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17 April 2018

A Slow Learner

Chris Bayliss

After my recent experience with the slam that got away on the Gold Coast, you would have thought I might have learned my lesson. This hand from the Swiss Pairs event at the Merimbula congress proved I am a slow learner.

BD: 23	♠K862	Dir: S
	♥532	Vul: Both
	♦94	
	♣QT92	
♠AJ7		♠QT3
♥AKJ87		♥QT9
♦		♦AKQT65
♣K7653		♣8
	♠954	
	♥64	
	♦J8732	
	♣AJ4	
	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ NT	
N	- - - - -	5
S	- - - - -	16 13
E	3 4 5 3 4	6
W	4 4 5 3 4	

In common with many other pairs, Kate and I bid to slam in hearts. The computer analysis shows that the contract should not make but I got a club lead and that should allow the contract home.

South won the opening club lead with an ace and returned a spade. I won with the ace and ruffed a low club in dummy. Now I tried to cash my three top diamonds to discard losers from my hand. Unfortunately, north ruffed the third diamond and the contract was down.

If only I had listened to my own advice at the recent Friday teaching sessions. At trick one, **make a plan!**

I should have noted that I have all the top hearts and so can never get over-ruffed. If I ruff three clubs in dummy, I can score all my hearts separately and that will be eight tricks. After the opening lead, the

CK is a winner and I also have the SA. That takes me to ten tricks so I just need two diamond tricks for the slam.

All I have to do after winning the ace of spades is:

- Cash the king of clubs, discarding a diamond from dummy.
- Ruff a club in dummy. That's three tricks so far.
- Cash the ace and king of diamonds, discarding two spades from my hand. Now, I have five tricks.
- Ruff a spade and ruff a club. That takes me to seven tricks.
- Ruff dummy's last spade and ruff my last club. Nine tricks now.
- The three remaining trumps in my hand take me to twelve.

It was small consolation that only one declarer was able to bring the contract home.

24 April 2018

Eights High

Chris Bayliss

BD: 1	♠32	Dir: N
	♥QJT965	Vul: None
	♦65	
	♣Q94	
♠AJ5		♠KQT9
♥43		♥AK
♦AJT972		♦KQ
♣A2		♣KJT53
	♠8764	
	♥872	
	♦843	
	♣876	
	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ NT	
N	- - - - -	5
S	- - - - -	14 21
E	7 7 3 7 7	0
W	7 7 3 7 7	

The Earl of Yarborough would have enjoyed this hand. In the days of Whist, the earl offered odds of a thousand to one that a hand would not contain an honour card (ten or higher). He was on to a winner there because the actual odds are 1,827 to one.

The session on Monday turned up a hand with no card higher than an eight. The odds against this are 16,959 to one. If you were to play two sessions a week, you would expect such a hand to occur once every six years.

What's more, the hand was completely balanced – not even a doubleton. The odds against a flat eights high hand are 105,791 to one. Playing two sessions a week, you should expect such a hand once in almost forty years. In theory, I should not see its like again but no doubt the computer will throw up another one next week!

With east-west holding thirty-five high card points and four different grand slams available, it was surprising to see most of the field playing in 3NT. Well done Penny and Margaret on your 6NT; and Gai and Rosemary for your 6♦.

27 April 2018

Moss Vale Teams

Chris Bayliss

The inaugural Moss Vale Teams proved a great success. The original event format, the convivial atmosphere and the excellent lunch all contributed to a fun day of bridge.

Thank you, Craig for all your hard work behind the scenes.

