

The Schapiro Spring Foursomes Final 2017

The final of the 2017 Schapiro Spring Foursomes featured the Irish Open team, with coach and multiple world champion Krzysztof Martens replacing the unavailable Tommy Garvey, and the Allfrey team which has shown itself to be the best in England by some margin in recent years. In the semi-finals, Allfrey, the second seed, defeated top-seeded Zia by 80-52 IMPs, while Barton (Ireland), the original seventh seeds, defeated Seed 13, Black, by 107-62.

The final was played over four eight-board segments, however, as the undefeated team in the double-elimination KO, Ireland had the option of claiming an extra eight-deal segment should they be behind after 32 deals and that eventuality duly materialised. Allfrey led almost throughout the final but never by anything like a comfortable margin. Indeed, with two deals to play in regulation the margin was down to a single IMP, increasing to 15 over those two deals. When the Irish missed a cold slam on the second board of the extra eight the match was effectively over as the rest of the set was a very quiet affair. Allfrey (Alexander Allfrey, Andrew Robson, David Bakhshi, Tony Forrester, David Gold and Michael Bell, had won the 2017 Schapiro Spring Foursomes, the final score being 91-67 IMPs (82-58 after slow-play fines to both sides). The runners-up were Krzysztof Martens, John Carroll, Tom Hanlon, Hugh McGann, Rory Boland, Mark Moran, and npc Grainne Barton.

This deal from the third set had the potential for a huge swing but it all ended up rather tamely in the end, though the two West players had some fun along the way.

Board 21. Dealer North. N/S Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
Carroll	Forrester	Martens	Bakhshi
–	1♣	1♥	1♠
1NT	2♥	Dble	Pass
2♠	3♦	Pass	3♥
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♥
Pass	4♠	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♥	Pass	6♠
All Pass			

Forrester's 1♣ opening was either natural or balanced and Bakhshi's 1♠ promised at least five cards. Now John Carroll could have leapt to 4♥, or even 5♥, but decided that either of those actions would just encourage his opponents to keep bidding, which was not what he wanted to happen. Instead, he tried a psychic 1NT call, hoping to conceal the true nature of his hand. However, Forrester had enough to show a good raise to 2♠ or better via a heart cuebid and Carroll had an opportunity a few seconds later to try a second psyche, this time 2♠. However, from here N/S took over, Forrester completing the picture of his hand by bidding his four-card diamond suit. Bakhshi bid 3♥ to commit to game then cuebid hearts to show the control at his next turn before taking control with RKCB and bidding the small slam on finding one key card to be missing.

Six Spades would have been a tricky contract on a heart lead but Carroll thought it unlikely that a heart would stand up and instead kicked off with a diamond. Bakhshi won the ace, played a spade to his queen then a diamond to the king followed by a diamond ruff with the ace. A spade to the king now put him back in dummy to ruff the last diamond and it remained only to exit with a heart and leave the defence to solve his club guess for him; +1430.

West	North	East	South
Robson	Hanlon	Allfrey	McGann
–	1♦	1♥	2♥
5♦	5♥	6♥	6♠
7♥	Dble	All Pass	

Hanlon opened 1♦, and McGann's 2♥ was a transfer to spades. Robson tried the rather more flamboyant psyche of 5♦, allegedly Exclusion Key Card Blackwood, showing a diamond void and asking for key cards outside that suit. When Hanlon felt able to not only support spades at the five level but do so via a 5♥ cuebid, McGann was happy to bid the spade slam, only for Robson to trust his opponents and take the save in 7♥, promptly doubled by Hanlon to end the auction. McGann led the seven of diamonds and three rounds of that suit saw him collect his ruff. There were three black tricks to come next so the contract was down six for –1400 and 1 IMP to Allfrey. I have to confess that this is one of my favourite ways to gain a single IMP but, given that 6♠ was far from secure on a heart lead, leaving declarer to find the ♣Q himself, Robson would have much preferred to defend had he known the full layout.