

## The 2026 EBU Spring Foursomes

For the first time in over 30 years the EBU Spring Foursomes attracted the maximum possible entry of 64 teams, the perfect number which meant that there was no need for any threesomes at any stage of the main event.

The teams would play a dual elimination tournament, 32-board knockout matches but with two lives. The remaining undefeated teams would play in one pool, where they would face another undefeated side, while the once-defeated teams would play in a separate pool, where they would face another once-defeated team. On losing a match in the undefeated pool a team would drop down into the once-defeated pool for the next round, while a loss in the once-defeated pool would see a team knocked out of the main event as they had now been beaten twice, and they would drop down into the secondary event.

Not only was this the largest entry for many years, but the field also looked to be the strongest there had ever been in the history of the event, with 21 countries being represented.

The last undefeated team would get a match off while the remaining six once-defeated teams would battle it out for a place in the semi-finals, where they would be rejoined by the undefeated team. That last undefeated team proved to be the original number three seed, SCHNELWAR (Vincent Demuy, Zach Grossack, Joe Grue, Adam Kaplan, Susan Schnellwar) of USA, who could relax for the rest of the day while the three quarter-finals were being played.

The quarter final line-up was:

Seed 7 – **BARTON** (Grainne Barton npc, Conor Boland, John Carroll, Nick Fitzgibbon, Tom Hanlon, Adam Mesbur, Mark Moran) – Ireland

.v.

Seed 20 – **PHOENIX** (Ali Ahmed, Thomas Bessis, Finn Kolesnik, James Thrower, Daniel Tylvad) – UAE, France, USA, England, Denmark

Seed 12 – **GREEN** (Sebastian Atisen, John Atthey, Ben Green, Frances Hinden, Graham Osborne, Neil Rosen) – England

.v.

Seed 16 – **DAVIDOFF** (Viktor Aronov, Stefan David, Grozyo Donev, Zia Mahmood) – Bulgaria, England

Seed 1 – **EDMONDS** (Sjoert Brink, Sebaastian Drijver, Jodi Edmonds, Jacek Kalita, Michal Klukowski, Joel Woodridge) – Netherlands, USA, Switzerland

.v.

Seed 31 – **LUPO VELOCE** (Heinrich Berger, Thomas Burg, Wolfgang Lauss, Peter Zelnik) – Austria

It was a pity that technical issues prevented the quarter-finals from being shown on vugraph as, while BARTON defeated PHOENIX by a relatively comfortable 26 IMPs, the other two matches could have gone either way right up to the last deal. In the end, GREEN scraped through by a single IMP, 69-68 against DAVIDOFF, while LUPO VELOCE beat EDMONDS by 67-64.

## The Semi-finals

As the undefeated team, SCHNELWAR had the right to choose their semi-final opponents, and selected LUPO VELOCE, leaving BARTON to face GREEN.

BARTON led GREEN by 36-1 after 10 deals, but then the tide turned. It was still 36-19 to BARTON when this deal hit the table:

Board 19. Dealer South. E/W Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
<b>Osborne</b>	<b>Hanlon</b>	<b>Hinden</b>	<b>Boland</b>
—	—	—	1♦
2♣	2♦	2NT	4♦
4♠	Pass	5♣	Pass
Pass	Dble	All Pass	

West	North	East	South
<b>Moran</b>	<b>Atisen</b>	<b>Carroll</b>	<b>Green</b>
—	—	—	1♦
3♣	Pass	4♠	5♦
5♠	6♦	6♠	All Pass

For HINDEN, Graham Osborne started the West hand with a simple overcall, but was then able to introduce his second suit at a comfortable level by bidding 4♠ over Conor Boland's 4♦. When Frances Hinden gave simple preference to clubs, Tom Hanlon made a dubious penalty double, and that concluded the auction.

Hanlon could have beaten 5♣ doubled had he led a spade – Boland wins the first club and puts him in with a heart to get his spade ruff – but on the actual diamond lead Osborne could ruff and play a club, and there were just two aces to be lost; just made for +750.

