

The semi-finals and final – Spring 4s Bulletin 4 – Brian Senior

The semi-finals of the 2018 Schapiro Spring Foursomes featured four heavyweight teams. The undefeated team was GILLIS, with three top Norwegian internationals in Erik Saelensminde, Boye Brogelund and Espen Lindqvist, along with England's own Norwegian, Espen Erichsen, partnering Glyn Liggins, plus captain Simon Gillis. In the semi-final they faced the Irish Open team, Tom Hanlon, Hugh McGann, Mark Moran, Rory Boland, Tommy Garvey and John Carroll, the losing finalists in both 2016 and 2017. In the other semi-final, OLDFIELD, featuring English internationals Simon Cope and Peter Crouch, and the Rimstedt brothers, Ola and Mikael, still juniors but members of the Swedish Open team. The team captain was Geoff Oldfield. Incidentally, not only do the Rimstedts play on the Swedish Open team, but their sisters, Sandra and Cecilia play on the Swedish Women's team, though not in partnership. Their opponents were ALLFREY, Alexander Allfrey, Andrew Robson, Tony Forrester, Graham Osborne, Mike Bell and David Gold. All but Osborne were winners in both 2016 and 2017, while Osborne was in the winning team the previous year.

BARTON, the Irish team, led pretty much throughout against GILLIS, the final score being 82-46 in their favour. Would they face ALLFREY for a third consecutive final?

The answer to that question looked as though it might be no, as ALLFREY trailed OLDFIELD by 18 IMPs with six boards to play. However, those six boards were to see the match turned on its head.

Board 27. Dealer South. None Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
Osborne	Cope	Forrester	Crouch
–	–	–	1♥
4♠	All Pass		

The action was short and simple at our first table. Peter Crouch opened 1♥ with the South hand and Graham Osborne overcalled 4♠ and was left to play there. Simon Cope led the king of diamonds. Osborne won the ace, ruffed a diamond and gave up a heart. Crouch won that cheaply and had no choice but to return a trump to prevent a second diamond ruff in the dummy. However, Osborne would win the ♠A, cross to hand with a heart ruff and draw the missing trumps, after which he took the club finesse and lost one trick there plus a diamond so had 10 tricks for +420.

West	North	East	South
Ola R.	Gold	Mikael R.	Bell
–	–	–	1♥
4♠	5♦	5♠	Dble
All Pass			

After the same start as in the other room, David Gold was unwilling to go quietly with the North hand and bid 5♦ over 4♣. Mikael Rimstedt bid 5♠ as a two-way shot, not certain who could make what, and Mike Bell doubled to complete the auction. Gold led the eight of hearts to the jack and queen and Bell switched to a trump. Ola Rimstedt won that with dummy's ace and drew trumps then took the club finesse. Had Bell won that, declarer would have had the rest of the tricks, but Bell ducked. Now there were only two club tricks to be had and the contract was one down for -100 and 11 IMPs to ALLFREY, closing to only 7 IMPs behind.

But suppose that Ola had won the spade switch in hand at trick two and taken the club finesse. As the cards lie the defence would have been powerless. If Bell wins the club he can either return a club to cut declarer's communications with the club winners – but now declarer has a diamond ruff and the last diamond goes on the ♣Q, or he can return a trump to stop the ruff – but now declarer can draw trumps and cash the clubs. Either way there are 11 tricks. And if Bell ducks the club? Declarer takes a diamond ruff, draws trumps and the ace of clubs is the eleventh trick.

Board 29. Dealer North. All Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
Osborne	Cope	Forrester	Crouch
–	1♣	All Pass	

Simon Cope's 1♣ opening was either natural or balanced outside their 14-16 no trump range. With a 1♦ response showing hearts, Crouch had no sensible action other than to pass, and Cope was left to play his two-three fit when there was an excellent nine-card diamond fit available. Forrester led a trump and the contract drifted three off despite declarer's 19 HCP; -300.

