

GCBA NEWSLETTER

Season 2020-21

February 2021

GCBA RESULTS

Series 6 of the GCBA Swiss teams is approaching a finale with teams captained by Paul Denning and Patrick Shields fighting it out for the top spot.

Series 6 of the 9-high Swiss Pairs was won by Richard Williams and Janet Miles with Derek Boreham and Moya Jackson occupying the runners-up spot.

The February GCBA Swiss Teams was won by Paul Denning, Joe Angeseing, Val Constable and Andrew Kambites. Congratulations to all of the above.

COUNTY LEAGUES

Division One sees the teams captained by Dan Macintosh and Patrick Shields well ahead of the pack. Division Two has completed with Mike Lewis' team well clear of teams led by Askok Kwatra and Mike Wignall.

EBU LOCKDOWN LEAGUE

Congratulations to Ashok Kwatra, Jack Armorgie, Patrick Shields and Richard Chamberlain on winning Division Four of the National Lockdown League by a huge margin.

INTERNATIONAL SELECTION

A huge well done to Richard Chamberlain and Patrick Shields on their success in the trials to represent England at Senior level. They will play in the 'Teltscher Trophy' (the senior Camrose) in April and we wish them and the rest of the England team the very best of luck.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday 27th Feb sees a special pairs event being played on RealBridge. 'February Remembered' is being held to commemorate three of our former players who sadly passed away in February (Ian Constable in 2019, Wendy Angeseing and David Hauser in 2020). Enter by emailing febrem@gcba.org.uk. Entry is free but donations are welcome at:

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/GCBA-Gloucestershire>

Even if you are too late for the event, a contribution to the charity (Save the Children) would be much appreciated.

Looking further ahead, a date for your diaries is the Cheltenham Congress (on-line of course) which will be held 30th April – 2nd May (more details available soon)

TOLLEMACHE

The Tollemache Final for the top 8 County sides (teams of eight) saw Gloucestershire playing below its best form. We managed 3 wins and 4 losses, finishing in 7th position.

♠ K873									
♥ K83									
♦ 762									
♣ T96									
♠ J5				♠ Q2					
♥ Q75		4♠ by		♥ AT64					
♦ QJT94		South		♦ K8					
♣ Q75				♣ J8432					
				♠ AT964					
				♥ J92					
				♦ A53					
				♣ AK					
South	West	North	East	North	East	South	West		
1♠	Pass	3♠	Pass	Pass	2♠	X	4♠		
4♠	Pass	Pass	Pass	5♦	Pass	6♣	Pass		
				Pass	Pass				

Gloucestershire gained points on the deal shown at the bottom of column two. As you can see, on a diamond lead (East unblocking the King), the contract looks hopeless as there are two diamond losers, as well as the major suits to negotiate.

Undaunted, declarer won the opening lead, unblocked the clubs and drew trumps before ruffing a club in hand and exiting in diamonds. The defence were able to cash two diamonds and then had to concede a ruff and discard or open up the heart suit. When West led a low heart, South ducked in dummy and when the ten appeared had the two heart tricks he needed for his contract - a well played hand but one which should nevertheless have been beaten. West know his partner holds the A♥, else declarer has 10 tricks. Conceding a ruff and discard at trick 11 will only give the contract if South holds ♥JT and if that is the case, declarer always has the tricks via a straightforward heart finesse.

Things did not always go so well for us – as on the following deal: how do you play on a spade lead to the Ace and the ♥8 return?

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There are many chances on this deal. One line would be to run the heart to dummy's Queen. Another would be to finesse the diamond either way, or to use the club entries to set up a diamond if the King falls in three rounds. The odds favour the last option but this turned out to be a losing line when the diamonds were 5-1 with East holding KT9xx. Needless to say they stopped in game in the other room so a big swing in became a big swing out.

Let's hope we can do better next year.

WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS

In no-trumps, imagine that you hold as South ♦QT4 with ♦65 on the table. West leads ♦2 to a top honour with East, who returns the ♦3. Which card do you play and why?

This is a position frequently encountered at the table. A beginner might think this is a straight 50/50 guess, but a more experienced player would know that East will hold AJxx or KJxx twice as often as AKxx and hence the ten is the correct card to play. There are many such card combinations that frequently recur and the more you see a particular holding, the more you develop a strategy for handling it.

Now suppose we make a minor change and give South ♦Q74 and dummy ♦T5. Surely we are in the same situation as before and so running the second trick round to the ten is right? Well no, it isn't the same. The difference is that East can see the now bare ten on the table and will thus always return the ♦J every time he holds ♦9 as this pins the ten and avoids giving you a cheap trick.

Also, some players would return the ♦J when they don't hold the ♦9 on the basis that their partner might hold that card and again they don't want to give you a trick to which you were not entitled. Following this logic, and the odds associated with it, we conclude that East is less likely to hold the ♦J than in our first scenario and hence we should hope he has ♦AK and hop up with the ♦Q at trick 2.

Extending this theme a little further what do you do with ♦Q94 opposite ♦T5? This time we hold the nine and hence East will never have a direct pin of your ten so will only return the ♦J when holding that card if he is one of the group of players that believes that the chances of partner holding the nine is greater than the chance of you correctly guessing which card to play. Unless you have played a huge number of boards against this particular East (and had the foresight to record his actions), you cannot really know how East plays in this position. Hence you are back to the situation at the start of this article and finessing is your best option.

So we might summarise our strategy as 'rise with the Queen when holding Qxx and finesse with QTx or Q9x (and the ten is in dummy)'.

You may well say - 'nothing startling about that, – it is what I have always done'. This is all very well, but now look at the situation from East's point of view. If he knows your strategy, then every time he started with the knave, he should return that card. When you don't hold the nine he will pin dummy's ten and win 4 tricks. When you do hold the nine he has taken you off a guess, but as we have seen, you were going to guess correctly, so his play costs nothing.

So as declarer we know how East should defend when holding the knave (he will lead it). This inevitably leads us to the conclusion that on the occasions he returns a low card, he cannot hold the knave. In that case, your correct play is the queen even when holding Q9x – aaarghh! – our strategy is turned on its head.

The point of all this is really how East should play. If he is known to always play the knave at trick 2, he concedes the position whenever he leads a small card. Hence the best strategy for East is to sometimes return the knave and sometimes return a small card if he wants to maximise his return. The situation is similar to the defender who always plays the queen from QJ doubleton. When they do that, they tell declarer nothing, but when they play the knave, a declarer who has built up a knowledge of this defender knows it must be a singleton. Randomising your play as a defender is not really an attempt to fool, it is more a way to avoid fooling yourself.

An Inferential Problem

♠ 876543
♥ AKQJT98
♦
♣

7NT by
South

♠ A2
♥ 76543
♦ AK8
♣ AK8

The East-West cards lie in such a way that 7NT by South is makeable against any defence. What is the full layout and how does declarer play?