

Summer Festival Swiss Pairs

By Brian Senior

For me, there was a strange feel to the first weekend of the 2018 EBU Summer Meeting. I have been going to Brighton and latterly to Eastbourne for around 40 years and to be in London, at the regular Year End and Easter venue, just didn't feel right. Well, it is for one year and circumstances conspired to make this one-off unavoidable, and at least we all know what to expect from the Royal National Hotel and its surrounding area.

The Swiss Pairs was totally dominated by the top Hungarian international pairing of Gabor Winkler and Peter Lakatos, who were 35 VPs clear of the joint-second placed pairs of Tony Waterlow & Wasim Naqvi, and Chris Jagger & Ian Pagan.

I believe that Michael Byrne has asked the winners for a couple of their best deals, so my focus lies elsewhere. My first exhibit comes from Session Three.

Board 30. Dealer East. None Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
	Senior		Mizel
–	–	Pass	1♦
Dble	4♥	Pass	Pass
Dble	All Pass		

Holding 19 HCP, West could not resist a second double and East didn't fancy bidding with an eight-high hand – only one card bigger than a six, wow! Had East led a club there would have been no story, but it was something of a guess and the actual choice was a spade to the jack and queen. West judged correctly that the second spade wasn't standing up and chose to switch to a trump.

The only trouble with doubling twice is that it pretty much pinpoints all the missing high cards and I was able to take full advantage of that fact. I put in the jack of hearts then cashed the ace and king, discarding two diamonds from dummy. Next a low diamond went to the queen and ace, but what was West to do? Attempting to cash either the spade or diamond would set up two extra winners in dummy, while a club round to the ace-queen was an even less attractive option. In practice, West tried the ace of spades. I ruffed, and had 10 tricks for +590 and 92 out of 114 MPs.

Once West had switched to a trump at trick two there was no escape for the defence. To avoid the endplay West needed to cash one diamond and then switch to a trump. Playing the \spadesuit K at trick two ought to get a count signal from partner and that would help in finding the right defence. With declarer's diamond exit taken away, there is no endplay. He can pick up trumps without loss but eventually loses two clubs and is down one. Declarer could try an endplay by playing hearts from the top, putting West in with the queen. However, West can now play the \spadesuit A and, though that sets up two spade winners for declarer, that only comes to nine tricks – six hearts, two spades and one club – down one.

One more unlikely option for the defence would be a club switch at trick two. If declarer wins the queen and takes the heart finesse he has only nine tricks and loses two clubs and his contract at the end. But win the club and take the ruffing spade finesse, cross to the \clubsuit A and cash the established spade and only then take the heart finesse, and there are 10 tricks once more.

John Cox was the hero of this next one from Session Four.

Board 12. Dealer West. N/S Vul.

	\spadesuit	K Q 8 7		
	\heartsuit	7 5		
	\diamondsuit	K 7 6		
	\clubsuit	Q 9 7 2		
\spadesuit	10 3		\spadesuit	A 9 6 2
\heartsuit	A K 10 6 2		\heartsuit	J 9 4 3
\diamondsuit	10 6 5 3		\diamondsuit	Q
\clubsuit	K 10		\clubsuit	A 8 6 5
	\spadesuit	J 5 4		
	\heartsuit	Q 8		
	\diamondsuit	A J 9 4 2		
	\clubsuit	J 4 3		

West	North	East	South
Cox		Taylor	
1 \heartsuit	Pass	3 \spadesuit	Pass
4 \heartsuit	All Pass		

Peter Taylor's 3♠ response showed four-card support with an unspecified shortage, normally just below opening values. Cox was not, of course, interested in slam so didn't bother to ask which shortage his partner held. Incidentally, isn't that a better method than making a specific splinter bid? Using the artificial 3♠ response North didn't know which suit dummy was short in, which on another day could make the opening lead that much harder.

