



Cambs & Hunts Bridge



Newsletter Number 25

30 April 2000

Editors: **Chris Jagger**, 2 Wycliffe Road, Cambridge CB1 3JD, Tel: 01223-526586 and
Jonathan Mestel, 180 Queen's Gate, London SW7 2BZ, Tel: 01223-329671.

E-mail: ajm8@cam.ac.uk

The next newsletter is scheduled to appear on **30th September**. Please try to get copy to us no later than **15th September**. All contributions welcome!



The County thanks retiring committee member Eryl Howard for her hard work as Secretary. The new County committee, starting in May, welcomes David Carmichael as Secretary and Philip Wraight as Tournament Organiser. Peter Last continues as Treasurer, Margaret Jude as Membership Secretary, Chris Larlham as Captain and Chris Jagger as Chairman.



A recent revoke reminded me of this story from 'Bridge with the Times' describing an event from a Selection Match for a British team a long time ago:

There was a board on which South was the declarer in 3NT and ran off seven diamonds. On the last of these West, who had already discarded 5 times, played a very low diamond. Everybody laughed and East asked calmly, 'Where did you find that one?' Equally calmly, West replied 'It has just turned up.' There was no penalty for the five revokes as East-West won no tricks.

Three or four boards later North dealt and opened 5♦ which all passed. Declarer won the first trick and played out nine diamonds. When West threw a spade on the ninth diamond, East enquired politely 'Having none?'



In this issue Giles Woodruff follows the Rueful Rabbit and Hideous Hog to Newmarket and also analyses a hand from the County Pairs final. Chris Jagger shows how entire distributions can sometimes be deduced in the middle of an auction. Sally Dempster reports on the Bridge for All scheme in the County, and a letter from Graham Badger criticises some top players for not taking part in ECL matches. Jonathan Mestel describes some more hands where sixes were critical, and reports on the 'Four Card Bridge' competition from last Newsletter. There is the usual round-up of News and Events.



The Griffins visit Newmarket by Giles Woodruff

... with apologies to the late Victor Mollo.

I strolled over to the far end of the room, and was surprised to see the Rabbit on table three. No doubt the Hog, on the opposing side, was surprised to be there too.

“It’s our first Swiss Teams,” the Rabbit had confided in me earlier, “and I’m not sure I’d have entered if I’d known there were going to be computer dealt hands. All these wild distributions! I have enough problems when the trumps split 4-3, and I’ll be in no end of trouble if they’re 6-1, 7-0 or worse.”

The Hog had been confident. It was unusual to see him in partnership with Papa, but he explained: “There is no-one in the club I trust to handle the dummy better, provided that it’s face up in front of him. Many of the country’s best squads don’t give enough thought to right-siding the team. It’s a neglected tactic.”

“Anyway,” he continued, “while you’re getting me a drink from the bar, mull over this defensive problem. Papa got it wrong, but is still defending his choice to the death. Perhaps you could adjudicate later?”

I explained that waiting was not yet a director’s duty, and more pressing was the requirement that he stop smoking in the playing area.

“I thought that this was the mis-playing area,” he grunted, stubbing out his cigar in a bidding box. “Anyway, here you are:”

East	South	West	North
P	1♦	1♠	1NT
P	P	Dbl	P
2♠	P	P	Dbl
P	3♣	P	3♦
All Pass			

♠ Q10732	♠ 86									
♥ Q87	♥ 963									
♦ J94	♦ A653									
♣ A7	♣ J432									
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 40px; margin: 5px auto;"> <tr><td style="width: 20px;"></td><td style="width: 20px; text-align: center;">N</td><td style="width: 20px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 20px; text-align: center;">W</td><td style="width: 20px;"></td><td style="width: 20px; text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 20px;"></td><td style="width: 20px; text-align: center;">S</td><td style="width: 20px;"></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		
	N									
W		E								
	S									

“Partner leads the ♠K, and switches to a trump. Plan the defence.”

* * *

Midway through the match, the Rabbit’s ears twitched. The Toucan, sitting East, picked up ♠ – ♥ – ♦ – ♣AKQJ1098765432. He seemed to have an insoluble problem. The Walrus was sponsoring the team and had insisted that both pairs play his system. “No opening on less than 13 points,” he had demanded. The Toucan wondered whether you were allowed to add on anything for voids. Perhaps if he couldn’t open 1♣ he was allowed to pre-empt? He bounced giddily on his chair. The Walrus insisted on some rule of 500 or other. Now what was it? The Toucan was fairly sure he had to make sure he would score –500 opposite a worthless dummy. What level would allow him to achieve that? After exhausting all the options he reluctantly opted for 7♣. He would have to try playing it badly.

