

High-Level Decisions – Brian Senior Schapiro Spring Foursomes 2015

Boards 9–16 of the first session on Friday evening were a lively set, including a number of high-level decisions. I'm not sure that anyone covered themselves in glory at my table, where the Anglo-Bulgarian PENFOLD team faced the young Scots, MORRISON.

Board 12. Dealer West. N/S Vul.

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

West	North	East	South	
Wilkinson	Pass	Senior Morrison	2♠	Penfold
Pass	Pass	1♠	2♠	
3♦	4♥	5♦	Dble	
All	Pass			

Two Spades was a Michaels Cuebid, at least five-five in hearts and a minor. The extent to which 3♦, from a passed hand, implied a spade fit, was not clear at the time, though it seems reasonable to suppose that it should do so – particularly if you happen to play weak 2♦ openers, when it is hard to see how West can have a good enough single-suited diamond hand to justify the bid.

Four Hearts and 5♦ both seemed obvious enough (given the doubt about a spade fit from East's point of view), but what about South's double? A level higher, and it might be readily understood as Lightner, asking for an unusual lead on some auctions, but I confess to just having assumed that E/W were saving and my partner was doubling because she expected it to go off – given that I would have some values to bid 4♥ when vulnerable.

Anyway, it takes a spade lead for a ruff, a heart to the ace and a second ruff to defeat 5♦ doubled. When I actually cashed the ace of hearts, we could get either a ruff or a club trick but not both, and that was –550 and 13 IMPs away when our teammates were forced to bid higher to save over 5♥, which is on only a winning club view.

Board 14. Dealer East. None Vul.

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

West	North	East	South	
Wilkinson		Senior Morrison		Penfold
–	–	4♠	4NT	
5♠	Dble	All	Pass	

Phillip Morrison opened 4♠ and Sandra Penfold overcalled 4NT, at least five-five in two unspecified suits. When Alex Wilkinson competed to 5♠, I had an interesting choice of actions.

There was nothing in this auction to say that a pass over 5♠ would be forcing, so the options were to bid 5NT to ask partner to pick a suit, or to double and leave it up to her whether to play or defend. The double, I'm sure, should not be penalty here, but showing transferrable values – ones that would be good both on offense and defense. Well, that is what I seemed to have got and, with a reasonable expectation of beating 5♠ and no guarantee of making a slam, double seemed to be the better option. But Sandra could not expect to make a slam on the South cards so left in the double, only to find that we could not defeat 5♠ doubled. That was -650 this time. Did anyone do anything terribly wrong?

Board 15. Dealer South. N/S Vul.

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

West	North	East	South	
Wilkinson		Senior	Morrison	Penfold
—	—	—	Pass	
1♥	4♠	Pass	Pass	
Dble	All	Pass		

The auction up to East's final pass seems to be pretty automatic. Should East pass the double? Well, he has no great expectations of making a five-level contract, but how confident can he be of defeating 4♠? It looks to be another close one.

If East does remove the double, should he bid 5♥, or prefer 4NT, two or more places to play? And for the more sophisticated partnerships, there may also be a difference between an immediate 5♥ and bidding 4NT then converting partner's expected five of a minor to 5♥ – for me, the immediate 5♥ is stronger, just in case partner has a huge hand which makes slam a possibility.

After a heart lead, I ruffed and took an immediate club finesse – the defenders will usually be able to prevent a diamond ruff in the dummy, so an alternative tenth trick has to be found from somewhere – and a few moments later the contract had been made for +790.

That was worth 12 IMPs. At the other table, Trendafilov and Karaivanov had reached 5♦ on the E/W cards and this proved to be unmakeable because of the four-nil heart split. Five Hearts, however, can be made despite that bad trump split.