

For this year's Schapiro Spring Foursomes we will be providing a bulletin in the form of a few articles by Brian Senior that will be published online, with printed copies also being available at the venue. To start us off we re-print here one of Brian's articles from 2000.

The toughest and most prestigious weekend event in the EBU calendar is the Spring Foursomes. Held in Stratford over the bank holiday weekend at the beginning of May, it attracts a number of strong teams from overseas plus the vast majority of the top players in England. This year the field included teams from Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Japan, the Netherlands, and individuals from Australia, Norway and Sweden

The Spring Fours is a dual elimination teams competition. In other words, you play straight knockout matches of 32 boards each and stay in the main event until you have lost twice. There are then secondary events for those knocked out of the main one. This year, there were 48 teams, the perfect number for the format to work perfectly. Play began on the Friday evening and the semi-finals and final were played on Tuesday – so not an event for the faint-hearted.

The last undefeated team get Monday evening off while the six once-defeated teams play the quarter-finals. This year, the undefeated team was MOSSOP (David Mossop, Tom Townsend, Jason and Justin Hackett, Tony Forrester, Geir Helgemo), the previous year's winners. It was just as well for them that they were undefeated because they needed to use up that spare life in the semi-final against the tough Scottish team, SPEARS (B. Spears, S. Kaluderic, M. Dragic, D. Diamond). SPEARS led by 28 IMPs after the first of the four sets and, though MOSSOP won each of the remaining three sets, they still trailed by 9 IMPs after 32 boards. The regulations gave them the right, as the undefeated team, to claim an extra eight boards, and they duly did so.

The Extra Set

Board 34. N/S Game. Dealer East.

<p>♠ - ♥ J83 ♦ AK108 ♣ K109752</p> <p>♠ 96532 ♠ QJ7 ♥ 95 ♥ AKQ1076 ♦ 63 ♦ Q95 ♣ A643 ♣ 8</p> <p>♠ AK1084 ♥ 42 ♦ J742 ♣ QJ</p>	<p>West <i>Dragic</i></p> <p>– Pass Pass</p> <p>West <i>Helgemo</i></p> <p>– Pass</p>	<p>North <i>Justin H</i></p> <p>– 2♣ 3♦</p> <p>North <i>Kaluderic</i></p> <p>– Pass</p>	<p>East <i>Diamond</i></p> <p>1♥ Pass All Pass</p> <p>East <i>Forrester</i></p> <p>1♥ 2♥ All Pass</p>	<p>South <i>Jason H</i></p> <p>1♠ 2♦</p> <p>South <i>Spears</i></p> <p>1♠ All Pass</p>
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When Jason Hackett overcalled 1♠, his brother tried to improve things by bidding his clubs. Jason showed his second suit and Justin raised in case he was stronger. The club fit meant that 3♦ was an easy make, Jason ruffing the third heart in hand with the jack and soon claiming nine tricks; +110.

In contrast, Kaluderic never bid on the North cards, fearing that the deal might be a misfit and that he would only make matters worse. That left Forrester to play Two Hearts on a club lead to dummy's ace. Forrester played a diamond up and Kaluderic won the king and switched to a low heart. With no dummy entry to play as second diamond towards the queen, the best technical play for the contract is to run the heart to dummy's nine. As it happens, that would have worked,

but Forrester preferred to play for a misdefence. He rose with the ace of hearts and cashed all the rest of his hearts then exited with the ♠Q. Spears won the king and, having pitched his second club, had to get off play with a diamond or else he would give declarer a spade trick. But Kaluderic had made the mistake of keeping two diamonds and after winning and cashing his clubs had to give a trick to the queen of diamonds at the end. That was another 110 to MOSSOP and 6 IMPs.

Board 35. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

	♠ 10987		West	North	East	South
	♥ A43		<i>Helgemo</i>	<i>Kaluderic</i>	<i>Forrester</i>	<i>Spears</i>
	♦ AQ875		–	–	–	Pass
	♣ 2		Pass	2♦	3♣	4♦
♠ KQ65	♠ AJ42		Dble	Pass	4♠	5♦
♥ Q1062	♥ 95		Pass	Pass	Dble	All Pass
♦ 632	♦ 10					
♣ K6	♣ AQJ1073		West	North	East	South
	♠ 3		<i>Dragic</i>	<i>Justin H</i>	<i>Diamond</i>	<i>Jason H</i>
	♥ KJ87		–	–	–	Pass
	♦ KJ94		Pass	1♠	2♣	Pass
	♣ 9854		2NT	Pass	3♠	Pass
			3NT	All Pass		

Kaluderic tried an off-centre natural weak two bid in third seat and Forrester overcalled. Spears made a pre-emptive raise and Helgemo doubled for take-out. When Forrester bid Four Spades, Spears judged well to save and Forrester in turn judged well to settle for the penalty rather than go on to Five Spades, which would have failed by a trick.

Forrester led his trump and careful defence held Kaluderic to two spade ruffs in dummy and nine tricks in all; –300.