For BARTON, Mark Moran started with a two-suited overcall, 3♣ showing at least five-five in the

black suits. John Carroll jumped to 4♠ in response and now everybody thought they had reason to find one more bid.

Ben Green had a seven-card suit and was at favourable vulnerability, so his 5♦ call looks right, and Moran had two extra cards in his promised suits so also had to bid again. As for Sebastian Atisen, he was at favourable vulnerability with three-card diamond support and a singleton club. The only question was whether repeated spade leads might cause declarer problems in 5♠, given Atisen's four-card trump holding, but he rightly judged it too dangerous to rely on that possibility. Carroll's 6♠ is less clearcut in my view, with so much strength in the red suits. Perhaps a pass over 6♦, leaving it up to partner, is a better option?

Six Spades was down a trick for -100, while 6♦ would have been down two. Even doubling to collect +300 would only have saved 3 IMPs, given the result at the other table. It was now just 36-32 in favour of BARTON. Was the momentum swing permanent, or only temporary?

The next few boards were flat, but then the set ended with a bang on another big high-level competitive layout.

Board 24. Dealer West. None Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
<b>Osborne</b>	<b>Hanlon</b>	<b>Hinden</b>	<b>Boland</b>
Pass	1♣	4♦	Pass
5♦	Dble	All Pass	

West	North	East	South
<b>Moran</b>	<b>Atisen</b>	<b>Carroll</b>	<b>Green</b>
Pass	1♣	4♦	Pass
Pass	Dble	Pass	4♠
5♦	6♠	All Pass	

Atisen doubled when the diamond pre-empt came back to him and it was natural for Green to respond in his seven-card suit, however weak his hand might be. When Moran now saved in 5♦,

Atisen blasted 6♠, ending the auction. With clubs coming in for five tricks there was nothing to the play and Green soon had all 13 tricks for +1010.

In the other room, Osborn raised diamonds before the double came. Perhaps Boland too should have bid his long spade suit, but he wasn't quite sure that the five level was secure, while surely there would be a plus score available on defence. He passed out the double and found that there was a heart and three club tricks to come, so down two for +300 to HANLON, but 12 IMPS to GREEN, who led by 44-36 going into the final quarter.

However, BARTON had much the better of the fourth quarter and ran out winners by 78-54 IMPs. The defending champions were in the final once again.

Meanwhile, in the other semi-final, LUPO VELOCE had raced into a 26-0 IMP lead after three boards, but SCHNELWAR took the lead on Board 11 and never looked like relinquishing it, leading by 56-36 at half-way, and 63-52 going into the final quarter, and pulling away to win by a final score of 80-52.

It would be USA v Ireland for the 2026 EBU Spring Foursomes. As the still undefeated team, SCHNELWAR would have the option of claiming an extra eight-board set should they be behind at the end of the regulation 32.

## The Final

BARTON had much the better of the first quarter, which they won by 39-12. This well bid slam by their veteran pair, Adam Mesbur and Nick Fitzgibbon, contributed 13 richly deserved IMPs to the Irish cause.

Board 3. Dealer South. E/W Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
<b>Grossack</b>	<b>Carroll</b>	<b>Schnelwar</b>	<b>Moran</b>
–	–	–	Pass
1NT	Pass	3♥	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

West	North	East	South
<b>Fitzgibbon</b>	<b>Grue</b>	<b>Mesbur</b>	<b>Demuy</b>
–	–	–	Pass
1NT	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♦	Pass	4♣	Pass
4♠	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♣	Pass	6♣	All Pass

Both Wests opened a strong NT and both Easts had a piece of system to cater to this handtype.

For Zach Grossack, that was a jump to 3♥, showing the heart shortage and a hand not suitable to start with a transfer to spades. With no great heart strength but sufficient length to offer prospects of stopping the suit being run against him, Grossack settled for 3NT.

John Carroll led the four of hearts against 3NT, Mark Moran winning the king and continuing with the five. When Grossack followed low, Carroll won the ace then queen, seeing the only hope of beating the contract being to find his partner with five hearts – unlikely but, you never know. In practice, this just cost the overtrick; 10 tricks for +630.

