

2019 Schapiro Spring Foursomes 3

Sunday morning saw the quarter-finals in the undefeated pool, and a series of upsets, with all the top three seeds losing, and the remaining match seeing fifth-seeded PENFOLD lose to the thirteenth seed, MOSSOP, though in my view MOSSOP was significantly under-seeded. All those top seeds, ALLFREY, who are the defending champions, MILNER, ALLERTON and PENFOLD, won their second match on Sunday, however, to stay in the event as once-defeated teams.

The final of the undefeated pool on Monday morning would feature MOSSOP and K1, a strong Bulgarian quartet. Meanwhile, the vagaries of the draw would see the original number one and two seeds, ALLFREY and MILNER, meet in a clash of the titans in the once defeated pool.

They do say that it is better to be lucky than to be good. Many would say that Paul Hackett qualifies as both lucky and good, but certainly luck came to his aid on one deal on Sunday. Paul picked up:

♠ A 10 8 7 6
 ♥ Q 5
 ♦ A 6 4
 ♣ A 9 7

He was dealer at Love All and passed! Why? Well, he had missed one of his aces and counted only 10 HCP – could happen to anybody, I suppose. He then saw the bidding go 2♠ on his left, 4♠ on his right!. It would have been nice to have been able to double that but, he assures me, that would have been for take-out by his agreements. I wonder about that. I suspect that if we double in this auction and partner is staring at a spade void he might just work it out, whatever our agreements. Perhaps it is not worth the risk. I remember playing with a client many years ago. My right-hand-opponent opened 2NT and my left-hand-opponent transferred to spades then bid 3NT to offer a choice of games. Opener chose 4♠ and I was looking at ♠QJ1098 – really! I doubled and partner, aka centre-hand-opponent, of course looking at a spade void, took it out! There was a certain symmetry to the result as that turned +800 into –800. Anyway, Paul was content to see 4♠ drift three off for a winning board. Kay Preddy did very well on this deal from Round 5.

Board 18. Dealer East. N/S Vul.

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

In my match both Easts opened 1♠ and played there, both Souths led the bare king of hearts, and both declarers came to 11 tricks – flat board. Kay's opponents bid to 4♥, a contract which is destined to make as declarer has no entry

to dummy to take the losing trump finesse. Forced to lay down the ace from hand, the king falls and the contract is a fortunate make.

Kay led a diamond, Norman Selway winning the ace and switching to a low club. That went to the king and ace, Kay continuing by cashing the queen and ... leading a third club. Of course, she knew that this would give a ruff and discard, but it also gave declarer an entry to dummy and, of course, he used that entry to run the queen of hearts to the bare king – down one.

Also from Round 5:

Board 24. Dealer West. None Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
2♠	3♥	Pass	4♥
All Pass			

At my table West opened a constructive weak two – 8-11 HCP with six spades – and we quickly got to game. Incidentally, what is your style when you have the distribution for a Leaping Michaels bid, 4♣ over 2♠ showing at least five-five in hearts and clubs? How strong do you like to be before you make this bid to show the two-suiter? With likely spade wastage, I thought I was just too weak, hence the 3♥ call. Change the hand so that I held two low spades and an extra couple of points in the long suits, and I would have overcalled 4♣.

Anyway, just looking at the deal on paper, 4♥ looks like a routine make, does it not? And, sure enough, East led the ace of diamonds then continued with a second top diamond so I could ruff, draw trumps and claim 10 tricks. But suppose that East starts with the ♦K, asking for count, and reads partner's six as being from four rather than two. He therefore switches to his singleton spade and West wins and plays two more rounds. Declarer will ruff high, cash the other heart honour in hand and lead a second heart. When East follows low, declarer has to decide whether West is 6-2-4-1, when he must rise with the ace, or 6-1-4-2, when he must finesse – declarer has, of course, seen West's diamond count signal at trick one.

I wonder how many pairs found this defence and, if so, how many declarers got it right? My last deal for today also features possibilities for declarer and for the defence.

Board 27. Dealer South. None Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
–	–	–	1♣
4♠	All Pass		

After a simple auction, North makes the normal lead of the ten of clubs – at least at our table the 1♣ opening was natural, promising at least four cards. Our opponent won the queen of clubs and attempted to cash two heart tricks for a diamond pitch. Nevena ruffed in with the ten so he over-ruffed and played ace and another club, but I could ruff in front of dummy with the nine and return a spade to draw dummy's trump. Nevena won the ♠A and cashed the ♣K and we had the ace of diamonds to come for down one – a flat board after essentially the same play in the other room.

Our opponent was shaking his head and muttering to himself about his line of play. He thought he had been careless and should have played a trump honour at trick two.. Say that he does so and South wins the ♠A, how must she defend?

South knows that declarer is at least seven-four in the black suits. She may be tempted to return the king of clubs to set up two winners in the suit and maybe even, if declarer is seven-five, ruff out his ace. If she does so, declarer wins the ♣A. draws trumps and cashes the heart winners for 10 tricks. The winning and necessary defence is to switch to the ten of hearts at trick three. As South still has trumps, that kills the king of hearts and, in the fullness of time, declarer has to concede three minor-suit tricks for down one. Of course, declarer could be 7-0-2-4, with ♦Qx, when a heart return lets the contract through. Again, I wonder how many declarers tried a trump at trick two and how many defenders found the killing heart switch?