perhaps it is better not to have that information available where young children and those of a delicate disposition might come across it.