The Teams

1	Margaret Hutchison	Moira Weate	Adele Brown	Louise Cregan
2	Penny McKenna	Margaret Hore	Eric Lindh	Patricia Phillips
3	Margaret Marsh	Pat Fulton	Marina Beaumont	Joan Shanahan
4	Robert Snelling	Alan Maher	Margaret Hibbert	Kate Kerr
5	Gai Ritchie	Rosemary Pitt	Alison Minchin	Tony Lye
6	Marika Holmik	Anna Zaranski	Cherry Schneider	Barbara Epworth
7	Dick Evans	Susan Whyte	Lucy Fisher	Eve Rossetto
8	John Davies	Gabriel Greenwood	Chris Bayliss	Kate Chown

The Results

Pool A

Place	Team	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Total
3	Hutchison	9	22	13	44
2	McKenna	21	11	16	48
4	Marsh	16	8	14	38
1	Snelling	14	19	17	50

Pool B

Place	Team	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Total
1	Ritchie	20	15	18	53
2	Holmik	10	20	18	48
3	Evans	13	15	12	40
4	Davies	17	10	12	39

Premiership

Semis

Snelling	23
Holmik	15

Ritchie	15
McKenna	5

Final

Snelling	12
Ritchie	16

Third Place

Holmik	12
McKenna	17

Championship

Semis

Hutchison	17
Davies	11

Evans	1
Marsh	29

Final

Hutchison	4
Marsh	19

Third Place

Davies	5
Evans	23

27 April 2018

Teams Play

Chris Bayliss

Experienced players generally consider teams the fairest, most interesting and most enjoyable form of the game.

Why is Teams Fairer?

Suppose, you are sitting north-south in a pairs event. An east-west comes to your table and bids an unbeatable slam. You later discover that no other east-west bid the slam. You have done nothing wrong and yet you get a very bad score.

It follows that in a pairs event, your score is not dependant only on what your do. What happens at all the other tables can make a huge difference to your result.

In teams it is different. Your team of four players is matched against another team of four players. Your score is completely determined by what happens at these two tables. What happens elsewhere in the room is totally irrelevant. In other words, your fate is completely in your own hands.

Why is Teams More Fun?

Teams matches tend to be longer than rounds of pairs. Typically, a teams match is about eight boards but in major championships they can be longer; sometimes much longer. In finals of international events, it is not uncommon to have matches of fifty or more boards, sometimes spanning two or three days.

Because matches are longer, there is more opportunity to become acquainted with your opponents. Of course, you can run into unpleasant people sometimes and then long matches can become very trying. For the most part though, bridge players are pleasant people and many a friendship has been born during the course of a long teams match.

The other point about long matches, is that there is less movement of players during the day and more time between rounds. You have time to catch up with your team mates, compare scores, congratulate on good boards and commiserate on the bad ones.

Teams Movements

For a single match, the movement is straightforward. The east-west at your table goes to the opponent's home table and plays east-west there. Meanwhile, the opposition east-west comes to your home table to play against your north-south pair.

There are essentially three types of team competition: round robin, Swiss and knockout. Sometimes these can be combined into a single event.

Round Robin Events

In a round robin event, every team plays a match against every other team. Intuitively, this is the fairest system. It is just like a football league competition where every team plays every other team.

Swiss Events

In a Swiss event, teams are usually ranked according to masterpoints. Suppose there are 20 teams in the event. Then for the first round, the number one ranked team plays team eleven, team two plays team twelve and so on. There are other systems but this is the most common.

For every subsequent match teams are matched according to their overall standing. So number one placed team plays two, three plays four and so on. After two or three matches, you find yourself playing teams of a similar standard to yourself and this is one factor that makes Swiss events very popular.

Knock Out Events

Knock out events are just like football cup events where the winners go to the next round while the losers bow out. Sometimes, there is a repechage system whereby losers in the early rounds of the knock out can compete for an opportunity to re-join the main draw.

In any case, knock out events usually allow knocked out teams to play in a side event, most often a Swiss event.

Teams Scoring

As a match progresses, both your north-south pair and your east west pair should keep a scoresheet. Once both tables have played all their boards, the east-wests return to their respective home table and compare their scores with the north-south.

Let's look at our team's scoresheets. First, North-South's card.