Mesbur responded 3♣, at least five-four in the minors, then confirmed the five-five shape at his next turn. When Fitzgibbon cuebid 4♠, that was just what Mesbur wanted to hear, as it also suggested little wasted in hearts. He asked for key-cards then bid the small slam. A spade lead meant an easy 13 tricks for +1390 and 13 IMPs to BARTON.

While player judgement was also involved, the Irish method was superior to the American, as Fitzgibbon had more space to explore over the 3♣ response, while the 3♥ response rather cramped the auction at the other table.

Set two began with five flat boards. On Board 14 SCHNELWAR gained 11 IMPs when Demuy/Grue bid a borderline 6NT which made exactly while the Irish stopped in game. Then the final board of the set saw another big American gain, and again it was on a slam hand – of sorts.

Board 16. Dealer West. E/W Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
<b>Demuy</b>	<b>Hanlon</b>	<b>Grue</b>	<b>Boland</b>
3♠	Pass	Pass	4♥
All Pass			

West	North	East	South
<b>Moran</b>	<b>Schnelwar</b>	<b>Carroll</b>	<b>Grossack</b>
1♠	Pass	2♦	2♥
5♦	5♥	6♦	6♥
Dble	All Pass		

Demuy opened the West hand with 3♠, leading to a very simple auction as Hanlon and Grue both passed, and Boland overcalled 4♥ – and that was that, a quick and easy 12 tricks for +480.

Moran opened at the one level and that led to a completely different auction, both sides finding their red-suit fits and competing vigorously to the six level, where eventually Moran doubled to conclude a spirited auction.

Moran cashed the king of spades then switched to a trump, just as had Demuy against game. Grossack won in hand and ruffed a diamond, ran the queen of clubs, then led a club to the ten. When that passed off peacefully, he ruffed a spade to hand to ruff the ♦Q, ruffed another spade back to hand, and drew the outstanding trump then claimed; 12 tricks for +1210 and 12 IMPs to SCHNELWAR.

At the midpoint in the match BARTON still led, but by only 42-35.

SCHNELWAR had ended the second set with two double-figure swings in three boards, and they carried that momentum through into set three. BARTON picked up 8 IMPs on Board 17, but then SCHNELWAR made back to back vulnerable 3NTs on the next two deals whilst conceding –100 and –50 respectively at the other table for 11 IMPs on each deal. They picked up an overtrick IMP on Board 20, then came another of those high-level judgement deals.

Board 21. Dealer North. N/S Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
<b>Demuy</b>	<b>Mesbur</b>	<b>Grue</b>	<b>Fitzgibbon</b>
–	1♥	1♠	5♣
Dble	5NT	Pass	6♣
Pass	6♥	Pass	7♣
Dble	All Pass		

West	North	East	South
<b>Boland</b>	<b>Kaplan</b>	<b>Hanlon</b>	<b>Grossack</b>
–	1♥	Pass	2♣
Dble	All Pass		

When Mesbur opened 1♥ and Grue overcalled 1♠, Fitzgibbon just leapt to 5♣, no doubt assuming that his opponents had a big spade fit and wanting to put the pressure on them. Mesbur clearly expected something completely different for this action as he rebid 5NT then bid 6♥ over Fitzgibbon's 6♣ response. Fitzgibbon went back to clubs, and Demuy doubled. Demuy cashed the king then ace of diamonds, followed by the ace of spades, and that was down three for –800.

No doubt Mesbur and Fitzgibbon will have an animated discussion as to what just happened – I know I would.

The auction from the other table looks odd, doesn't it? That's because it is, and the problem was that the match was being played with screens, and the two East/West players were acting on different information as to the meaning of South's 2♣ bid. North alerted the 2♣ bid and explained to East that it promised only two-plus clubs. East therefore thought that the double showed clubs. Unfortunately, South did not alert West who, thinking that 2♣ was natural, intended his double as being for take-out. A ruling was of course required, and 5♣ doubled down one for –200 was considered to be the most likely, and a reasonable average, of a number of possible outcomes.

