

# Return to Fairyland

## by Brian Senior

We had a slightly unfortunate result on one board in Thursday evening's Mixed Pairs. While I was thinking to draw a veil over proceedings, I have been persuaded by my adoring fan that the details may entertain some who get a kick out of other people's suffering so, here goes.

Board 15. Dealer South. N/S Vul.

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

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

Earlier in the session, we had managed to play our solid seven-three spade fit, a suit in which we could make a slam, in 4♥ with ♥AQ96 facing the singleton eight – down three for exactly the matchpoint score you would expect. It was going to be quite a challenge to achieve a greater disaster than that one but we succeeded with flying colours – witness the auction above.

Two Diamonds was a multi - weak two in a major or 20-22 balanced - and the first double showed 13-15 balanced or any hand too strong to overcall.

By a non-passed hand, 2NT would have been the strong inquiry and, with no discussion to the contrary, it should still have had that meaning here, however strange it may have looked. Three Hearts therefore showed the top end of the range with spades – it's played that way around so the supposedly stronger responding hand can always become declarer. However, when East doubled again, attempting to show a balanced hand too strong for an immediate 2NT overcall, South passed, thinking partner had hearts.

The good news was that North had an opportunity to correct to his actual suit, the bad news was that N/S were already up the Swanee without a paddle and it probably wasn't going to matter where they ended up. When North bid 3♠ you might have thought that South would get the message, but no. South lurched on with 4♣ and, when that too was

doubled, North did the gentlemanly thing in a mixed pair and made one more attempt to become declarer to save his lady partner from suffering that fate.

Why would you not leave in 4♦ doubled? It is inconceivable that North has hearts by this stage of the auction, so South's 'correction' – I use that term in its loosest possible sense – to 4♥, has very powerful sadomasochistic overtones. At this point North gave up the unequal struggle, knowing that there could be no point to making a further correction to 4♠ as the auction seemed destined to continue for as long as he was foolish enough to remain involved. He passed out 4♥ doubled and East led a trump.

Declarer placed his hand on the table and invited E/W to decide whether to claim down nine or down ten. Being a truly warm-spirited gentleman, Alex Hydes took mercy on North and settled for only nine down for –2600.

In case you were wondering, South intended 2NT as Lebensohl! Quite why South should think that 3♣ would be a better spot than 2♥/♠ is another issue, even had that indeed been the system.

N/S had played doubled in game, vulnerable, in a suit in which E/W could make a slam, not an everyday occurrence. Still, it is always important to remain positive at the bridge table and, as North said, it was below average for them at this point in the session, but there were still several more rounds to be played so there was still a chance of scoring some matchpoints.

Congratulations to Susan and Jim Deacon, who won the event by a full 4% from Alex Hydes and Susanna Gross.