

A day in the life of . . .

Nevena Senior

Nevena Senior is the holder of a total of ten medals in European and World Championships, playing for Bulgaria, where she was born, Great Britain and England. She considers her highest achievements to be winning the European Ladies Pairs in 1987 in Brighton for Bulgaria (when she had only been playing bridge for four years) and the gold medal for England in the Women's Teams at the World Mind Sports Games in Beijing in 2008.

I LEAD a kind of 'double life', so I don't have a typical day – I have two!

I live in Nottingham, but from Monday to Wednesday I work in London, playing and coaching at the Andrew Robson Bridge Club. This entails getting up at 8.45am on Mondays in order to catch the London train at 10.30. I just drink a quick coffee before leaving, but treat myself to a sandwich once in London. I reach the club in time to play in the 1pm session, after which I go over the hands with my partner.

I have a two-hour break before the evening session starts at 7pm, so I might have a sushi as an early dinner. The evening is a replica of the afternoon – playing and coaching afterwards – so my working day usually finishes around 10 or 11 in the evening. I am lucky in being able to spend the night at a friend's house, but by the time we've finished chatting bedtime is very late – still, travelling to the club the next day takes less time than from Nottingham!

I go back on Thursday and usually spend the weekend at home although once or twice a month I may play in a congress – I only play in the big ones and the major knock-out events, or I would not have enough time with my family.

I live with my husband, Brian, our daughter Katya (13) and my son Kiril (24). My mother, who is 84, lives with us most of the year, with occasional trips back to Bulgaria. She does not speak English (though she can read it and she understands quite a lot) but this does not prevent her from making friends. One of

our neighbours is from the Ukraine, and my mother has frequent chats with her – in Russian! Having mother with us is good, especially if both Brian and I are away playing bridge: she gets on well with the children and they all look after each other. Kiril, who was born in Bulgaria

when I lived (and was married to my first husband) there, is perfectly bilingual; Katya, born in England, speaks Bulgarian with an English accent, but has no problems in either language. Brian is the only person in the household who does not speak Bulgarian, but by now he understands enough to make it impossible for any of the others to criticise him without him being aware of it!

When I'm at home, I forget about bridge and try to sleep late to catch up, even if Katya tends to wake me up at 6am for a cuddle, or because she has suddenly remembered that she 'needs' something for school. Kiril now works, so he leaves early, and by the time I'm up both kids have left and I can have a leisurely morning checking e-mails and catching up with the news. I cook both lunch and dinner, though lunch is generally just soup with Brian and mother, and in the afternoon I do the shopping and might meet Katya after school for a 'girlie' shopping expedition.

Now she's growing up, Katya needs me less and does more things with her father. Brian plays tennis with her and they go to the cinema together once a week. Since Bulgaria joined the EU, going there is easier and we all go at least once a year. Our best trip, however, especially if you



Nevena's Top Tip

Always have a plan as declarer, but be prepared to change it, if things are different from what you would normally expect.

Ideally, you should try to combine all possibilities at the start of the play, but it is sometimes difficult to do so. However, you should use all the new information about the opposition's hands that comes along in the course of the play and adjust the plan accordingly.

Look at this deal, for example:

♠ J 9 6 5
♥ A K J 6
♦ A 8
♣ Q 7 2



♠ A K Q 8 3
♥ 7 5 2
♦ Q 6
♣ A K 4

You are in 6♠ and West leads a club.

To start with, your plan should be to draw trumps, cash the ace and king of hearts, cross to hand and play a heart towards the jack. That gives you the contract when West holds ♥Q, or hearts are 3-3 or East has ♥Q-x or ♥Q.

However, when you draw the trumps, East turns out to have only one. As a discovery play, you play two more rounds of clubs, and East shows out on the third round. At that point your original plan stops making sense. Cashing the ace and king of hearts was a precaution in case East held ♥Q-x. But if this was the case, West would have had a 3-4-1-5 shape and might well have led his singleton (and East, with eight diamonds, would have bid).

It's much more attractive in this position to cash one top heart, then play ace and another diamond, hoping that the ♦K is with East, and endplay him.

ask Katya, was to Disneyland when she was 4 – it was a memorable experience!

Despite being portrayed in *Wife Swap* (which I wish to forget about) as not being close to each other, we are a close-knit family, and in the evening, after our meal, we enjoy our favourite TV programmes together. We had a *very* long phase of being *House* fans, but have now moved on to *Boston Legal*, and are quite addicted to it. Just as well I can now catch up on missed episodes on the internet . . . □