

Brian's Brighton – Part Nine

The Four Stars Teams Final

Members of the English Open team dominated the Four Stars final on the last day of this year's Brighton Congress. The team of Justin and Jason Hackett, Alastair Kent and Andrew McIntosh led for much of the way before being overtaken by the eventual winners, David Gold and Tony Forrester, Alexander Allfrey and Andrew Robson.

Round 2. Board 10. Dealer East. All Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
Penfold	Gold	B. Senior	Forrester
—	—	1♥	Pass
1♠	3♣	3♥	5♣
5♥	All Pass		

This deal was something of a triumph for intermediate jump overcalls. Most of us play weak jumps and, indeed, at the other table North therefore bid only 2♣. North/South might still have found the excellent save - 5♣ is only down one - but failed to do so and conceded -620. At our table David Gold's intermediate 3♣ made it possible for Tony Forrester to jump to game and put Sandra Penfold under pressure. How could she not bid 5♥?

Forrester led his singleton spade to the king and ace. Gold thought a bit then cashed the king of clubs before giving the spade ruff for down one and -100. That meant 12 IMPs to the eventual winners. Note that North cashed the club trick before giving the ruff. Had he not done so, South might have decided that he did not have a club trick to cash and would have switched to a diamond instead, hoping for ace-queen with North. That would have cost the contract and, indeed, Forrester said precisely that at the end of the play.

Round 2. Board 11. Dealer South. None Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
Penfold	Gold	B. Senior	Forrester
—	—	—	1♦
1♥	Pass	4♥	Dble
All Pass			

West	North	East	South
Robson	N. Senior	Allfrey	Selway
—	—	—	1♦
1♥	Pass	4♥	Dble
Rdbl	All Pass		

East has a pretty automatic pre-emptive raise to 4♥ facing the overcall, and South an equally clearcut take-out double. Gold did well to leave it in, swayed by his king of hearts, which rated to be of little value in a spade contract. Four Spades is one down on accurate defence so this was a big winning decision. Gold led his singleton and collected a ruff to go with the three aces and heart king; down two for -300.

At the other table, the auction was the same, but Andrew Robson tried a redouble to test his opponents' nerve. Four Hearts could have been making, of course, but Robson was a long way from being confident of this and was hoping someone would run to 4♠, which he had high hopes of beating. But nobody blinked and the same defence led to the same down two. This time the price was -600 and 7 IMPs.

The Allfrey team won this match by 11-9 VPs.

Round 6. Board 18. Dealer East. N/S Vul.

	♠	K 5 4 2		West	North	East	South
	♥	K J 6 5 3		Kent	B. Senior	McIntosh	Penfold
	♦	7 6		—	—	1♦	4♥
	♣	7 3		5♦	5♥	5♠	Pass
♠	9 8 6		♠	6♣	Pass	6♦	All Pass
♥	-		♥				
♦	10 9 5 4 2		♦	West	North	East	South
♣	A Q J 9 8		♣	N. Senior	Justin H	Selway	Jason H
	♠	Q 7		—	—	1♦	4♥
	♥	A Q 10 9 8 7 4 2		5♦	5♥	6♦	Pass
	♦	-		Pass	6♥	Dble	All Pass
	♣	K 10 5					

After identical starts to the two auctions, Andrew McIntosh made a grand slam try of 5♠ and Alastair Kent cooperated with a club cuebid. However, when McIntosh could not bid the grand slam himself, the partnership stopped safely in 6♦. Either of North and South might have found the paying save, but it is always hard to do when vulnerable against not, and they chose to defend.

South's lead of the ace of hearts was the second trick one ruff and discard I have seen over the weekend. The other came in Friday afternoon's BAM event. All it did was to give the overtrick. Declarer could throw a spade from hand and draw trumps. The favourable club layout meant all thirteen tricks for +940.

At the other table Norman Selway did not make the grand slam try, bidding a simple 6♦, and the Hacketts did find the save. It got even better when the opening lead was the ace of clubs, costing a trick, of course, so that the contract was down only one; -200 and 12 IMPs to the eventual runners-up.

Round 6. Board 19. Dealer South. E/W Vul.

	♠	10		West	North	East	South
	♥	Q 7 4		Kent	B. Senior	McIntosh	Penfold
	♦	A Q 9 7 6		—	—	—	Pass
	♣	K 8 4 2		1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
♠	K		♠	2♦	Pass	2♠	All Pass
♥	K 6 3 2		♥				
♦	K 8 5 4 2		♦				
♣	A 6 3		♣				
	♠	A 7 4 3 2					
	♥	A J 9 8					
	♦	10 3					
	♣	J 7					

Having to rebid that diamond suit - a 1NT rebid would have been 15-17 - is not ideal with the West cards, but McIntosh improved the contract by repeating his spades, ending the auction. Penfold led the jack of clubs, ducked to the king, and declarer won the club return in dummy to play the king of spades. South ducked this, as the defence would then learn more about declarer's hand as he tried to get to it to draw the next round of trumps. A low diamond towards the bare jack saw North win the queen and return the eight of clubs for South to ruff.

It usually pays to trust partner - even when he has got it wrong, you will strengthen future partnership confidence. Here, North had asked for a heart return, but South could see that declarer could have no guess in the suit as she held the jack along with her ace, so she played a diamond and declarer could ruff and play on trumps and the heart king was his eighth trick; +110. If South underleads the heart, declarer will win the king but, when South later wins the ace of spades, she can underlead again in hearts to North's queen and gets the second club ruff which is required to defeat the contract.

With East/West going minus at the other table, North/South needed to beat 2♠. This deal helped the McIntosh team to an 18-2 VP win and second place overall.