SCHNELWAR gained another 12 IMPs so led by 70-50. the teams exchanged medium-sized swings and ended set three with SCHNELWAR up by 76-57 with one eight-board set to play.

The momentum all seemed to be with SCHNELWAR going into the fourth quarter, but it was BARTON who struck first.

Board 25. Dealer North. E/W Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
<b>Demuy</b>	<b>Carroll</b>	<b>Grue</b>	<b>Moran</b>
–	1♦	Pass	1♠
Dble	2♦	3♥	Pass
4♥	All Pass		

West	North	East	South
<b>Hanlon</b>	<b>Kaplan</b>	<b>Boland</b>	<b>Grossack</b>
–	1♦	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♦	Pass	Pass
2♥	3♦	3♥	Pass
4♥	All Pass		

Both East/Wests got to what looks to be a doomed heart game.

Moran led the queen of diamonds against Grue, Carroll overtaking and cashing a second diamond before switching to the singleton spade. Demuy ducked in dummy but Moran overtook with the ten and returned his low spade for Carroll to ruff, and that was down one for –100.

Kaplan led the king of diamonds against Hanlon, continuing with the ace. Now, however, he imagined a layout on which Grossack held the jack of hearts and could ruff with it to promote the queen. He therefore continued with a third diamond. Grossack could only ruff with the four as away went dummy's small spade. Hanlon over-ruffed, cashed the top hearts, and had 10 tricks when the queen fell; +620 and 12 IMPs to BARTON, closing to 69-76.

Board 26 saw both Norths declare 4♠, needing only to play ♠KJ98643 facing singleton five for at most two losers. In isolation, the correct play is low to the king, gaining against bare 10 or queen, but on this deal left-hand-opponent had opened the bidding, and both declarers led low to the eight, winning when there was ♠Q107 inside.

There was an overtrick IMP for SCHNELMAR on Board 27, then came a big swing on Board 28.

Board 28. Dealer West. N/S Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
<b>Demuy</b>	<b>Carroll</b>	<b>Grue</b>	<b>Moran</b>
1NT	Pass	2♠(i)	Pass
3♣(ii)	Pass	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♥	Dble	All Pass

- (i) Clubs
- (ii) Don't like clubs

West	North	East	South
<b>Hanlon</b>	<b>Kaplan</b>	<b>Boland</b>	<b>Grossack</b>
1NT	Pass	2♠(i)	Pass
3♣(ii)	Pass	3NT	All Pass

- (i) Range ask or clubs
- (ii) Maximum

Kaplan led the two of spades against 3NT, Grossack winning the ace and returning the seven. Hanlon won the king and led a club to the king and jack, then switched his attention to diamonds, playing the queen, which held, followed by the seven to the jack and ace. Kaplan cashed his black tricks for down one and -50.

Grue settled for a club partscore on finding that his partner didn't like clubs, only for Moran to balance with 3♥. That would have come to no harm, but Carroll was tempted and played his partner for more than he actually had. The raise to game was promptly doubled by Grue, and that was that.

Demuy led the nine of clubs to the two, queen and jack. Grue switched to the queen of diamonds, Moran winning the ace and taking a diamond pitch on the ace of clubs. The eight of clubs came next, covered by the king as Moran pitched his last diamond. Back came a club, ruffed and over-ruffed, and Demuy forced declarer with a diamond. Moran accepted the force and played a heart,

and had to lose this trick plus one spade. Two down meant –500 and 11 IMPs to SCHNELWAR.

That made it 88-69 in favour of the American team, and when Moran and Carroll bid a thin slam on Board 31 and it went down that was the match, another game swing on the final deal merely giving an unrealistic look to the final margin. The final score was 111-69 in favour of the new 2026 EBU Spring Foursomes champions, SCHNELWAR (Vincent Demuy, Joe Grue, Adam Kaplan, Zach Grossack and Susan Schnelwar), all of USA, but it was a much closer match than that.