

2019 Schapiro Spring Foursomes 2

Three rounds into the 2019 Schapiro Spring Foursomes and all but one of the top eight seeds remain undefeated. The eighth undefeated team is thirteenth-seeded MOSSOP, who scraped through against the number four seeds, GILLIS, by 68-65 in Round 3. In my opinion MOSSOP should have been seeded higher than thirteenth so this was more a meeting of equals than an upset.

Only one of the several youth teams is still going strong in the main event, so congratulations to U26 Women, who had another good win yesterday to remain in the once-defeated pool. Getting on for half the field missed slam on this deal from the Friday evening session, and three declarers went down in 6♥.

Board 8. Dealer West. None Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
Holland		Senior	
1♠	Pass	2♥	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♦	Pass
4♠	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♥	Pass	6♥	All Pass

John Holland and I were playing two-over-one GF, so 3♥ covered quite a wide range. However, I could cuebid 4♦ as a serious slam try – lesser hands begin with 3NT to show a non-serious try, one which is just leaving partner the space to explore slam if he has a good hand. I think this serious/non-serious split is an essential part of the methods when playing two-over-one, as without it there are really serious range issues on potential slam auction. Anyway, knowing I had a good hand, John could go past game to show the spade control and, by implication since I had bypassed clubs, a club control, and the small slam was easily reached.

Sam Anoyrkatis led the ten of spades against 6♥. If declarer takes that at face value then he can play to draw trumps and take the ruffing spade finesse for his contract, but everyone is familiar with the concept of leading through dummy's side-suit like this to attempt to dissuade declarer from taking a winning finesse, so it is better to look for an alternative.

Declarer should play to ruff his club losers in dummy, pitching the two of clubs on the third diamond. He should, however, be mindful of the spade lead – after all, it could be genuine – and keep his spade ruffs back to hand to a minimum. So, win the ace of spades and cash the ace of clubs before taking the discard on the diamonds – this will save taking an extra spade ruff to get to hand – and then cash the diamonds for the club pitch. Declarer is now in the right hand to ruff a club, play a heart to the ace and ruff another club. If the ♣K has not appeared, he now

needs to ruff a spade followed by a ruff of the fourth club.

On the actual layout, there is no need of a third club ruff so declarer just cashes the ♥K and claims 12 tricks. If he does need to take a third club ruff, the only danger is that hearts are two-two with an honour in each defender's hand, and the club gets over-ruffed, followed by a spade or diamond through to promote a trick for the other trump honour.

I heard a lot of talk about this next hand, from Friday evening's final set of boards. Six Diamonds is where I would be happy to play, and that was the majority contract, with more pairs stopping in game than bid to the grand slam.

Board 31. Dealer South. N/S Vul

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

Say that you bid to 7♦, played by East. On a non-trump lead you can win and cash the four outside winners, pitching a club on the ace of spades, then crossruff your way to 13 tricks. But what if South leads a low diamond?

Firstly, declarer can of course succeed by guessing clubs successfully after taking two spade ruffs in the dummy and pitching the other losing spade on the ace of hearts. But any self-respecting declarer will want better than a two-way finesse to make a grand slam.

If hearts are four-three, two extra winners can be established in the suit. Three hearts, four diamonds, three black winners, and three heart ruffs, comes to 13, reversing the dummy. So declarer thinks about that for a while and sees that, unless there is ♥KQx in one hand, he will require four dummy entries, three to ruff out the heart, and a fourth after trumps have been drawn to cash the established winners. Three of those entries will have to come from the trump suit, and only one more can come from leading a diamond from hand. So declarer should work out that his best shot is to put in dummy's eight. If that is covered by the nine, he will probably have to fall back on the club guess, but on the actual deal the eight scores. Declarer can now play ace of hearts for a spade pitch, ruff a heart high, diamond to dummy, ruff a heart high, spade ruff, ruff a heart high. When hearts are four-three, he crosses to the king of clubs, draws the outstanding trump, and cashes the hearts and black aces – 13 tricks.

If the hearts do not behave as hoped, declarer will need to guess the clubs. However, this 50-50 chance is only the fallback position after trying for the other roughly 50-50 proposition that hearts might be four-three. The combination will make the slam slightly over three-quarters of the time – much better than just relying on a club guess. Of course, declarer could easily go down by playing low from dummy at trick one without making a plan and finding that he no longer has the necessary entries for the hearts. Of course, he still might guess the clubs, but this is yet another example of the importance of planning, planning, planning, before playing to trick one.

Quite a few pairs found their way to game on this deal from Round 3, but mostly unsuccessfully.

Board 10. Dealer East. All Vul

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

West	North	East	South
-	-	Pass	Pass
1♣	2♠	Pass	2NT
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

There were various auctions on the board. At my table 1♣ could have been short, 2♠ was weak, and 2NT inquired, showing interest in game despite being bid by a passed hand. North jumped to 4♠, figuring that it should have play with his six-four shape if South was worth the game try. Indeed, give South ace-doubleton heart instead of this 4-3-3-3 hand and 4♠ would have been an excellent contract. Even as it was, it had play. Declarer won the club lead and set about an elimination in hope of eventually being able to force an opponent to open up diamonds to give him an extra trick. He ruffed a club, cashed the top spades, crossed to dummy with a third trump and ruffed the last club. Now he played ace and another heart. Had West played low, East would have won the queen and would have been forced to lead a diamond, on which declarer would play low and have his tenth trick. It was not to be, West, Ankush Khandelwal, rose with the ♥K, cashed the jack and exited with his fourth heart. Declarer won but had to lead a diamond to the king so was down one.

In case you were wondering, yes, declarer could have led a heart to the ace to ruff the third club rather than playing a third round of trumps to get to dummy. His thought was that this would lead to his second heart play being from hand and it would be that bit easier for West to work out the correct defence as he would know for certain what was the heart position, while he would be less certain if the second heart came off the dummy.

Incidentally, if you don't want to hear only about the action in my matches, feel free to tell me about interesting hands from your own. You can do this either in person when you see me wandering around the playing area, or via email at bsenior@hotmail.com.