South, Papa, passed. If the Toucan was genuine, there was no need to concede 5 IMPs by doubling. If he wasn’t, then defeating the contract should be good anyway.

Holding ♠85 ♥KQJ1098765 ♦76 ♣–, the Rabbit converted to 7♥. Surely hearts would play better than clubs, he thought, especially with the Toucan at the helm.

The Hog, who had been planning to sacrifice in 7♠ now had an easy double, which ended the auction. The Rabbit managed, just, to avoid revoking and conceded five off for -1400.

	♠ KQJ976							
	♥ A							
	♦ K85432							
	♣ -							
♠ 85	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td>W</td><td>N</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>	W	N	E		S		♠ -
W	N	E						
	S							
♥ KQJ1098765		♥ -						
♦ 76		♦ -						
♣ -		♣ AKQJ...						
	♠ A10432							
	♥ 432							
	♦ AQJ109							
	♣ -							

"13 IMPs away," grumbled the Hog, "through scatterbrained incompetence." For once he was wrong - it was more. At the other table, Colin the Corgi sneakily didn't mention his clubs at the first two opportunities, and the Chimp as South had somehow managed to declare 7NT redoubled.

"How can you bid 7NT on that?" roared the Walrus. "I had only shown 13 points, and you didn't even have an opening bid let alone a stop in their suits!"

"Er, well, probably West wouldn't have a club and I deduced you had the ace of hearts from your double, and of course 7NT scores more than 7♠," ventured the Chimp, unconvincingly. "Anyway, even if you didn't have two six card suits it might be a good sacrifice against something and after all, if I was wrong, a bottom is just a bottom."

"It's not matchpoints, it's IMPs," pointed out the Corgi, "and I think we have one at this table."

The Chimp was keen to change the subject. Pulling out a piece of paper, he turned to me. "Has anyone told you about the Rabbit's brilliancy in the last match?"

"What are those hands printed on the back of the paper?" asked the Corgi.

"Er, no, they're not hands. It's my bank statement. Anyway," he scribbled, "you open 4♥, partner raises to 6♥, LHO leads the ♠A, and RHO follows small. Next LHO switches to the ♦K."

♠ 83						
♥ A9						
♦ A9542						
♣ AK62						
<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td>W</td><td>N</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>	W	N	E		S	
W	N	E				
	S					
♠ KJ7						
♥ KJ108532						
♦ -						
♣ 843						

As no-one seemed in the mood to talk to the Chimp, I ventured: "I ruff, and plan to ruff my spade before playing for 2-2 trumps."

"Hang on! East plays the ♠Q under the ♠K," the Chimp interrupted.

"Well," I reconsidered, "when I find RHO with ♠Qx, it becomes percentage to play a heart to the ace, and finesse the heart. With LHO having six spades to RHO's doubleton, the heart length is likely to be with RHO."

"The percentage play," the Chimp agreed, "but... one off. Hearts are two-two."

"So what was the Rabbit's brilliancy? Did he ignore the odds and stick to 'eight ever nine never'?"

"The Rabbit was East!"

♠ A10952	♠ 83	♠ Q64						
♥ Q6	♥ A9	♥ 74						
♦ KQ87	♦ A9542	♦ J1063						
♣ 95	♣ AK62	♣ QJ107						
	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W</td><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td><td style="padding: 2px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;"></td><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td><td style="padding: 2px;"></td></tr> </table>	W	N	E		S		
W	N	E						
	S							
	♠ KJ7							
	♥ KJ108532							
	♦ –							
	♣ 843							

I was amazed. “The Rabbit found that! Not sticky chocolate almond biscuits again?”

“No, it was his new convention, Smith Peters. Apparently you play high-low on the first suit declarer plays to show you like partner’s opening lead!”

The teams scored up, and it transpired that the Rabbit’s team had won by 48 IMPs, helped by the hand I watched, another where the Chimp found the only lead (low from Qx trumps) to beat a small slam, and a third where he took a couple of inspired very deep finesses to bring home 6NT.

