

Spring Fours 2016 – Final Bulletin – Brian Senior

The semi-finals and final of the Schapiro Spring Foursomes are played on the Tuesday, after all the rest of the teams have gone home to lick their wounds. In two close-fought semi-finals, Allrey defeated Gidman by 53-39 IMPs, while Moran beat Sinclair by 51-41. In previous years Sinclair, as the previously undefeated team, would have had the right to play another eight boards in an attempt to turn the match around. However, in recent years there have been a number of occasions on which an undefeated team has claimed that right but still lost the match. Their opponents have had to play the extra eight boards then go almost straight into the final, against a team who have just had an extra hour and more's break since their semi-final, and this has given a big advantage to that other team, who have done nothing to earn it. Accordingly, this year the undefeated team would have had the right to extra boards had they needed them in the final, but not at the semi-final stage. Being the last undefeated team is still very valuable, as the team not only gets Monday's second match off but also has the right to choose their semi-final opponents.

The final was between the Irish Open team (Tom Hanlon, Hugh McGann, Rory Boland, Mark Moran, John Carroll and Tommy Garvey), and the bulk of the England Open team (David Gold, Mike Bell, Tony Forrester, David Bakhshi, Andrew Robson and Alexander Allfrey). After five boards the match was tied at 11-11 IMPs. Though there was a lot more bridge to be played, the next two deals were decisive as the English team put on 28 IMPs.

Board 6. Dealer East. E/W Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
Forrester	Garvey	Bakhshi	Carroll
-	-	1♠	Pass
1NT	Dble	Pass	Pass
2♣	Dble	Pass	2♠
All Pass			

When Forrester scraped up a 1NT response to the five-card spade opening, Garvey doubled, take-out of spades, and Carroll's leave in implied good spades as well as good values. Forrester ran to 2♣ and, though Garvey doubled again, clearly intended as penalty, Carroll removed to 2♠, despite the vulnerability which would have suggested trying for a penalty.

Looking at his hand, he presumably intended this to be a cuebid, the start of a game-forcing sequence, but Garvey didn't take it that way and passed. It is quite surprising to find a pair of this calibre getting into a mess in what is not that complex a sequence.

Forrester led the queen of clubs, which Carroll won with dummy's ace, Bakhshi retaining the king. Carroll ran the queen of hearts then led a second heart to his ten, crossed to the king of diamonds and led a spade to the queen then cashed the ace and made nine tricks for +140.

West	North	East	South
Boland	Allfrey	Moran	Robson
–	–	1♠	Pass
Pass	Dble	Pass	Pass
1NT	Dble	Pass	Pass
Rdbl	Pass	2♥	Dble
All Pass			

Boland did not respond as West. Allfrey doubled and here Robson's leave in showed a serious spade stack. Boland tried to wriggle into a better spot, starting with 1NT. When the double came back to him, he redoubled, SOS. I would play that this always asked partner to pick one of the next two suits up the line rather than being a three-suited take-out, and no doubt Boland intended it just that way. Alas, Moran did not see things in the same light and bid his next-longest suit, 2♥. When that was also doubled Boland took his medicine and offered up a silent prayer that the contract would not be too bloody.

Robson led a low trump to the jack and king, which at least gave Moran one trick to which he was not entitled. He played king of clubs, ducked, and a second club to the nine and ace. Allfrey returned the four of hearts to the seven and ten and, still unclear as to the trump situation, Robson switched to ace and another diamond. Allfrey won the king and played his spade, ducked to the ten, and Robson continued with ace and a third spade, ruffed by Allfrey. Robson ruffed the diamond return and played a fourth spade, again ruffed by Allfrey, but now Allfrey had to play a minor, with dummy holding the top card in each suit, and declarer could discard his last spade as Robson ruffed, the heart eight making the last trick for five down and –1400.

That was worth 15 IMPs to Allfrey, and the next deal was another hammer-blow to Irish hopes.

Board 7. Dealer South. All Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
Boland	Allfrey	Moran	Robson
–	–	–	2NT
Pass	3♣	Pass	3♦
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

Allfrey used Stayman and, on discovering that his partner held no major, bid 3NT. A heart lead would have defeated the contract but dummy had shown interest in the majors so Boland led the ten of diamonds. Disaster! Not only did West miss the killing heart lead, but his choice of the ten meant that Robson could not pick up four diamond tricks, finessing against the nine on the third round. Boland switched to a heart when in with the ace of diamonds, but that was 11 tricks for +660.

West	North	East	South
Forrester	Garvey	Bakhshi	Carroll
–	–	–	2NT
Pass	3♣	Pass	3♦
Pass	3♥	Dble	3NT
All Pass			

The Irish N/S pair were playing Puppet Stayman. Carroll's 3♦ promised either one or more four-card majors or three spades, so Garvey had to bid 3♥ to show his four-card spade suit. Bakhshi took the opportunity to double for a heart lead and Forrester duly did as requested.

Carroll knew that he could not afford to play on diamonds as there had to be at least four heart losers established once he lost the lead. Instead, he won the heart king and cashed out the spades before trying a club to the jack. When that lost he was two down instead of one had he played on diamonds, but either one or two down was –13 IMPs.

Should Carroll have bid 3NT after the double of 3♥? Perhaps a pass would have allowed them to scramble into the four-three spade fit and they might have been able to come to ten tricks to almost flatten the board, but it is not clear to play 4♠. What is clear is that these two boards had moved the score on to 39-11 in favour of Allfrey and the Irish team never actually got up to 39 IMPs in the match. The final score was 128-33 in favour of Allfrey, over half that margin coming in the final set.