

2019 Schapiro Spring Foursomes 4

The Bulgarian K1 team, who had, rather foolishly as it turned out, booked their flights home for late on Monday so had to cancel and rebook, beat MOSSOP in the final of the undefeated pool, thereby earning themselves choice of opponents for the semi-final, Monday evening off and, if required, the option of an extra eight boards in the final should they find themselves behind at the end of the regulation 32 boards. That is quite a sizeable reward for remaining undefeated.

The big match of Round 6 saw MILNER beat the defending champion ALLFREY team, but they in turn lost in Round 7 to MOSSOP by 24 IMPs after being well behind earlier in the match. The Anglo-German team AMALIA beat GIPSON by 8 IMPs in a match that was tight throughout, while my team PENFOLD came from 22 down to De BOTTON to win the last quarter by 26-0 and prevail by 4 IMPs.

As undefeated team, K1 chose to play against AMALIA in the semi-final, leaving MOSSOP to face PENFOLD, who they had already beaten earlier in the weekend, albeit only after being given a last-set scare as PENFOLD came back from 38 down to lose by 7 IMPs and missed two big chances to win it.

There was an amusing board in our Round 6 match against TREVETHIN.

Board 20. Dealer West. All Vul.

	♠	5 3		
	♥	A K 8 5		
	♦	8 7		
	♣	Q J 10 9 4		
♠	A K 8 4		♠	J 10 2
♥	Q 10 7 6 3		♥	J 4
♦	A 6		♦	K J 5 2
♣	6 5		♣	A K 7 3
	♠	Q 9 7 6		
	♥	9 2		
	♦	Q 10 9 4 3		
	♣	8 2		
West	North	East	South	
Nevena		Brian		
1♥	Pass	2♣	Pass	
2♥	Pass	3♦	Pass	
3NT	All Pass			

We bid to 3NT on this Acol sequence and North decided that he would do best to lead a club – reasonably enough. However, he feared from the auction that I would have five cards in the suit so, hoping to find his partner with either eight- or king-doubleton, he led the four. Nevena played dummy's three and South, seeing no point in playing the eight, followed with the two to show reverse count. So Nevena scooped in the first trick with the five of clubs!

She led a heart to the jack and played the jack of spades, which held the trick. A heart was lost to the king and back came a club. She won and led the ten of spades to the queen and ace, then ducked a heart. That lost and another club came back, but she could win that and cash the ♠K and ♦A then throw South in with the nine of spades to lead into dummy's diamond tenace at the end to concede the overtrick.

From the same set of boards came a very good example of how much better it is to get your bidding done early and leave the opposition with the last guess, rather than go more

slowly and be forced to take the final decision yourself.

Board 22. Dealer East. E/W Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
Nevena		Brian	
—	—	2♣	2♥
Pass	2♠	3♦	Pass
3NT	4♠	Pass	Pass
Dble	All Pass		

North went slowly, allowing me to show my diamonds then make a forcing pass to leave the final decision to Nevena, but that was no decision at all, with 10 cards in the suits bid by the opposition.

I cashed a top diamond, switched to a heart and saw declarer ruff. He played his remaining diamond so I won and played the ♣K and when I won the ace of spades could give Nevena a club ruff. The contract was down four for +800. We could, of course, have made 3NT, so expected this to be worth about 5 IMPs.

In the other room South did not bid over the 2♣ opening but North jumped immediately to 4♠. East had too much shape to leave the decision to partner so bid 5♦, and that contract had no chance at all so we gained a huge swing.

Going into the final set of our Round 7 match against De BOTTON, we were 22 IMPs down having only actually scored 21 IMPs over the first 24 boards – not very promising. However, we won that last set by 26-0 to progress to the semi-finals. This was a key deal:

Board 28. Dealer West. N/S Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
Brian	Bakhshi	Nevena	Padon
Pass	1♣	4♥	Dble
All Pass			

One Club could have been two cards and the double just showed points. As is normal when holding a balanced hand, David Bakhshi left it in for penalties. Dror Padon led ace and another diamond, Bakhshi winning the king and switching to the king of clubs. The contract was now cold. Nevena ruffed and used dummy's spade entries to take the double heart finesse, losing only to the queen; +590.

In the other room, North overcalled only 3♥ and West bid 3NT in response to East's double going down two for – 200. We therefore gained 9 IMPs.

Four Hearts doubled can be defeated in a number of ways. The simplest is to simply lead, clubs, clubs and more clubs. Eventually, declarer runs out of trumps. After the ace of diamonds lead, it is too late to play the forcing game as the defence has conceded a crucial tempo. No matter, East can switch to a club anyway. Declarer ruffs and crosses to dummy to take a heart finesse. When that loses, East leads a second diamond, West winning the king and returning a diamond. East ruffs, dummy over-ruffs, and there is no longer a trump in the dummy to take a second trump finesse, so West's ♥K becomes the setting trick.

And if declarer knocks out the king of diamonds before taking the first trump finesse? Then we are back to a position similar to that at the table after trick two. A club switch is no good, as we have seen. The only hope for the defence is for West to play a third diamond and East ruff with the eight (the queen is no good as declarer can then trap West's king with ease). Declarer over-ruffs in dummy and can, of course, make the contract by playing a heart to the ace, dropping the now bare queen. But, be honest, wouldn't you think both heart honours were onside and play West for ♥KQx. If declarer takes a heart finesse he loses to the bare queen and once again has no trump left in dummy to repeat the finesse. That would have been a fine defence.

There was a board in Round 4 which had more interest than we noticed at the time. Indeed, it was one of the boards on which we could have turned around our first match against MOSSOP.

♠	A Q x x
♥	A Q J x x x
♦	K x
♣	x
♠	x x x
♥	x
♦	x x
♣	A K Q 10 x x x

West	North	East	South
	Senior		Holland
–	1♥	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♠	Pass	5♣
All Pass			

What is the best rebid by North, playing two-over-one GF such that 3♣ was natural and invitational? Indeed, should South respond 3♣ or should he upgrade to a game-force given that partner will have no way of knowing that there are seven running tricks in partner's hand for the invitational jump? With only five hearts I would have had an easy 3NT call, but the last time I saw one of these invitational jump responses it was on something like K10xxxx and an outside ace and king – it is a particularly horrible area of bidding and few pairs really know what they are doing in it so far as I can see – I know we don't. Anyway, had I bid 3NT we would have won the match as our opponents were going down in 5♣ at the other table and, with clubs behaving, 3NT was merely a matter of overtricks.

Anyway, John Holland found himself in 5♣, no doubt the practical bid with his hand, and the lead was the jack of diamonds to the king and ace. East cashed the queen of diamonds then switched to a low club. John rattled of a few of those then had to make a decision regarding which finesse(s) to take. He eventually led a heart to the jack and lost to the king for down one. Well, was that as good a guess as any, or should he have got the play right?

As John was first to point out some time later, the clue was, as is so often the case, something that didn't happen. If the spade finesse was not working, would not East have returned a low diamond at trick two to his partner's marked ten for a spade switch through the ace-queen? Once declarer realises that the ♠K is almost certain to be onside, his best play looks to be to lead a heart to the ace and ruff a heart. In practice, this brings down the king and that is that, but if it does not, declarer takes the spade finesse and leads the queen of hearts. If East plays low again, now comes the big decision – has he got ♥Kxxx or ♥xxx? Declarer will not always get it right, but this is the position he should get to.