Sadly the Chimp’s form was not to last. During dinner I carelessly left a set of hand records marked ‘Evening Session’ on the director’s table. Annoyingly I couldn’t find them when I returned, which was inconvenient as I was going to look into why the West and North hands had been transposed by the computer.

The Chimp is still trying to explain to the Walrus why, on the first hand, he chose to force to 6♠ redoubled on a flimsy 5-1 fit instead of supporting the Walrus’ hearts at any point. And the Walrus hasn’t yet got on to the inquisition as to why the Chimp

ignored his Blackwood response and bid the slam anyway missing two aces.

* * *

There was still the Hog’s defensive problem to resolve . . .

“I know a diamond didn’t work at the table,” argued Papa, “but I maintain it’s a 50-50 guess.”

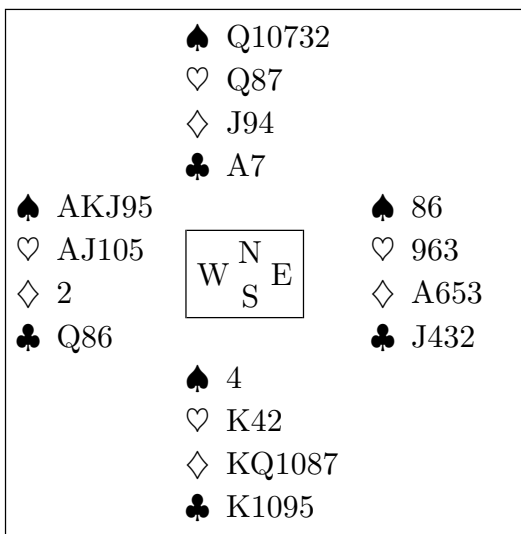
The hand, as played, was:

♠A led, then ♦2	♠ Q10732	3♦ by S						
	♥ Q87							
	♦ J94							
	♣ A7							
♠ AKJ95	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W</td><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td><td style="padding: 2px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;"></td><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td><td style="padding: 2px;"></td></tr> </table>	W	N	E		S		♠ 86
W	N	E						
	S							
♥ A1052		♥ 963						
♦ 2		♦ A653						
♣ K108		♣ J432						
	♠ 4							
	♥ KJ4							
	♦ KQ1087							
	♣ Q965							

Papa had won the ace and returned a trump. Declarer won and played the ♣A followed by a club to the 9 and 10. West exited with a club, and declarer had no trouble scoring two clubs, a ruff, four diamonds, and two hearts.

The Hog explained: “Isn’t it obvious? Win with the ace and return a spade. Declarer has no good pitch so has to ruff. Then when partner gets in with the ♥A he can play the ♠A so that you come to a trick in each suit plus an extra one in trumps through the force.”

“You are a results merchant!” thundered Papa. “Look, suppose the hand were as follows:



Now if you return a spade, declarer ruffs and plays a heart. It isn't hard for him to score a heart, four trumps, two clubs, and two club ruffs. If you return a trump he's one trick short."

"Papa, Papa," murmured the Hog, "I accept the spade return doesn't work here, but I still have nine tricks on a trump return, even if you don't. Look, if you like, you defend and I'll play, assuming that you can afford the normal stakes."

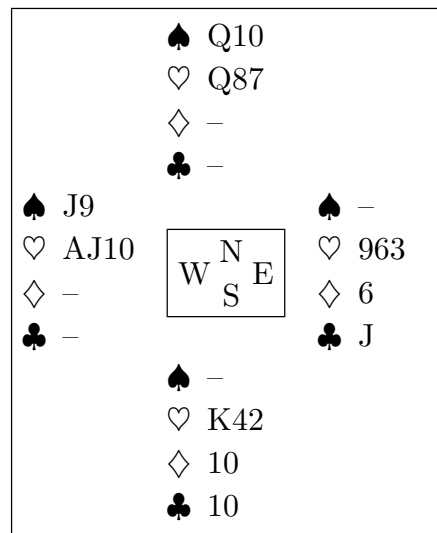
"Naturally," replied Papa confidently, "doubled and redoubled I trust?"

East won the ♦A and returned a diamond, Papa discarding a spade. The Hog played two rounds of clubs. "Don't forget to unblock," he chided.