I led a heart from the North hand. With dummy known to hold a shortage it is likely that declarer will want to take ruffs so, with no clearcut alternative, the trump is a standout lead. Cox won in hand and led a diamond so I hopped up with the king and led a second trump. Cox won, ruffed a diamond and led a low spade to the ten and queen. At this point it didn't matter what I did, but in practice I returned my remaining diamond.

Cox ruffed the diamond and played three rounds of clubs, ruffing. Then he cashed the remaining trumps. Obligated to keep the queen of clubs, I was forced down to one spade. Away went dummy's club and now partner, Jack Mizel, was also squeezed, in his case in spades and diamonds. Either the ♦10 or ♠9 would make the last trick. Plus 450 was worth 100 out of 114 MPs for Cox and Taylor.

This time there was nothing the defence could do, whatever the opening lead. If, for example, I return a spade after winning the ♠Q, declarer wins the ace and ruffs a spade, and we get back to the same situation, just with the roles played by clubs and spades switched around.

Kay Preddy was the star of our other two deals, firstly this one from Session One.

Board 14. Dealer East. None Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
Selway		Preddy	
–	–	2NT	3♠
6NT	All Pass		

Kay opened 2NT and, when South overcalled 3♠, Norman Selway just blasted 6NT, expecting to be contributing six tricks to the cause. South led the king of spades.

Six No Trump was not the most popular contract – there were more people in 6♣, for example, but when it was played it was by no means always successful. Where it failed, this was often because declarer won the first trick and ended up having to guess whether to try for an endplay or to take the diamond finesse. Obviously, reading the ending correctly and going for the squeeze/endplay is a winner, while the finesse is not.

Kay ducked the opening lead and won the spade continuation. She cashed the three heart winners, pitching diamonds from dummy, then ran the clubs, coming down to ♦AQ and a heart in hand, a spade, a diamond and the last club in dummy. Leading the last club now squeezed North down to a singleton diamond as he had to guard the hearts, so away went Kay's heart, and South in turn was squeezed down to one diamond as he had to guard against dummy's nine of spades. A diamond to the ace was now guaranteed to drop the king and that was 12 tricks for +990 and 112 out of 114 MPs.

Ducking the first trick made this contract a huge favourite via the squeeze line. To come in at the three level over a 2NT opening South was almost guaranteed to have a six-card or longer suit, while that of course made North heavy favourite to have the heart length. That meant that declarer's threat cards were sitting over the opposition's guards, and that meant that the double squeeze was a sure thing, just requiring that declarer pay attention to the defensive discards.

We have just seen two deals on which a double squeeze, quite a simple type as squeezes go, has produced 100 and 112 MPs out of 114, with the defence powerless in both cases. While on the slam deal many pairs were in a different contract, this suggests that squeeze play is a dark and mysterious art to many players, who are missing out on a rich source of tricks and matchpoints. Opportunities to play for a squeeze come up more often than you might imagine once you start to look for them, so perhaps this is something many players might fruitfully read about and work on?

And finally back to Session Three:

Board 27. Dealer South. None Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
	Selway		Preddy
–	–	–	1NT
Pass	3♣	Pass	3♦
Pass	3NT	Pass	4♥
All Pass			

One No Trump was 15–17 and 3♣ showed a diamond shortage with game values but no slam interest. Three Diamonds asked and 3NT said that North was precisely 4–4–1–4. Kay therefore chose to play in 4♥.

West led the king of diamonds. Kay won the ace, ruffed a diamond and took the club finesse. When the jack held she was already ahead of half the field who did not take the finesse, but there was still plenty of work to be done as the cards lay. Kay cashed the ace of clubs then ruffed a diamond. East over-ruffed and returned a trump, West winning the ace and continuing with the eight. That prevented any further ruffs in dummy, but had also drawn trumps for declarer who no longer needed to worry about opposing ruffs.

Kay won the second heart with dummy's queen and played king of clubs for a diamond pitch, then ruffed a club. West meanwhile also discarded a diamond to keep king–doubleton spade, so Kay exited with her diamond loser and West had to win and lead from the king of spades to turn Kay's queen into the game–going trick. Plus 420 was worth 105 out of 114 MPs.