Board Number	Vul	Contract & Decl	Lead	Tricks	This Table	Other Table	Net Score	IMPs Plus	IMPs Minus
1	Nil	3S N	2C	10	+170				
2	NS	3NT E	5D	8	+50				
3	EW	4S E	3H	11	-650				
4	Both	5HX W	2S	6	+1100				
5	NS	2H N	JS	9	+140				
6	EW	2H N	10C	8	+110				
							Total		
Imp Diff <input type="text"/>							VPs		

Now, East-West's card.

Board Number	Vul	Contract & Decl	Lead	Tricks	This Table	Other Table	Net Score	IMPs Plus	IMPs Minus
1	Nil	4S N	2C	10	-420				
2	NS	1NT E	QC	8	+120				
3	EW	4S W	7D	10	+620				
4	Both	4S N	5H	10	-620				
5	NS	2H N	JS	8	-110				
6	EW	2S E	AH	8	+110				
							Total		
Imp Diff <input type="text"/>							VPs		

The first thing to do is to consolidate the scores onto one of the scoresheets. For this example, we will copy the east-west scores onto the north-south sheet.

Board Number	Vul	Contract & Decl	Lead	Tricks	This Table	Other Table	Net Score	IMPs Plus	IMPs Minus
1	Nil	3S N	2C	10	+170	-420			
2	NS	3NT E	5D	8	+50	+120			
3	EW	4S E	3H	11	-650	+620			
4	Both	5HX W	2S	6	+1100	-620			
5	NS	2H N	JS	9	+140	-110			
6	EW	2H N	10C	8	+110	+110			
							Total		
Imp Diff <input type="text"/>							VPs		

The next step is to calculate the net score for each board. This is just a case of adding up the scores for "This Table" and "Other Table".

Board Number	Vul	Contract & Decl	Lead	Tricks	This Table	Other Table	Net Score	IMPs Plus	IMPs Minus
1	Nil	3S N	2C	10	+170	-420	-250		
2	NS	3NT E	5D	8	+50	+120	+170		
3	EW	4S E	3H	11	-650	+620	-30		
4	Both	5HX W	2S	6	+1100	-620	+480		
5	NS	2H N	JS	9	+140	-110	+30		
6	EW	2H N	10C	8	+110	+110	+220		
Total									
Imp Diff									
VPs									

Having done this, we calculate the IMPs by reference to the conversion chart on the scoresheet.

Margin	IMPs	Margin	IMPs	Margin	IMPs	Margin	IMPs	Margin	IMPs
0-10	0	170-210	5	430-490	10	1100-1290	15	2250-2490	20
20-40	1	220-260	6	500-590	11	1300-1490	16	2500-2990	21
50-80	2	270-310	7	600-740	12	1500-1740	17	3000-3490	22
90-120	3	320-360	8	750-890	13	1750-1990	18	3500-3990	23
130-160	4	370-420	9	900-1090	14	2000-2240	19	4000+	24

On board 1, our net score is -250. That falls in the range 220-260 on the conversion chart. It is negative, so the opponents get 6imps. Boo! On board 2, our net score is +170. That is in the range 170-210 so our team gets 5imps. Hooray!!! We continue with the rest of the boards and then add up the imps to get totals.

Now we subtract, the opponent's total imps from ours and write that in the Imp Diff box. In our case the imp difference is 22 less 7 or + 15, a nice little win. High fives!!!

Board Number	Vul	Contract & Decl	Lead	Tricks	This Table	Other Table	Net Score	IMPs Plus	IMPs Minus
1	Nil	3S N	2C	10	+170	-420	-250		6
2	NS	3NT E	5D	8	+50	+120	+170	5	
3	EW	4S E	3H	11	-650	+620	-30		1
4	Both	5HX W	2S	6	+1100	-620	+480	10	
5	NS	2H N	JS	9	+140	-110	+30	1	
6	EW	2H N	10C	8	+110	+110	+220	6	
Total								22	7
Imp Diff								+15	
VPs									

The final step is to determine the VPs for the board. This is the most important step since the winning team on the day is the one that accumulates the most VP. VPs are found by reference to another conversion table on the scoresheet.