West	North	East	South
Ola R.	Gold	Mikael R	Bell
–	1♣	Pass	1♠
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	All Pass	

Gold also opened a potentially short club, though he would usually have genuine clubs and would only be short if holding 17-19 balanced, as here. The Gold/Bell system was a big winner on this deal as Bell could afford to respond 1♠ to show diamonds and Gold could rebid 1NT to show 17-19 balanced. Now 2♣ was a puppet to 2♦, either to play or as the start of an invitational sequence. Bell, of course, passed the forced 2♦ response.

Mikael led a low trump but it didn't matter. Two Diamonds proved to be a beautiful little contract and Gold lost just two spades and one trick in each minor; +110 and 9 IMPS to ALLFREY, who led by 2 IMPs with three boards to play.

Board 31. Dealer South. N/S Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
Ola R.	Gold	Mikael R.	Bell
–	–	–	1♦
3♣	Dble	All Pass	

Bell's 1♦ was either natural or a weak no trump type, possibly with short diamonds. Ola decided to get frisky, trading on the favourable vulnerability, and Gold made a negative double. With no likely major-suit fit but powerful clubs, Bell judged to leave in the double. That would surely have been the winning action had Gold been a little weaker but, as it was, 3NT would have been an easy make for N/S so the challenge would be to try to get enough of a penalty to compensate for that fact.

Gold led the king of spades then switched to his trump. Bell won the queen and cashed the ♣K then switched to the queen of hearts. Ola won in dummy and ducked a spade to Gold who returned the queen of diamonds. Ola won the ace, led a heart to the ten, then played on trumps. He had to lose to the ♣A and ♦K but that was all; down only two for –300.

If that proved to be a good result for E/W they would go into the final board ahead and, while there was plenty of scope for a major swing on that final deal – a thin but successful slam was available to N/S – both pairs stopped in game for no swing. Board 31 would therefore decide the match.

West	North	East	South
Osborne	Cope	Forrester	Crouch
–	–	–	1♦
Pass	2♣	2♠	3♣
Pass	3♠	Pass	3NT
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♠
Pass	5♦	All Pass	

Osborne did not make the weak jump overcall but his opponents found the diamond fit and ended up in 5♦ rather than 3NT after making a slam try along the way. All might have been well if so much of N/S's strength had not been in the black suits, facing shortage, leaving three top red-suit winners. Osborne led a spade to dummy's jack. Now, how could Crouch avoid the three top losers? As he saw it, he had to either get rid of two hearts from hand, or three hearts from dummy, before he lost the lead. The spades would not stand up to allow sufficient heart discards from hand as Forrester had bid the suit. The only alternative was a bit of sleight of hand plus a lot of luck in the club suit. At trick two Crouch led the ten of clubs off the table and ran it, hoping that Forrester held the jack and had a holding from which it was not obvious to cover. With the six-two club split this would not have worked even had Forrester held the jack, but Crouch was not to know that. In practice, Osborne won the jack of clubs and continued with a second spade. Crouch ruffed dummy's winner to play winning clubs for

heart pitches from the dummy. However, all this did was to increase the number of undertricks as Forrester ruffed the third club. There were still the three top red tricks to be lost so Crouch was down three for -300 and ALLFREY had gained 12 IMPs and won the match by 95-81. For the third year running, the final would be between the Irish Open team and what most would consider to be the best team in England.

The final began with four flat boards. On Board 5 Gold and Bell outbid Moran and Boland to bid and make 7♥ while the Irish pair stopped in the small slam. After another flat board came this deal:

Board 7. Dealer South. All Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
Boland	Allfrey	Moran	Robson
–	–	–	Pass
1NT	Pass	2♥	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♥	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Rory Boland opened 1NT and declared 3NT after a transfer sequence in which he had shown interest in hearts. Alexander Allfrey led the jack of hearts and Boland ducked smoothly. Taken in by this, Allfrey continued with a low heart round to declarer's eight. That looked to be a good start but Boland had communication difficulties. Accordingly, he tried the jack of spades at trick three, hoping this would lose but would retain a spade entry to his heart winners. But the ♠J held the trick. Boland continued with a low club to the ten, king and ace, and Robson promptly returned a spade. Boland won the ace, perforce, and led a diamond to the king, ducked in tempo by Robson. Boland led a club next and could have made his contract had he guessed to put in the nine, but the situation was not so clear and he played the queen, cashed the heart winners and led a second diamond. By now it didn't matter who held the ace as they would have sufficient winners with it to defeat the contract. Boland was down one for -100.

