

Brian's Brighton The Summer Meeting 2015

Wednesday 19th – The Senior Pairs

The Senior Pairs for the Mercian Bridge Travel Trophy was won by Brian Senior and Geoff Wolfarth, who had finished second the previous year, with Warner Solomon and Mike Fithyan in second place. The two pairs met on the first round of the final.

Board 13. Dealer North. All Vul.

	♠	K 7 2		West	North	East	South
	♥	7 6		Wolfarth	Solomon	Senior	Fithyan
	♦	10 5 2		-	Pass	3♥	3♠
	♣	K J 5 4 3		4♦	4♠	5♦	All Pass
♠	6 3		♠				
♥	9		♥	10 5			
♦	A K Q 9 8 4		♦	K Q J 10 8 4 2			
♣	A 9 8 2		♣	J 7 5			
		♠		10			
		♥		A Q J 9 8 4			
		♦		A 5 3			
		♣		3			
				Q 7 5			

When Wolfarth introduced his diamonds, I thought it clear to save over 4♠, but perhaps 5♥ would have been a better choice given the solidity of the suit. The defence cashed two rounds of spades then switched to a club. Wolfarth won the ace and played the nine of hearts to the ten and ace. Fithyan thought for a bit then found the best defence, returning a club to force dummy to ruff. Wolfarth duly took the club ruff and drew two rounds of trumps ending in dummy. When Solomon could ruff the third round of hearts, the contract was two down for -200.

It is no better for declarer to ruff the club, come to hand with a trump and ruff another club. Though the last club now goes away on the king of hearts, there is no way back to hand without promoting the ten of diamonds into a fourth defensive winner.

Five Hearts would probably have got out for down one, though it is possible to arrange a diamond ruff for down two. Minus 200 was worth only 25% for the eventual winners.

Board 14. Dealer East. None Vul.

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

Three Spades would have made exactly, losing one trick in each suit, while 4♣ also made on the nose, with one loser in each side suit. Plus 130 was worth 75% for a flat round.

Board 7. Dealer South. All Vul.

	♠	K 7		West	North	East	South
	♥	A Q 7 6 4		-	-	-	1♦
	♦	K 7 3		Pass	1♥	1♠	1NT
	♣	K 8 6		Pass	3NT	All Pass	
♠	9 5 2		♠	Q J 10 4 3			
♥	10 5 2		♥	K 8 3			
♦	J 5 4 2		♦	Q 8			
♣	A 10 9		♣	J 8 7 6 5 4			
	♠	A 8 6					
	♥	J 9					
	♦	A 10 9 6					
	♣	Q J 3 2					

The winners were lucky on this one. Firstly, the N/S methods meant that Senior could get in a spade overcall to attract the most threatening opening lead, and secondly, declarer's technique was found wanting. Declarer won the spade lead in dummy to play a club to the jack and ace and Wolfarth cleared the spades. When declarer took the heart finesse it lost and Senior had spades to cash for down one; +100 and 75% of the matchpoints.

After the spade overcall, declarer must attack East's potential late entry first. If East has the ace of clubs as well as the king of hearts, the contract appears to be doomed unless declarer can manufacture an endplay, but on the actual layout it can be made by knocking out the heart king before the spades have been established. As you plan to play on both hearts and clubs eventually, arrange to take the heart finesse before playing on clubs. That means winning the first spade with the king as before but then crossing to hand with the ace of diamonds to run the jack of hearts. That makes the contract on the actual lie of the cards, while if the heart king and club ace are switched declarer gets two heart tricks without losing the lead, and can then play on clubs and succeed when the suit divides evenly.

Board 21. Dealer North. N/S Vul.

	♠	K 10 8 6 4 3		West	North	East	South
	♥	Q 3		-	2♠	2NT	Pass
	♦	6 4		3♦	Pass	3♥	Pass
	♣	A 8 3		3NT	All Pass		
♠	A 7 2		♠	Q J 5			
♥	K 9 8 7 6		♥	A 2			
♦	Q J 8		♦	A K 10 3			
♣	K J		♣	Q 7 6 4			
	♠	9					
	♥	J 10 5 4					
	♦	9 7 5 2					
	♣	10 9 5 2					

Senior arrived in 3NT after a transfer sequence and South led the nine of spades, which North won with the king. After some thought, North switched to ace and another club. Senior cashed the diamonds then the spades, coming down to queen and another club and ace and another hearts facing king to four hearts - and south was squeezed, unable to keep both suits guarded. Eleven tricks meant another 75% score for Senior/Wolfarth.

To hold the contract to ten tricks, North needed to break up the squeeze, and it is not easy to find the necessary defence. To be certain, he must switch to a heart when in with the king of spades, and play a second round when he wins the club ace. Now declarer lacks the communications he needs and there are only ten tricks.

An alternative defence which might succeed would be for North to duck two rounds of clubs. The chances are that declarer will play south for ace-ten to four and leave the suit alone from that point, and again there will be no squeeze. However, this defence is less guaranteed of success as declarer could guess to lead a third low club and drop the by now bare ace.