Papa mulled. A day of irritating jibes and still the Hog was pretending he could teach him how to defend. Surely though, there was no need to unblock? If the Hog let him win the third club, he had a safe exit with the ♠A. True, this would set up the ninth trick in dummy, but when the Hog ruffed his club, he would then have no way back to hand without forcing himself off.

"I shall defend as I like," he retorted.

As he anticipated, the Hog let him win the third club and Papa exited with the ♠A. However, the Hog then changed tack and drew trumps, abandoning his club ruff and thus reducing himself back to eight tricks. On the last trump the position was:



Papa was caught in a curious squeeze. Whatever he discarded, he would come to just the ♥A. The Hog would come to four cases of champagne.

"You can't say I didn't give him a sporting chance this time," gloated the Hog.

* * *

I met the Rabbit on the way out.

"Did you enjoy it?" I asked, as we walked towards the car park.

"It wasn't as bad as I thought," he rambled, "and it's nice of the EBU to give the Chimp an invitation to visit the Laws & Ethics Committee. I may have misheard but I think they said something about giving him a pension. I hope it's better value than their savings account for gold points though. Is the rate of interest really negative ...?"



Bridge For All in Cambs and Hunts by Sally Dempster

The EBU Bridge For All (BFA) programme has been running for about two years and we now have about 40 BFA students in Cambs and Hunts, plus 10 accredited BFA teachers.

The programme is divided into six units of prescribed sets of lessons, with well-produced student notes, model hands, quizzes and problems. Each unit contains about 12 lessons, lasting about two hours. Units are available only to students registered with an approved BFA teacher. Each unit costs 15 pounds. This includes EBU membership as well as all the materials.

Unit One starts with five lessons on Mini-Bridge, providing a quick method of playing hands starting from lesson one, followed by instruction on how to open and respond to one no trump and one of a suit bids. Unit Two deals with declarer play at no trump and suit contracts, opening leads, simple attitude signals and discards and the competitive auction. Unit Three takes students through opening two bids and responses, slam bidding, count and suit preference signals, and ends with a lesson on recognising the danger hand as declarer. Unit Four tackles the wider use of doubles, pre-emptive bidding, defences to pre-empts, doubles of one no trump openings, and competing against the one no trump opening. Units Five onwards, are more likely to be of interest to people already playing some duplicate as they aim to introduce students to the sort of conventions they will meet at duplicate clubs: trial bids, cue bidding, splinter bids, transfers, the losing trick count,

tactics at pairs and teams, advanced declarer play, dealing with interference over one no trump openings and much more.

Although BFA was initially advertised for beginners, we now have several club players attending BFA classes. They find that the classes reinforce what they already know and shed light on several grey areas they were not too certain about. In fact BFA is growing and is now no longer just for beginners.

The project manager is Sandra Landy of World and European championship fame. In addition to masterminding and promoting BFA, she has also commissioned and edited several useful books to accompany the series. Really Easy Bidding and Really Easy Play in No Trumps. These are written for the non-expert player, and at £10, are excellent value for money.

New courses for different types of student needs are being developed. The first of these – Brush up your Bidding – is now available. This is for existing players who want to modernise their bidding and rubber bridge players who are moving into duplicate.

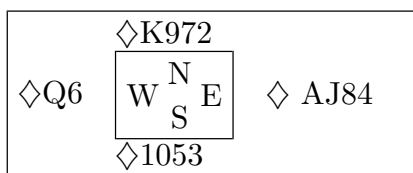
This autumn there will be at least three groups doing Unit 4, a Unit 3 group and we hope, several more Units 1 and 2. We hope to pioneer a Brush up your Bidding class as well. If anybody would like to join one of these groups please telephone me on 01223 263452 and I will put you in touch with a BFA teacher.



...and half a dozen of the other *by Jonathan Mestel*

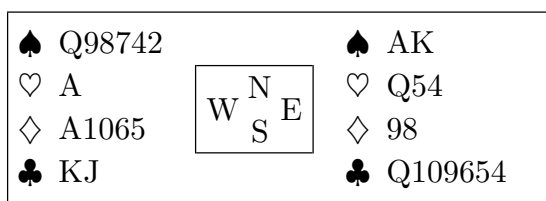
Those spots continue to pull their weight. On page 9, the possession of ♠7 is critical, but two hands from the Tollemache starred ♦6. How do you play 1053 opposite K972 in no trumps? Suppose you lead the 10 from hand, covered by the Q, K and ace. What do you do when next in hand?