West	North	East	South
Bell	Hanlon	Gold	McGann
–	–	–	Pass
1NT	Pass	2♥	Pass
2♠	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♣	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Bell also opened 1NT and Gild transferred first to spades then to clubs before offering 3NT as a possible contract. Bell accepted 3NT as the final contract and Hanlon led the ten of hearts. Bell went for the simple line. He won the first heart and played ace then jack of spades, overtaking with the queen when Hanlon ducked his king. A third spade set up two more winners there and Hanlon tried

the two of diamonds. Bell called for dummy's king and now McGann erred. To defeat the contract he had to win the ace of diamonds and return a diamond, playing his partner for the ten. When he later got in with the ace of clubs, he would have had the necessary winners to defeat the opposing game. But McGann ducked the diamond – presumably the partnership play pure length leads here so there was no guarantee that he Hanlon held the ten – and now Bell could cash the spade winners then lead a club to his queen and two more heart winners brought the total up to nine. Plus 600 meant 12 IMPs to ALLFREY who led by 23-2 IMPs after eight boards.

Set two saw ALLFREY add to their lead at first, which had grown to 40-2 at the midpoint in the set. The Irish, however, then came back strongly to trail by only 10 IMPs, 30-40, after 16 deals. This was the big swing of the set in favour of ALLFREY:

Board 12. Dealer West. N/S Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
Carroll	Allfrey	Garvey	Robson
1♣	1♠	Pass	2♣
2♥	4♠	Pass	Pass
Dble	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♦	Pass	Pass	5♠
All Pass			

John Carroll's 1♣ was two-way, either strong and artificial, as here, or an 11-13 no trump. Allfrey overcalled 1♠ and Robson showed a good spade raise so that Allfrey felt able to jump to 4♠ at his next turn. When Carroll doubled for take-out, Tommy Garvey responded 4NT, two places to play. Had Carroll now bid club, he would have converted to diamonds to show both red suits, but of course in practice Carroll bid 5♦ so Garvey was happy to leave him to play there. Robson, however, was not, and took the push to 5♠, which ended the auction.

There is a way to beat 5♠ but it requires East to lead a club, and West to win the first trump and underlead his top diamonds to put East in to deliver the club ruff. Not altogether surprisingly, Garvey did not lead a club, preferring the jack of diamonds. Carroll overtook to switch to the king of hearts, but now Allfrey could get rid of one diamond loser on the ♥A and ruff the pother one, just giving up a spade; 11 tricks for +650.

West	North	East	South
Osborne	Moran	Forrester	Boland
1♥	2♥	Pass	4♠
Dble	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♦	All Pass		

Here the opening bid was a natural 1♥ so Mark Moran overcalled 2♥, at least five-five in spades and a minor. After a pass from Forrester, Boland jumped to the spade game and Osborne doubled for take-out. Once again we saw a 4NT, two places to play, bid and 5♦ from West. Here, however, there was no 5♠ bid so 5♦ ended the auction.

In a curious symmetry, one way to defeat this contract again involves an underlead of an ace-king, this time in clubs to get a heart ruff. Of course, a simpler way is to set up a spade trick and take one in each side-suit. Moran led the king of clubs and Boland dropped the queen. Now Moran underled as his partner had shown the ♣J by dropping the queen under the king, but it was too late. Osborne ruffed, drew trumps and played on hearts. Having seen Moran follow to three rounds of diamonds, and being marked with 10 black cards for the Michaels Cuebid, he led the eight and ran it, playing for the suit to be four-zero. With the spade losers going away on the hearts, that was 11 tricks for +400 and 14 IMPs to ALLFREY.

Set three was all ALLFREY, who extended their lead to 66-36. If the Irish had any hopes of turning the match around they were extinguished when ALLFREY picked up 24 IMPs on the first two deals of the fourth and final set. They won going away by 110-46 and had beaten Ireland in the final for the third straight year.