

Match of the Day

by Brian Senior

After two sessions of the Swiss Pairs Geoff Wolfarth and I were unbeaten, with six wins, mostly by narrow margins, and one draw. We had a tough draw in Round 7 against 'The David Mossop Appreciation Society', Alex Hydes and David Price, Mossop's two most regular partners. Price found an interesting ending to bring home his doubled contract on this early deal:

Board 6. Dealer East. E/W Vul.

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

The 1♣ opening was either natural or balanced, possibly two cards and this deal did not show the method in very good light as South could still have been, say, 2-4-4-3 shape when 4♥ came round to North, leaving him with little option but to double to show his extra values. South in turn didn't feel confident that his side could make anything at this level even though North was marked with short hearts, so settled for 'the safe plus score' by passing.

The lead was the king of diamonds, ruffed. Price gave up a club and North let his partner win the ace in case it seemed a good idea to South to play a trump. No, Wolfarth had other ideas and returned a diamond, ruffed. Price played the jack of hearts next and Wolfarth won the ace and played a third diamond, once again ruffed by declarer.

Price needed to pick up the spades and, with North marked with the length, he started with the jack to the king and ace. A fourth diamond ruff was followed by the king of hearts, a club ruff, and the queen of hearts, drawing South's last trump. That brought everyone down to three cards and North had been squeezed. Dummy was down to ♠Q5 and ♦10, so North was forced to come down to ♠10 7 and ♦K. Price exited with the diamond and North had to win and return a spade for Price to finesse, running it to his hand and making his contract; 10 tricks for +790 and a lot of matchpoints. We got a little back on the next deal.

Board 7. Dealer South. All Vul.

	♠	Q 9 7 5 3	West	North	East	South
	♥	K J 7	Price	Senior	Hydes	Wolfarth
	♦	A Q 9 5	—	—	—	Pass
	♣	8	1♣	1♠	2♦	Pass
♠	K 8 6	♠	A 10 4	2NT	Pass	3♦
♥	Q 6 2	♥	A 8 5			
♦	6	♦	J 10 8 7 3 2			
♣	A K J 9 4 2	♣	3			
	♠	J 2				
	♥	10 9 4 3				
	♦	K 4				
	♣	Q 10 7 6 5				

Unless East chooses to bid only 1NT over the overcall it is tough for E/W to go plus on this deal if the defence is accurate. However, Hydes was off to a good start when South made the natural lead of the jack of spades. Hydes won dummy's king and led a diamond to the ten and king. This was the chance for the defence to beat the contract via a heart switch but no, Wolfarth continued with a second spade, which could have been right on a different layout. Hydes won the ten and played the $\spadesuit J$. North won and played a third spade so Hydes won that and played a third diamond. Again, North won and played a spade and that was ruffed by Hydes who played another diamond. You will have guessed by now that when North won the fourth diamond he played the fifth spade and declarer ruffed and was down to $\clubsuit A K J$ and $\heartsuit Q$ in dummy facing a club and $\heartsuit A 8 5$ in hand. Hydes cashed the ace of hearts and North dropped the jack. Hydes led the club and... played the ace then king, hoping to drop a doubleton queen offside and was done down for -100. One thing which would no doubt have come into declarer's thinking was the fact that this play guaranteed at worst one down, while a losing finesse would have meant down two or three, and -200 or more is the kiss of death on a competitive partscore deal. Hydes might well have taken the finesse at IMP scoring.

Coming towards the end of the match we still seemed to be behind.

Board 3. Dealer South. E/W Vul.

	\spadesuit	9 8 7 6		West	North
	\heartsuit	8		Price	Senior
	\diamondsuit	K 10 7 5 4		—	—
	\clubsuit	A 10 8		4 \heartsuit	4 \spadesuit
\spadesuit	A 10 2		\spadesuit	Pass	5 \spadesuit
\heartsuit	A K Q 9 7 5 4		\heartsuit	Dble	Pass
\diamondsuit	6		\diamondsuit	All	Pass
\clubsuit	Q 3		\clubsuit	Pass	Pass
	\spadesuit	K Q 5 4 3			
	\heartsuit	6			
	\diamondsuit	A J 9 3			
	\clubsuit	J 5 2			

Wolfarth, for reasons known only to himself, judged the South hand to be a 2 \spadesuit opening, weak with five spades and a four-card or longer minor, rather than a 1 \spadesuit bid. When Price overcalled 4 \heartsuit , North had an easy bid of 4 \spadesuit as this would surely be cheaper than conceding 4 \heartsuit . However, when Hydes now took the push to 5 \heartsuit , North had a tough decision.

At IMPs, North would defend 5 \heartsuit , as the penalty in 5 \spadesuit might offer only a modest saving or, occasionally, cost 800, more than the value of the opposing game. There is also the possibility that 5 \heartsuit will not make, and now a phantom sacrifice could cost a lot of IMPs. Or, to put it another way, the five level belongs to the opposition and, having pushed them there, you let them get on with it. Matchpoints, however, is all about frequency of being right and wrong, not the size of the gain or loss. It felt as though 5 \heartsuit would make more often than not, while there would be some sort of double fit in a spade contract, making it unlikely that the penalty would be as much as -800. So Senior saved in 5 \spadesuit and Price doubled.

The lead was the singleton diamond, solving declarer's problem in that suit, and now there were just two trumps, one club and one heart to be lost for -300 and an 80% plus score to N/S. Declarer would have got the diamonds right whatever the lead. Once West turns up with three trumps to go with his long hearts it is surely correct to play him for diamond shortage.

Senior/Wolfarth sneaked an 11-9 VP win after a tough match which could have gone either way.