

Summer Meeting Swiss Pairs Session 1

By Michael Byrne

The Harold Poster Swiss Pairs Championship started play on Friday evening with a choice of two sessions - 6pm or 7.15pm.

156 pairs are competing, and the field is currently headed by Gabor Winkler and Peter Lakatos who started off with a fairly healthy 20, 19, 20 to leave them on 59 Victory Points out of 60.

Whilst not well known in this country, Gabor Winkler is one of Hungary's most famous players and has represented them countless times at international level, coming 5th in the European Pairs in Rome in 1995 and reaching the quarter finals of the World teams Olympiad in 2004 in Istanbul.

They are just ahead of John Atthey (winner in 2008) and Gary Watson who started slowly with a gentle 18-2 win before chalking up 20-0 in their next two matches to stand on 58.

As usual the slams were coming thick and fast and the event started off with a bang with this deal:

	♠ 52		Board 1
	♥ A5		Dealer North
	♦ KJ9753		Love all
	♣ Q84		
♠ Q8		♠ 107643	
♥ K10643		♥ 982	
♦ Q4		♦ 2	
♣ K962		♣ J1073	
	♠ AKJ9		
	♥ QJ7		
	♦ A1086		
	♣ A5		

On this hand a lot depended on North's initial action. Those that opened 1♦ invariably found themselves in a slam, those that opened a weak two invariably found themselves in 3NT.

4 pairs played in the worst contract of 5♦, which scored a handful of match-points, and one pair had a misunderstanding about this sequence:

1♦-1♠
2♦-3♦
P

Alas, this did not trouble the scorers.

Those in 3NT either made 11, 12 or 13 tricks. One unsuccessful declarer got a heart lead which he ran to the queen and took a spade finesse, when hearts were cleared he ran winners and hoped the ♠10 would drop, when it didn't +460 and 13% was his reward.

I was declarer as North and got a club lead ducked to the king, I cashed diamonds and it seemed West had the ♥K so I ran the ♥Q and made 12 tricks for 490 and 41%.

And finally 8 declarers got a heart lead and cashed 6 rounds of diamonds, they then viewed to drop the queen of spades and cash 3 rounds. West's hand was put through the mincer and now they made all 13 tricks, for +520 and a 70% score.

Playing in 6♦ several declarers got the ♣J lead – what is the right line now do you think?

Ducking the club seems safe (a 7-1 break is pretty unlikely when no-one has bid) and West wins the king and returns one for want of anything better to do. Drawing trumps reveals very little and it appears you have a choice between a spade finesse and a heart finesse.

Not so – play ace, king and a ruff a spade before you take the heart finesse, now if the ♠Q is doubleton or tripleton you don't need the King of hearts right to make it

If only the ♥K was with East I could tell you how many of the 10 successful declarers did this, but sadly since both the KH was right and the QS was doubleton everyone made it whether they took the right line or not.

Making 920 was worth 95%, as 3 people had rolled in 6NT (greedy!) and one of them made an overtrick!

This next slam deal caught many people out though, and the scores were all over the place.

	♠ AJ	Hand 18
	♥ AKQ52	Dealer East
	♦ 9	NS Vul
	♣ AK862	
♠ 109876		♠ 542
♥ J93		♥ 74
♦ 753		♦ Q1082
♣ 93		♣ QJ105
	♠ KQ3	
	♥ 1086	
	♦ AKJ64	
	♣ 74	

Both 7♥ and 7NT could be made, but several declarers in hearts only made 12 tricks.

It was nice to see no-one played this deal in part-score but one pair did have a misunderstanding about the meaning of 4NT and played there for 25%.

Another pair had a misunderstanding about the meaning of 4NT and got a bit higher.....

Kieran Dyke	Marion Robertson
South	North
1♦	1♥
1NT	2♦*
2♥	4NT
6NT	7NT

Dyke/Robertson started well reaching 2♥ and North attempted to keep things simple with 4NT, intending to follow it up with 6♣ over a one key card response to ask for 3rd round club control.

South considered this quantitative since they were in a game force and there were various slam tries available and bid 6NT, a 13 count with a source of tricks very valuable when partner is “known” to be balance.

North had an unenviable decision now and just went for the jackpot, hoping the clubs ran or some other miracle occurred – it did!

On a spade lead declarer cashed two rounds of hearts, 2 more rounds of spades and ran the hearts. East’s hand was reduced to jelly and when she pitched two rounds of diamonds (correct if West had held the ♦J) declarer scored 3 diamond tricks to make his grand slam.

In fact on this lay out it was nearly impossible to avoid making 13 tricks in No Trumps and everyone in NT scored well, +2220 went to 5 pairs who shared the top, and +1470 was still worth 77%.

Several pairs reached 7♥ including Paul Hackett (who claims to have won this event by the largest margin when he was victorious in 1998) partnering Judy Lawson, and Catherine Seal partnering Neil Rosen. Their auctions:

Lawson	Hackett	Seale	Rosen
		1♣*	1♦*
1♦	1♥	1♥*	2♦*
2♥	3♣	2♥	3♥
4♥	4NT	4♦*	4♠*
5♥	5NT	5♦*	6♣
6♥	7♥	6♦	7♥

You can see the difference in methods, one partnership playing a relatively natural style the other a very modern 5 card major and transfer responses to 1♣ (note the 1♣ opening on a hand with a 5 card diamond suit to allow greater use of the transfer responses).

Whatever the bidding how would you set about the play on the ♠10 lead, or a tricky ♣J lead?

Seale cashed AK hearts and then attempted to ruff her 3rd club with the ♥10. Given that trumps were 3-2 with the jack not appearing this line would work if clubs were 3-3, or 4-2 when the doubleton trump was with the doubleton club – a quick one down.

Paul Hackett found a small improvement on this line when he cashed two trumps and then played Ace, king and ruffed a diamond, which gave him the extra chance of the queen of diamond falling in 3 rounds. He had to fall back on the club ruff though and that meant another one down.

A few pairs made the overtrick in 6♥, but every single one of the declarers in 7♥ went down, with the one exception of Denis Talbot who got the ♣Q lead. Sadly he left the building before I was able to find out how he played it, but as the sun is shining I am going to assume that he viewed that the ♣Q lead signified length and decided it was too dangerous to try and ruff a club, so he ran his trumps (ruffing a diamond en route) and squeezed East in the minors to chalk up +2210 and a 95% score.

There are 24 boards down, and 96 to go – a lot of boards left for everyone!