The Hackett twins play four-card majors and often open a major ahead of a longer minor on minimum hands. This approach worked very well on the deal. Diamond overcalled and Dragic responded 2NT. Now Diamond could see that if his partner held a spade stopper there could be a spade fit for his side and he bid Three Spades, intending this to be natural. Alas, Dragic took Three Spades as just a forcing noise, double-checking that he really did want to play in no trump. The surprise diamond lead allowed the defenders to take the first seven tricks for three down; –300 and 12 IMPs to MOSSOP.

Board 36. Game All. Dealer West.

	♠ K743
	♥ 1086
	♦ A6
	♣ AQJ3
♠ AJ5	♠ 109862
♥ AKJ7	♥ Q52
♦ J5	♦ 8732
♣ 10987	♣ 5
	♠ Q
	♥ 943
	♦ KQ1094
	♣ K642

Both Wests opened One Club and North passed. What is your philosophy about responding on hands like East's? Diamond did respond, hoping to improve matters. He bid 1♠ and Dragic raised to 2♠. When that came around to Jason he overcalled 3♦ on the South cards and played there. He had to lose four tricks in the majors but when he played diamonds from the top had nine tricks for +110.

In the other room, Forrester passed his partner's opening bid and Helgemo was left to play 1♣. Kaluderic led a spade for the queen and ace and Helgemo played the ten of clubs. Kaluderic won that and the defence could have taken all the rest of the tricks had they been aware of the position – king of spades and a spade ruff, diamond to the ace, spade over-ruff, draw trumps and cash the diamonds for six off and –600!

Not surprisingly, that proved to be too difficult. Kaluderic actually switched to the ten of hearts to declarer's jack. He let the next club run round to Spears who switched to the king of diamonds and, when that held, continued with the ten of diamonds. Kaluderic correctly read the ten as suit preference and played two rounds of spades. Spears ruffed and played a diamond through, ruffed and over-ruffed. Kaluderic played a heart and Helgemo won in dummy to play a winning spade, ruffed and over-ruffed, and could cash another heart to escape for two down and –200. that was still 3 IMPs to SPEARS, but something of a triumph for Helgemo for all that.

Board 40. Love All. Dealer West.

♠ J75		West	North	East	South
♥ AK103		<i>Dragic</i>	<i>Justin H</i>	<i>Diamond</i>	<i>Jason H</i>
♦ Q		Pass	1♣	Pass	1♦
♣ A8743		Pass	1♥	Pass	3♥
♠ 109832	♠ K6	Pass	4♥	All Pass	
♥ J96	♥ Q8				
♦ K72	♦ A6543	West	North	East	South
♣ K5	♣ 10962	<i>Helgemo</i>	<i>Kaluderic</i>	<i>Forrester</i>	<i>Spears</i>
♠ AQ4		Pass	1♣	1♦	1♥
♥ 7542		2♦	2♥	Pass	Pass
♦ J1098		2♠	Pass	3♦	Pass
♣ QJ		Pass	3♥	All Pass	

The lead of the king of spades, while being perfectly logical on the auction, did not exactly paralyse declarer. Justin won and drew two rounds of trumps and soon had ten tricks for +420.

SPEARS went into this final deal adrift by 10 IMPs. Missing game merely increased the final margin in MOSSOP's favour. Had they been able to double Three Diamonds, only the fortunate club position would have allowed Forrester to get out for –800. That would have been 9 IMPs to SPEARS and we would have been looking at a recount before they conceded defeat. As it was, the holders had come through by 16 IMPs, having won the extra set by 30-5 IMPs.

The Final

If this last-gasp win suggested that MOSSOP was the team of destiny, their illusions were swiftly shattered in the final. BURN, four of the English team for this year's World Team Olympiad in Maastricht in August (David Burn, Brian Callaghan, Gunnar Hallberg, Colin Simpson), had coasted through their semi-final against DIXON (C. Dixon, K. Stanley, I. Gordon, R. Bennett) by 76-25

IMPs. They proceeded to win the first set of the final against MOSSOP by 52-0, and there was no coming back from that.

BURN started with an 11 IMP gain on Board 1 when the Hackett twins bid a slam that was on a finesse, with a slight extra chance that if the obvious lead was not found it would be cold. The finesse lost and down they went.

Board 2. N/S Game. Dealer East.

<p>♠ A4 ♥ A10873 ♦ Q86 ♣ J75</p> <p>♠ KQJ5 ♠ 1098762 ♥ Q64 ♥ 5 ♦ 7532 ♦ K ♣ 84 ♣ KQ1063</p> <p>♠ 3 ♥ KJ92 ♦ AJ1094 ♣ A92</p>	<p>West Simpson</p> <p>– Pass 3♠ Pass 5♠</p> <p>West Jason H</p> <p>– 2♥ Pass All Pass</p>	<p>North Mossop</p> <p>– 1♥ 4♥ 5♥ Dble</p> <p>North Burn</p> <p>– 4♥ Dble</p>	<p>East Hallberg</p> <p>Pass 1♠ 4♠ Pass All Pass</p> <p>East Justin H</p> <p>1♠ 4♠ Pass</p>	<p>South Townsend</p> <p>1♦ 3♥ Pass Pass</p> <p>South Callaghan</p> <p>Dble Pass 5♥</p>
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Having passed as dealer, Hallberg came in with One Spade at his next turn when many would have shown both their suits. However, Hallberg knew what he was doing and went on to game when Simpson was able to show spade support. When Hallberg failed to double Five Hearts Simpson, who had great spades and little defence, went on to Five Spades. That was just two down for – 300; a good save.