Well, in context I hope you got this right. In practice, it's often a good idea to lead the higher of two irrelevant spots towards dummy; it can confuse opponents. Unfortunately, the suit round the table was



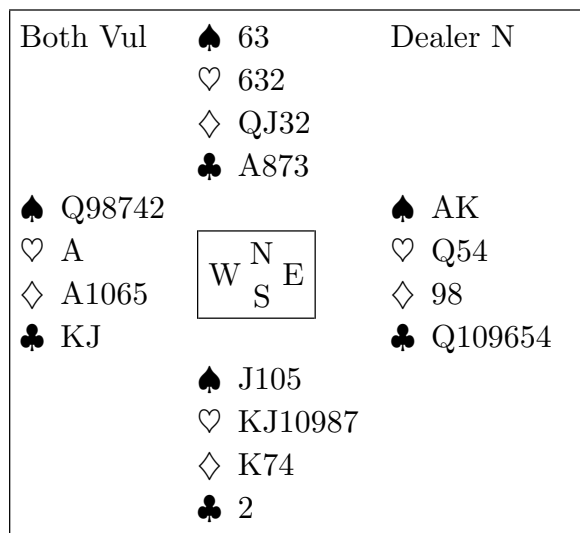
If, unthinkingly, you lead ♦5 to the 6, 9 and J, East is left with a tenace over dummy, but leading the ♦3 is worth an extra trick.

Now have a go at 4♠ by West on the following hand. South has overcalled in hearts and North leads ♥3.



You win in hand and lead ♣K which holds after a slight pause on your left. You continue with ♣J and North ducks again, while South ruffs with ♠5 and returns ♠J. Over to you. If South has no more trumps we can lead a third club throwing a diamond, establishing a club for another diamond discard, subsequently drawing trumps. But if South has ♠10 he will ruff in, and what then?

I felt the diamond suit offered best hope, and ran ♦9 at trick 5. North won with the J and exited with a trump, to which all followed. When I led ♦8 off table South was caught, the full hand being



In fact, he played the ♦7 under the 8, after which I couldn't go wrong. Better would be to play the ♦K, when I have a guess on the next round. But given my obsession with sixes, and especially his tempo on the diamond plays, I hope I would have pinned ♦7, setting up ♦6 for the 10th trick.

Well, I was pleased about this, but a month or so ago my coeditor pointed out that I'd misplayed the hand. The best line is to lead a club from dummy, overruffing the ♠10 with ♠Q, and then lead a diamond from hand. If North goes in with the J, the situation is the same as if I'd led a diamond from dummy, while if RHO wins with ♦K he has no 4th trump to lead, and I get to ruff a diamond in dummy, eventually drawing ♠6 with ♠9 (these sixes don't always score.) This line works whenever mine does, and also when South has only two trumps.

County Pairs Final by Giles Woodruff

Here is a technical problem from the County Pairs final, involving the kind of guess we all seem to get wrong more often than not.

♠ J9854		♠ KQ72						
♥ KJ9	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W</td><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td><td style="padding: 2px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>	W	N	E	S			♥ 73
W	N	E						
S								
♦ AK6		♦ Q873						
♣ K3		♣ J85						

You overbid to 4♠ after no opposition bidding. North leads a trump to South's ace. A club is returned, and you guess to play the king, but this loses to the ace. North gives you a reprieve by returning a trump and South shows out. After drawing the third trump, you now play the ♦A and the ♦K. Both follow, RHO playing the 9, then the J. How do you continue?

The fact that, writing this article three weeks later, I can insert every pip in the above problem rather than just "x"s is testament to the excellent service provided by Chris Larlham, who prepared computer dealt hands with hand records. He also directed the event this year, and kindly put up with my multiple-arrowswitched movement which ensures the most even comparisons possible across the field over the whole event.

The final was closely fought this year, and the competitors were closely bunched at the top. A good second session saw Catherine Jagger and myself (Cambridge) home, closely followed by Derek Oxbrow and Kath Haddock

(Cottenham) and Harold Bergson and Paul Huggins (University). As the latter cannot make the Corwen in June, their place will be taken by Philip and Sally Wraight (Cambridge) who finished fourth.

