

2019 Schapiro Spring Foursomes 1

The Spring Foursomes has been one of the EBU's most prestigious events since its inception back in 1962, the dual elimination format being attractive to both the top and lower-ranked teams alike.

The fortunes of the competition have waxed and waned. Back in the late seventies and eighties, it expanded to a second venue, Harrogate, having initially been held solely in Eastbourne. In 1990 and 1991 a third, midlands venue, was added, before the Spring Foursomes went back to its original single venue. The tournament's popularity faded somewhat and I can remember a string of years when the entry was only in the forties – 64 is the perfect number for the format to work with nothing but direct matches throughout. This year there are 60 teams, the best for a long time, which is great news. Also very encouraging is the number of youth teams in the field, with all the EBU's youth squads well represented.

Of the youth teams, pride of place for session one must go to the U26 Women, who defeated one of the teams seeded in the top half of the field to remain undefeated. I am a member of Team Penfold, and we too faced a youth team, U21 Gahan. A first set lead of 47-0 meant that we were never going to be in danger of an embarrassing defeat, but the youngsters gave a good account of themselves from there on in and we only added another 24 IMPs over the remaining 24 deals.

We gained a big swing on this deal on which many pairs missed the excellent slam.

Board 15. Dealer South. N/S Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
	Senior		Penfold
–	–	–	1♦
Pass	2♣	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♥
Pass	6♣	All Pass	

We were playing Acol, so the raise to 3♣ was not forcing. Looking at such a balanced hand, my first thought was to check if 3NT might be a better game than 5♣, hence the 3♠ no trump probe. However, Sandra could now see that I must be weak in hearts, which meant that our hands would be fitting perfectly. She cuebid 4♥ to say just that and I could jump to the cold slam.

My 3♠ bid made things easy for us, as Sandra could see the perfect fit immediately, but I think 3♦ is actually a better bid than 3♠ over 3♣. Why? Well, at the point where North is deciding what to bid over 3♣ his main thought is about finding the right game. Had Sandra's major suits been switched around, she would have bid 3NT and that would have ended the auction, with the opening lead coming through North's king to three spades. Better to bid 3♦. If South has heart strength, she will bid 3♥ and now North can bid 3NT. The difference is that North's vulnerable spade holding is no longer exposed to the opening lead, while he can hope that South's heart holding is less delicate.

It is still possible to reach 6♣ via this alternative route, of course, but it takes a little more work to get there.

There were some lively boards around on Friday evening. East held what is likely to be the best hand he sees all weekend on this deal from the second set.

Board 9. Dealer North. E/W Vul

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

West	North	East	South
Cope	Senior	Anoyrkatis	Penfold
-	1♥	2♥	3♥
4♠	5♥	6♥	Pass
6♠	All Pass		



When I opened 1♥, Theo Anoyrkatis overcalled 2♥, spades and a minor, and Sandra made a pre-emptive raise to 3♥, Andy Cope (pictured) liked his three spades, ace and side void enough to jump to 4♠, and I sacrificed in 5♥. Needing only the ♠Q and ♣A for Seven, Theo tried 6♥ and Andy settled for the small slam as he could see that he had the wrong ace (or perhaps 6♥ was Exclusion Key-card Blackwood, as at the other table?).

In the other room, Sam Anoyrkatis jumped to 4♥ with the South hand so John Holland bid 4♠ and now Alan Mould jumped to 6♥, EKCB, hoping for Seven if John held the ♣A. It was not to be so the board was flat at +1430. Seven Hearts would have been a good save – declarer can come to eight tricks for -1100 and an 8-

IMP gain.

I heard of a top-ranked pair who had a bit of a disaster on the E/W cards. Their auction, if I was given it correctly, went like this:

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	2♥	3♥
Pass	Pass	4♥	Pass
4♠	Pass	6♦	All Pass

You can see where North was coming from – two low spades and three low diamonds gives 6♦ play, while if partner has three or more spades the spade slam will have play. South, who might have bid at least 3♠ over 3♥, didn't seem to be on the same planet as his partner – how many hands can you come up with for East where 6♦ is a better spot than 6♠?

A heart was led so the club loser went away, but the five-two trump split meant that justice was done and the contract failed by a trick.

Not all the interesting stories come on slam deals. This next one was a flat partscore but showed one of our youthful opponents off to good effect.

Board 16. Dealer West. E/W Vul

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

West	North	East	South
Cope	Senior	Anoyrkatis	Penfold
Pass	Pass	1♣	Pass
1♦	1♥	Dble	2♦
2♥	All Pass		

One Club could have been two and 1♦ showed hearts. One Heart was take-out of hearts and double showed three-card heart support.

I led the three of diamonds against 2♥, Sandra winning the king and cashing the ace before switching to a spade to dummy's king. Andy ran the queen of hearts to my king, won the spade return and came to hand with the ace of clubs to ruff his third diamond. A heart to the nine passed off peacefully so he simply played a club to the king and a third club. I could win and cash the spade winner, but he had the ace-ten of hearts sitting over Sandra's jack-eight to claim the last two tricks, not perhaps a difficult endplay, but a nice confidently played hand from such a young player.