

# The Seniors Pairs

## by Brian Senior

The Seniors Pairs in the Mercian Travel Seniors Congress had a tight finish with several pairs in touching distance of the title. The eventual winners, John Short and Charles Chisnall actually had only the joint-fifth best final session score but their good carry-over saw them come out on top. One of the other pairs in contention were the defending champions, Brian Senior and Geoff Wolfarth who, by coincidence, had exactly the same final session score as the winners but an inferior carry-over, resulting in a fifth-place finish.

The defending champions had the better start in the direct clash between the two pairs, only for the eventual winners to recover with a big third board, which proved to be the decisive result which won the cup for Short and Chisnall.

Board 16. Dealer West. E/W Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
Chisnall	Senior	Short	Wolfarth
1♠	2♠	4♥	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

Senior's 2♠ was Michaels, at least five-five in hearts and a minor and, facing a five-card major opening, Short splintered, 4♥ showing spade support and heart shortage. Chisnall had a minimum opening with wasted heart values so signed off in game, ending the auction.

Senior led his singleton club. Wolfarth won and gave him his ruff and that was that, +650 to Short/Chisnall but only 3 out of 16 matchpoints.

Six Clubs is unbeatable and was reached at just one of the nine tables, by Bill Hirst and Kath Nelson. Nobody bid the spade slam but three other declarers made 12 tricks in game. The other tables saw N/S save in either 5♥ or 5♦, doubled of course, conceding either -800 or -500.

Board 17. Dealer North. None Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
Chisnall	Senior	Short	Wolfarth
–	Pass	1♦	1NT
Dble	2♥	All Pass	

It doesn't seem right to double the 1NT overcall then go quietly over 2♥, but if you play double of 2♥ as penalty you don't have a comfortable call on either the East or the West hand. To play that the first double of a suit is take-out is more flexible in the long run and here West would have had an easy double. Whether E/W could then get to their only making contract of 3♣ is not clear, but even going two down in the wrong spot would have been better than the actual result.

Short led the king of diamonds so Senior won the ace and played ace and another heart. He lost two spades and a diamond after that for +140 and 10 MPs to Senior/Wolfarth. John Holland and Erika Slatcher had the top N/S score of +470 in 2♥ doubled, while David Franklin and Gerry Stanford made 4♣ doubled for +510 E/W. Elsewhere there was 4♣ doubled down one, 2♠ E/W just making, 3NT down one by E/W and the rest were making nine or ten tricks in heart partscores.

Short and Chisnall needed to get some points back on the last deal of the set and that is just what they achieved.

Board 18. Dealer East. N/S Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
Chisnall	Senior	Short	Wolfarth
–	–	3♦	Pass
4♦	4♥	Pass	5♣
Pass	5♥	All Pass	

If anyone is still in doubt as to the difficulties that can be caused by opposing pre-empts, here is yet another example. Short opened a very aggressive 3♦, trading on the favourable vulnerability, and Chisnall's gentle raise bullied Senior into overcalling a level higher than he would have liked.

Now Wolfarth knew that his partner had bid under pressure, but slam seemed to be a distinct possibility and he had an easy cuebid available. Wolfarth duly bid 5♣ and Senior could not sign off in 5♥ fast enough.

Short led a diamond round to the queen. Senior took the heart finesse then cashed the ace. Discovering that he had a heart loser, Senior took his only remaining shot for the contract, leading a club to the jack. When that scored he needed only that the ♣K stand up as he could then have ruffed the ♦J and taken a spade pitch on the ace of clubs. Alas, the ♣K was ruffed and Short returned a spade so Chisnall could take two of those for down one and all 16 MPs to the eventual winners.

The 3♦ opening had won the board. Had Wolfarth not tried for slam, Chisnall would have saved in 5♦ and Senior would have doubled. Even if Wolfarth had trusted his partner's decision, far from obvious at this vulnerability, the penalty would have been inadequate with six N/Ss being allowed to play the sure heart game. Two E/Ws played in 5♦ doubled for –300, though –500 is possible on a trump lead.