Justin Hackett’s sub-minimum opening bid led to a quite different auction. Two Hearts showed a constructive spade raise and it was easy for Justin to save in Four Spades over Four Hearts. However, the Hacketts then allowed their opponents to play Five Hearts, believing that they had done their job when they pushed them to the five level. That may be the long-term winning policy but it was not successful on this occasion. Burn ducked the club lead and won the continuation. He got the hearts wrong but the friendly diamond position saw him home for +650 and 8 IMPs to BURN.

You are dealer at favourable vulnerability. How would you treat this hand:

♠ A6
♥ A4
♦ K109753
♣ A83

Your choices are to open 1NT, 15-17, or to open One Diamond and rebid either Two or Three Diamonds over a major-suit response. Callaghan chose the 1NT opening and burn showed five hearts and four spades and at least invitational values. Callaghan bid 3NT. Facing:

♠ KQ84
♥ K9752
♦ 62
♣ 92

3NT was hardly a great spot. Callaghan played for either queen or jack of diamonds onside and was rewarded when RHO held $\heartsuit J8$. Even then the contract would be in jeopardy if LHO held four or more clubs, but he didn't. 3NT proved to be unbeatable and that was +400 to BURN.

At the other table, Townsend opened One Diamond and rebid Two Diamonds. Looking at the two hands, you would prefer to play in Two Diamonds rather than 3NT, but +110 cost 7 IMPs. Wherever you might like to play, I think bidding and rebidding the diamonds is a bit wet and deserves to lose IMPs, even if it was unlucky on this particular deal.

Board 4. Game All. Dealer West.

	\spadesuit 9652	
	\heartsuit Q7	
	\diamondsuit K52	
	\clubsuit J643	
\spadesuit AK10		\spadesuit QJ73
\heartsuit A953		\heartsuit 62
\diamondsuit AJ64		\diamondsuit Q1098
\clubsuit Q2		\clubsuit K109
	\spadesuit 84	
	\heartsuit KJ1084	
	\diamondsuit 73	
	\clubsuit A875	

The Hacketts bid the East/West cards $1\diamondsuit - 1\spadesuit - 2NT - 3NT$. David Burn fished out the queen of hearts, which must have impressed his partner more than a little. There was nothing Jason could do; down one for -100.

Simpson opened the West hand with a 15-17 no trump. Hallberg used Stayman and jumped to 3NT when Simpson admitted to a four-card heart suit. Anyone who can find a heart lead after that auction is too good and I don't want to play against them. Not fancying one of the black suits, Mossop tried a low diamond, hoping to hit his partner's long suit. Simpson won dummy's eight and ran a diamond to the king. A heart switch would still have beaten the contract and it is easy, looking at all four hands, to convince yourself that Mossop should have found it. However, consider that Simpson had an 18-count for his 15-17 no trump and that only this precise heart layout makes the heart switch a winner. There are plenty of hands where declarer has 15-17 HCP and the heart switch gives him a vital trick. Take away the queen of clubs and change his hearts to king, jack, for example, where the heart guess is for his ninth trick. Mossop exited passively with his remaining diamond and Simpson eventually played on clubs for an overtrick and 13 IMPs to BURN.

Board 7. Game all. Dealer South.

♠ A8	
♥ K1093	
♦ A1082	
♣ AKJ	
♠ KQJ4	♠ 763
♥ AJ6	♥ 8752
♦ 93	♦ K75
♣ Q864	♣ 1072
♠ 10952	
♥ Q4	
♦ QJ64	
♣ 953	

West opened 1♠ at both tables. Callaghan became declarer in 3NT from the South seat. He won the lead of the ♠J and played a heart to the queen and ace. Jason cashed one spade in case declarer held only ten to three, then switched to a club. Callaghan won the ♣A and played ♦A then the ten of diamonds to the jack. When that held he tried a heart to the ten then cleared the diamond and had nine tricks for +600.

Mossop was declarer as North in 3NT and he received a spade lead to the jack and ace. He returned his remaining spade, which could have been very wrong had the suit been 5-2. He was in luck as Simpson won the trick and had only four spades. Hallberg had played his higher remaining spade to the second trick and Simpson read this as denying interest in a club switch. Instead, he tried his low heart, beating the contract immediately if partner held the king. The heart ran to dummy's queen and Mossop played the queen of diamonds, which Hallberg allowed to win. Declarer erred now. A low diamond would have left him with a diamond entry to the dummy to take the heart finesse and he would have survived, but he continued with the diamond jack. Hallberg won and exited with his last diamond. Mossop had nothing better than to play clubs from the top and was down one when Simpson had to give him a heart at the end. That was -100 and another 12 IMPs to BURN.