

The Twilight Zone

by Brian Senior

Eastbourne, Friday August 19th 2016, the first round of the Swiss Pairs as we start the first event at the new venue for the Summer Congress. The first board hits the table and straight away we are transported to – The Twilight Zone.

Board 5. Dealer North. N/S Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
Stevenson	Senior	Commins	Wolfarth
–	1♣	1♦	3♣
All Pass			

The bidding requires some explanation. One Club is either clubs or balanced and could be based on a small doubleton (possibly even in a 3-3-5-2 distribution with five diamonds or, rarely, a weak five-card major. Liz Commins and David Stevenson play canape overcalls against a short club, so 1♦ shows three or more diamonds with at least five cards in a second suit. The only time the second suit is not longer is when the two suits are of equal length but diamonds are very weak and being treated as being shorter.

Geoffrey Wolfarth decides to make a pre-emptive 3♣ bid, vulnerable against not, in hope of shutting out the main enemy suit. The South hand is really not worth 3♣ facing a possible weak no trump with two low clubs, but...

I have never played the E/W methods but I think West should be bidding 3♦ here – if partner turns up with only three diamonds, too bad, but whenever she has four I would rather be dummy in 3♦ than defend against 3♣. Well, in theory I would be wrong as, while ten tricks can be made in a diamond contract, 3♣ can be defeated by two tricks, vulnerable.

If the bidding was a little odd, the play became positively surreal. West led the seven of spades and declarer ran this to his ten. It was clear that spades was West's five-card suit so there were ruffs looming. However, if he played on trumps it seemed likely that the defenders would take those ruffs so he decided to play on diamonds instead, setting up his own ruff. When declarer led a low diamond from hand, West went in with the queen but, not being sure of the spade position (declarer might have had three and East two), returned a diamond to East's king. And now East led the ace of diamonds, AND the queen of hearts, simultaneously.

The director was called to deal with this unusual situation and was under a certain amount of extra pressure as David Stevenson is, of course, one of the country's leading experts on the Laws. Eventually, he found the right Law – East could choose which card to lead to the

trick but the other exposed card was a major penalty card, to be played at the first legal opportunity, and lead penalties might also apply if West gained the lead. East chose to play the ace of diamonds. Declarer ruffed low and played the queen of clubs. East won and, perforce, led the queen of hearts. Declarer ducked so East continued with a second heart. Declarer went up with the ace and down came the king. The king of clubs drew West's remaining trump and away went dummy's spade loser on the jack of hearts. A heart ruff put declarer in dummy to draw the last trump; nine tricks for +110. A few boards later you pick up the North hand and start to plan how many diamonds you will open or overcall, when...

Board 8. Dealer West. None Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
Stevenson	Senior	Commins	Wolfarth
3♣	Pass	Pass	4♣
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♠
Pass	Pass	Dble	All Pass

RHO opens 3♣.

Three Clubs was weak with at least five-five in the minors, coming as something of a shock to North, who now had to pass. East gave preference by passing and South, somewhere off with the fairies, cuebid 4♣ to show his major two-suiter. Why not 3♦, you may well ask, and you would not be the only one to do so.

North was not exactly charmed at being asked to choose between his two singletons so put the problem firmly back in South's court by bidding 4♦ – sadly, not natural, but asking South to pick his better major. He duly did so and East doubled, as who might not. While North gave that some thought, he foolishly believed that there might even be chances of making 4♠ doubled – after all, partner had bid 4♣ when he could have bid 3♦, so presumably had a very good hand and dummy would be providing two aces – and eventually passed. Note that North can actually make 4NT.

Apparently, the E/W passes over 4♣ and 4♦ both showed a preference for partner to lead that suit rather than the other minor, and West duly led a diamond. Now you might think that, with West having promised five diamonds in the auction, declarer might call for the six. No, he called for the ace, which was ruffed. Declarer won the spade switch with the eight and led a low heart to the jack and king. Back came a heart so he won and played a third and fourth round. The defence won and played two rounds of clubs and declarer was allowed to ruff with his ♠4 and playing the thirteenth heart forced East to ruff and lead into the ♠KJ at the end to give eight tricks for –300.

Any why did South bid 4♣ rather than 3♦, and then play the ♦A at trick one? As I said – away with the fairies. Despite the fact that 3♣ was both alerted and explained in response

to North's query, he had seen and heard nothing of this and was unaware that 3♣ showed both minors. North began to think that this could be the start of a very long weekend.