

# GCBA NEWSLETTER

Season 2023-24

December 2023

## GCBA RESULTS

Series 24 of the 9-High Swiss Pairs is nearing completion. Pauline Mussi and Hugh Wilkinson have a useful lead over Sheila Constable and Neville Shorrick.

### Winter Swiss Teams

After 4 rounds (8 matches) of this event, Richard Butland's team leads Patrick Shields' team by 4 VPs, with teams led by John Stirrup and Colin Lennox occupying the minor placings.

### County Leagues

In the fourth round of matches, teams captained by Richard Butland, John Councer, Alan Wearmouth, and Colin Lennox all registered wins.

Entries are now being sought for the County Knock-out Competition. This event carries Green Point awards and the opportunity for the winning team to represent the county in the EBU's Pachabo Cup competition.

## TRAINING DAY

January 6<sup>th</sup> sees Patrick Shields organising a further training day for those looking to improve their game (which should mean all of us) Do please make an effort to attend this half-day event if you can. You don't need a partner to play.

## INTER-CLUB COMPETITIONS

In November, Cheltenham Bridge Club played against Gloucester Bridge Club for the Hannaford and Smyth Trophies. These events saw 24 pairs from the two clubs play a series of team games against each other.

Gloucester won the Hannaford and Cheltenham the Smyth event. Inter-club matches are a great opportunity for many players who play little or no teams bridge to get involved and play in a representative match.

These matches are great social events and are to be encouraged. If your club holds any inter-club matches, do let me know how you got on. If you don't play such matches currently, then consider organising something with a neighbouring club.

## SENIORS CONGRESS TEAMS

Congratulations to Patrick Shields and Richard Chamberlain who were in the winning team at the recent National Seniors Congress Swiss Teams. Well done to both players.

## MIDLAND COUNTIES LEAGUE

Gloucestershire's latest match was against Leicestershire. The Dawes team won 18-2, the Porter lost 18-2, and the Markham drew 10-10. The Dawes team leads Division One, with the Porter dropping to second place in Division Two. The Markham team are third in their league. A couple of deals from the match caught my eye:

♠ 74	♠ KQJ96	♠ 852
♥ T964	♥ J873	♥ 52
♦ AT876	♦ K2	♦ J53
♣ K2	♣ A9	♣ J7543
	♠ AT3	
	♥ AKQ	
	♦ Q94	
	♣ QT86	

All bar one pair played in spades, and three pairs managed to get to the slam played by North. The slam was allowed to make on two occasions, both through mis-defences as playing in spades, eleven tricks are the limit (unless East leads a club and you guess right at trick one).

However, if you managed to play in no-trumps as Leicestershire's top pair did, then you make twelve tricks on any defence. The winning line is to play a diamond to the King early in the hand. West cannot rise with the Ace as you then have twelve tricks, so he must duck. Then you cash your nine major suit winners reducing everyone to three cards.

If West comes down to a singleton diamond, he is thrown in with it to lead away from his King of clubs. If he bares his King, then declarer can drop it and make 2 club tricks - a classic strip squeeze. This line of play works in no-trumps but when you play in spades you have insufficient entries to play a diamond to your King and later get back to hand to draw trumps because of the blockage in the heart suit and if you try to cash the hearts in dummy before drawing trumps you suffer a ruff.

♠ 8		♠ T7532
♥ Q9432		♥ A85
♦ AJ532		♦ 6
♣ T3		♣ Q976
♠ AKQJ	4♠ by	
♥ J	East	
♦ KT94		
♣ A842		
	♠ 964	
	♥ KT76	
	♦ Q87	
	♣ KJ5	

In 4♠, it looks like you can afford to lose two clubs and a diamond, so provided you can ruff two hearts in dummy you should be fine. Let's assume the defence start with a trump.

