

To Pre-empt or not to Pre-empt? – Spring 4s Bulletin 3 – Brian Senior

This deal came up in the final set of the match between the last two undefeated teams, GILLIS and BARTON, on Monday afternoon. This is always an important match because the last undefeated team, the winners of this match, gets the evening off while the other quarter-finalists have to play another match. Plus, if the undefeated team gets to the final and is behind at the end of regulation, they can claim an extra eight boards in an attempt to turn the match around.

GILLIS led by 70-55 IMPs going into the final set but their position looked decidedly rocky after our featured deal.

Board 29. Dealer North. All Vul.

	♠	Q 8 4 3	
	♥	–	
	♦	A Q 10 8 5 4	
	♣	9 6 3	
♠	J 10 2		♠
♥	A 10 8 7 6 3 2		♥
♦	3		♦
♣	A 5		♣
	♠	A K 9 5	
	♥	9 4	
	♦	J 2	
	♣	Q J 10 4 2	
West	North	East	South
McGann	Lindqvist	Hanlon	Brogeland
–	Pass	1♣	Pass
1♥	3♦	Pass	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♥	All Pass

For BARTON, Tom Hanlon opened 1♣, 11-13 balanced or any 17+. One Hearts was natural and game-forcing facing the strong artificial type. Now, what would you call with the North cards? Espen Lindqvist went for the pressure bid of 3♦, natural and weak, and Hanlon passed despite the heart fit to confirm the weak balanced type. Hugh McGann rebid his long heart suit and now Hanlon raised to game. With no diamond fit, Boye Brogeland had no reason to get involved on the South hand, so 4♥ ended the auction.

There was nothing to the play, Lindqvist leading a low spade and Brogeland winning two of those then switching to a diamond. The ace of diamonds was the third and final defensive trick so BARTON chalked up +620.

	♠	Q 8 4 3	
	♥	–	
	♦	A Q 10 8 5 4	
	♣	9 6 3	
♠	J 10 2		♠
♥	A 10 8 7 6 3 2		♥
♦	3		♦
♣	A 5		♣
	♠	A K 9 5	
	♥	9 4	
	♦	J 2	
	♣	Q J 10 4 2	
West	North	East	South
Erichsen	Garvey	Liggins	Carroll
–	Pass	1♣	Pass
1♦	2♦	2♥	Dble
4♥	4♠	Pass	Pass
5♥	All Pass		

This time 1♣ was either natural or a balanced hand outside the 15-17 no trump range, in which case it could have been as few as two clubs. One Diamond was a transfer response showing four or more hearts, and now Tommy Garvey contented himself with a simple 2♦ overcall. Glyn Liggins 'raised' to 2♥, promising four-card support in a near minimum opening. Now came the crucial difference. Facing

a vulnerable two-level overcall, Jihn Carroll felt that he was well worth a take-out double on his 11-count with both unbid suits. When Espen Erichsen jumped to 4♥, Garvey could compete with 4♠. That might even make if the defence fails to find its club ruff, so Erichsen surely did the right thing in theory, if not perhaps in practice. Knowing of an 11-card heart fit, he took the push to 5♥ and played there. Carroll cashed the top spades then switched to the jack of diamonds and the contract was down one for –100 and 12 IMPs to BARTON.

That brought BARTON very close but there wasn't quite enough in the remaining deals and GILLIS held on to win by a single IMP, 72-71, and could spend a relaxing late afternoon and evening while BARTON had to toil away in another 32-board match.

If, like me, you love to pre-empt at every opportunity, be cautious of doing so when your hand is suitable for playing in other denominations. As here, you may pre-empt your own side out of an auction in which you should remain involved.