

## Eastbourne Bulletin 3

By Michael Byrne

Looking through the hands records for the final day of the Swiss Pairs, the one thing that struck me was the vast number of slam deals that were present. Not just the silly game contracts where the hands lie so well you can't fail to make two overtricks, but the ones where a slam might well be bid by at least half the field.

Board 4 was the first such dramatic deal:

	♠ -	Dir W Game all
	♥ J972	
	♦ K53	
	♣ AQJ874	
♠ 9842		♠ AQJ763
♥ K84		♥ Q1053
♦ 107		♦ J
♣ 10532		♣ K6
	♠ K105	
	♥ A6	
	♦ AQ98642	
	♣ 9	

At most tables the auction started with North opening 1♣, East bidding spades, South bidding diamonds and from there the paths diverged.

If North was able to show his void spade (say a raise to 4♦ and then 5NT in response to key-card to show 2 and a void) then a grand slam becomes tempting, and I was surprised that only two pairs attempted this, both going down after mis-guessing the play. (At one table East had made a weak jump overcall of the 1♣ opening so declarer not unreasonably had taken the club finesse).

The grand slam was a brave shot but actually scoring up 640 from making 13 tricks in **game** would have been enough for 68%, so perhaps it was over ambitious.

At the top tables the then leaders Gerry Harouni & Gary Jones scored poorly for 5D just making (30%) while the eventual winners, Andrew Robson & Alexander Allfrey chalked up 1370 to earn themselves 87% on the board.

Top score went to 3 pairs, Jason Hackett/John Sansom (2<sup>nd</sup> placed overall), Andrew McNair/Alan Kay and John Holland/Alan Nelson who all rolled in 1390 and shared 98%.

Board 9 was one of the hands where game made overtricks so the next slam on my list is board 13 which was a pretty spicy deal:

	♠ QJ105	Dir N Game all
	♥ 2	
	♦ 10752	
	♣ 7652	
♠ A98642		♠ K
♥ AQJ1098		♥ K74
♦ -		♦ AK98643
♣ K		♣ AJ
	♠ 73	
	♥ 653	
	♦ QJ	
	♣ Q109843	

This time 13 tricks in hearts were relatively simple in a variety of fashions so well done to the 15 pairs that reached 7♥ and earned 89% for doing so, that included Robson/Alfrey on their way to a comfortable 16-4 win and now storming up the field. Playing in 6♥ and making the overtrick was still worth 58% though, as 5 pairs had played in game, and two more had bid 7NT, with a few going minus in hearts. Finally some pairs learnt their lesson that even at pairs it is normally not right to play a 9 card major suit fit in 6NT when **both hands** have a singleton and 1440 was worth only 34% to the pairs sitting EW at tables 1 and 2.

The very next board was 14 and another slam arose, again with a choice of strains.

	♠ 973	Dir E love all
	♥ 105	
	♦ 1098632	
	♣ K5	
♠ QJ10		♠ AK862
♥ 32		♥ AKQ74
♦ J7		♦ -
♣ AQJ1093		♣ 642
	♠ 54	
	♥ J986	
	♦ AKQ54	
	♣ 87	

6♠ was simple, although a 4-1 trump break and the club finesse wrong would put it down on a diamond force.

One pair attempted a grand slam on a finesse (again, a bit ambitious considering 6 with an overtrick is always a good score if you play in the right suit), while most of the field played in spades, making 480 for 29% or 980 for 81%.

This hand proved to be tricky for strong club systems as the spade fit often went missing – this was the auction from table 2:

E	S	W	N
1♣*	1♦	2♠**	5♦
?			

1♣ showed 16+ and 1♦ was natural. In a million years you wouldn't guess what 2♠ showed but apparently it promised a positive response with a 6 card club suit. It was hard for East to now bring other strains into the picture (perhaps a forcing pass and then 5NT pick a slam over a double?) and 6♣ was the final resting place for 920, this still proved to be 60% though.

At the top tables Plackett/Denning played in game to give 2<sup>nd</sup> place Hackett/Sansom 71% while Robson/Allfrey banged in the regulation 980 to chalk up their second slam in two boards.

Board 16 was a bidding test in which you had to remember to ask for keycards and check on the queen of trumps (needing K32 facing AJ964 to come in for no losers if you didn't), most pairs stayed out of this one although a number of people did reach a slam and one even made it doubled!

Onto the final match and this time there were only two legitimate slam deals:

		Board 25 EW Vul Dir N	
		♠ A52	
		♥ 64	
		♦ 75	
		♣ KQ10875	
♠ 94			♠ KQ83
♥ KQJ53			♥ A7
♦ K10862			♦ AQJ3
♣ A			♣ J64
		♠ J1076	
		♥ 10982	
		♦ 94	
		♣ 932	

This time a fair amount of the field did reach 6♦, and 1370 was worth 68%. Failing to cash the ♠A at trick one wasn't costly providing that the defenders grabbed it at their first opportunity, ducking meant declarer would make 1390 for 87%.

I had a lot of sympathy with my partner who underled the ♠A at trick one against an auction where declarer had denied a spade control and dummy had promised one. As he pointed out at the time, this cost very little and stood to gain a lot. If only I was a decent partner I would have produced the ♠Q, but as I am just a simple one all I could muster was the Jack.

At the top tables this hand was played in 3NT by Christophe Grosset and Stefan Skorchev to give Robson/Allfrey a whopping 92% on the board, while lower down the field both Tom Paske/Catherine Seale and Cross Crosswell/Matthew Brown did well to reach 6H for 1430 and 95%.

That was not the best score however since Alex Hydes and David Price attempted 6NT and were not paralysed by the lead of the 10H, which gave them all 118 match points out of 118.

The final slam deal was board 26, but since only one pair in the room found the double squeeze to make 6NT (and it was not my opponent - a high ranking EBU official who has sworn me to secrecy) I shall gloss over it and hope that the hands the rest of the week are a bit more sedate.