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You win and take the Ace of hearts and a heart ruff. You try to cross to the Queen of clubs but that loses, and the defence plays another trump. Now you need to ruff a diamond back to hand for another heart ruff but when you first concede a diamond, you don't want the defence to be able to play another trump.

If you lead from dummy with the King of diamonds, you will succeed 50% of the time when the hand with the Ace of diamonds has no more trumps. Later you ruff your last heart and then just concede a club for your contract. Not too testing a hand really but in the event, 4♠ went down 8 times out of 12.

## IMPROVER'S CORNER

Defence is frequently cited as the most difficult part of the game and basic card reading is a must if you are to improve. This month we look at interpreting the opening lead and using that information to help build a picture of the hidden hands.

- ♠ 9742
  - ♥ A632
  - ♦ 842
  - ♣ 95
- ♠ K6
  - ♥ QJ5
  - ♦ A9765
  - ♣ J43
- 1NT by South

South opens 1NT (12-14) and plays there with West leading the ♥7. As soon as dummy is displayed you should try to picture who has what and build on that picture as each card is played. You lead 4<sup>th</sup> highest from honours and 2<sup>nd</sup> highest from bad suits so what do we know from the lead. At this point we can't be sure as partner could have KT87 or perhaps something like 874.

We can probably eliminate partner leading from a small doubleton (why would he do that in preference to leading a longer suit when the bidding marks him with some values).

Dummy plays low and you naturally insert the Knave, declarer winning with the King. Now you should know the exact distribution of hearts around the table. Partners lead can no longer be fourth highest as the King has now been played, and if the ♥7 were fourth highest, it would be from T987, and from that holding, partner would have led the ten.

Equally, partner cannot hold four small cards and the ♥7 be his second highest because there is only one card hidden that is lower than the ♥7. So partner has led from either 974 or 874 and declarer started with KT8 or KT9.

At trick two declarer leads a low club from hand, partner shows you an odd number by playing the lowest missing club and you win with the Knave over dummy's nine. Now you know that declarer started with five clubs and the only holding that makes sense of his low club lead is AKxxx. The information you have tells you that playing back a heart would be disastrous, so you switch to a low diamond.

Declarer plays the Queen and partner wins the King and continues with the Knave and then the ten. You can now pinpoint declarer's spade holding as at best Qxx as anything more would put him above his no-trump range. So you overtake the ten of diamonds and cash two more rounds of the suit before switching to King and another spade. This defence scores an easy nine tricks and a big score for the defending side.

## SOLUTION TO NOVEMBER PROBLEM

North starts with three top hearts. Plan the play.

- ♠ KQT87
  - ♥ 95
  - ♦ KJ
  - ♣ A872
- ♠ AJ95
  - ♥ 832
  - ♦ AQ
  - ♣ QT54
- 4♠ by West

North	East	South	West
1♥	x	Pass	4♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

With two heart losers, the contract depends on not losing two club tricks, and it appears very likely from the bidding that North holds the King of clubs so it looks like you will be OK. However, you need to guard against the club suit breaking 4-1. A club to the ten will work if North holds the Knave, but there is no guarantee of that.

The best line is to ruff the third heart and draw the trumps finishing in hand. Provided the trumps are not 4-0 you are now 100%. Lead a low club towards the Queen, playing it if North plays low. When it holds, cash both diamonds finishing in hand and play another low club towards the ten.

If the clubs have broken you have the rest whilst North is endplayed (giving you a ruff and discard or leading a club away from the Knave) if the clubs are 4-1. If the trumps are 4-0 then you need to stop drawing trumps and you set up the clubs, now needing them to break evenly.

## DECEMBER PROBLEM

- ♠ K42
  - ♥ AK3
  - ♦ QJ82
  - ♣ AK6
- ♠ QT53
  - ♥ 74
  - ♦ AT764
  - ♣ 94
- 3NT by West

West	North	East	South
2NT	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♦	Pass	3NT	End

North leads the ♥5 to South's ten.