Imps	VPs	Imps	VPs
0 to 1	15-15	24 to 26	23-7
2 to 5	16-14	27 to 29	24-6
6 to 8	17-13	30 to 33	25-5
9 to 11	18-12	34 to 37	25-4
12 to 14	19-11	38 to 41	25-3
15 to 17	20-10	42 to 45	25-2
18 to 20	21-9	46 to 50	25-1
21 to 23	22-8	51+	25-0

15 imps is in the range "15 to 17" so that equates to an 20-10 result. Since we won, we get 20 VPs and the opponents 10.

Our final scoresheet looks like this.

Board Number	Vul	Contract & Decl	Lead	Tricks	This Table	Other Table	Net Score	IMPs Plus	IMPs Minus
1	Nil	3S N	2C	10	+170	-420	-250		6
2	NS	3NT E	5D	8	+50	+120	+170	5	
3	EW	4S E	3H	11	-650	+620	-30		1
4	Both	5HX W	2S	6	+1100	-620	+480	10	
5	NS	2H N	JS	9	+140	-110	+30	1	
6	EW	2H N	10C	8	+110	+110	+220	6	
Total								22	7
Imp Diff								20	10

Imp Diff +15

Teams Tactics

A glance at the sample scoresheet leads to a few important tactical observations.

On board 1, we lost 6 imps because our north south did not bid the game. It is very important to bid games, especially vulnerable games.

On board 2, we gained 5 imps because the opponents were unable to make the game they bid. So, (1) it is crucial to make games once you have bid them and (2) it is important to defend well especially on game contracts and slams.

On boards 3 and 5, there were one imp swings thanks to an overtrick. That is not much in the greater scheme of things. Overtricks can sometimes make a difference but it is far more important to make the contract than to risk it going for an overtrick.

The biggest swing came on board 4 where a sacrifice by the opponents gave us the biggest swing of the match. Risky sacrifices can be very expensive and don't be afraid to double the opponents if you are sure they are going down.

Board six was interesting. Two innocuous part scores combined to give us a very handy 6 imps. Even at teams, it is important to compete for the part score. Be more cautious if you are vulnerable because then two down loses you 200. That doesn't look good on the scoresheet.

30 April 2018

Suit Preference

Chris Bayliss

This hand occurred in the second qualifying session of the State Novice and Restricted pairs. Most north-south pairs reached 4♠ and most wests led the ♥A.

BD: 10	♠K432	Dir: E				
	♥2	Vul: Both				
	♦T842					
	♣AK96					
♠T		♠Q7				
♥AKT5		♥9843				
♦KJ76		♦A953				
♣5432		♣JT8				
	♠AJ9865					
	♥QJ76					
	♦Q					
	♣Q7					
	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ NT					
N	3	-	-	5	-	10
S	4	-	-	5	-	11 7
E	-	1	1	-	-	12
W	-	1	1	-	-	

With a singleton heart in dummy, the question is what card to lead next. If west follows up with a club, a skilful declarer will make twelve tricks. The diamond loser will disappear on the third club. The twelfth trick will come from the nine of clubs when east's club honours fall on the ace and king.

Only a diamond switch by west will keep declarer to eleven tricks, an important difference given the matchpoint format of the event. The diamond lead does not look attractive so how is west to know that this is a better option?

East can help. Once dummy goes down it is obvious that a second round of hearts will be futile. So, instead of the normal attitude signal, east should give a suit preference signal. A high card shows preference for the higher of the other two suits while a low card shows preference for the lower suit. In this case, the ♥9 would show preference for diamonds and the ♥3 would show preference for clubs.

Once west sees the ♥9 for diamonds, the diamond switch can be made. Declarer will be kept to eleven tricks and a good few matchpoints will be earned.