Returning to the play problem. Should we play South for a holding of J9 or J109? Given we know North had three spades and South one, the original odds of these holdings in isolation are 1.24% to 1.77% respectively. However, there are two orders in which you could play your cards with the former and six ways you could play your cards with the latter. Assuming South plays his cards randomly from either holding, he would play the 9 then the J 1/2 the time from J9 and 1/6 of the time from J109. Therefore you should finesse because 1.24%/2 is greater than 1.77%/6. In practice, I suspect few players will play the J first from J9, so this tips the odds even further. If you do finesse, it works and you can't go wrong in hearts (South has AQ) so you will make your contract. I played for the drop and went off.

[I'm always a bit suspicious of secondary inferences in these 'restricted choice' positions. If playing the 9 then the J is more likely to indicate a doubleton than playing the J then the 9, it's right for a J109 holder to play this way, and not at random. I don't think you can beat the a priori odds, but South's two discards and silence in the auction might lead one to do the wrong thing. (JM)]



Hand Reading by Chris Jagger

In the last issue we discussed card reading – using detective work during the play to work out exactly what the opponents hold. Sometimes we can work out the whole distribution before dummy even goes down – a recent example came up in the ECL match against Suffolk.

You hold ♠Jxx ♥KQ ♦QJxx ♣KJxx as West. The auction proceeds:

South	West	North	East
1♦	P	1♠	P
2♦	P	P	2♠
3♣	?		

Take a moment to work out everybody’s hand shape here before reading on – it may not seem too obvious at first!

Opener has at least six diamonds and four clubs, whilst responder has at least four spades. What of partner? Surely to compete with two spades he must have at least six of them, and thus exactly six of them, and probably not too weak a suit.

Let us turn back to responder – we now know he has only four spades, and since he did not respond 1♥, only three of them. Opener has at most three hearts, so that gives partner five of them!! The whole hand is suddenly falling into place. Opener is 0364, partner is 6-5 in the majors. Partner could well hold AKQxxx xxxxx x x, and with hearts splitting 3-3, game is going to be making!

Take a look at the actual hand:

EW Vul	♠ Q10xx	Dealer				
	♥ 10xxx	South				
	♦ x					
	♣ Qxxx					
♠ Jxx		♠ AK98xx				
♥ KQ	<table border="1" style="display: inline-table; width: 30px; height: 30px; text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;"> <tr><td>W</td><td>N</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td><td>E</td></tr> </table>	W	N	S	E	♥ AJxx
W	N					
S	E					
♦ QJxx		♦ xx				
♣ KJxx		♣ x				
	♠ –					
	♥ xxx					
	♦ AK109xx					
	♣ A10xx					

Where we went wrong in the analysis was that North did indeed respond 1♠ rather than 1♥, presumably because of the weakness of the heart suit (though a 1♥ response is in fact still correct on this hand, as the important thing when responding weak is merely to attempt to find a fit). Aside from that, we got the hand pretty much right, though partner had slightly weaker spades and stronger hearts (we were of course guessing much more about the high cards than we were about the distribution). Importantly, if we had decided to bid 4♠, this would be close to a make (it all depends on how good West’s spade pips are, since South can cash three minor suit cards and exit in a heart). At the same time, the ‘obvious’ double of 3♣ found at the table, needed a heart lead to defeat the contract (try planning the play on a trump lead).

[I held the West cards; everyone I’ve asked has doubled at this point, but Chris convinces me that the twin dangers of 3♣X and 4♠ making are such that I should have bid. I think 4♠ penalises partner too much, but I like 3♦. I’m told North held the critical ♠7! (JM)]

Results roundup:

This has been the year of the giant killers in the **County Knockout**. In Round one, JUDE bt WOODRUFF, MILMAN bt KEEVASH, JAGGER bt ASHE, PAL bt M.HARRISON, YEATMAN bt BIRDSALL, TAHSEEN bt HARRISON. In the quarter finals, TAHSEEN bt YEATMAN, JAGGER bt PAL, MILMAN bt JUDE, LAST bt LARLHAM. In the semifinals, MILMAN bt LAST.

In the **County Plate** M.HARRISON bt MAN. In the quarter finals, M.HARRISON bt COPPING, CURTIN bt KEEVASH, SHAW bt BRISCOMBE, and RILEY bt MAY.

In the **Eastern Counties League** against Suffolk the A team won 12-0, the B team 10-2, while the C team lost 1-11. Against University, the A team won 9-3, while the B team lost 6-6.

Final standings: In the "A" division we were joint 1st with Essex, placed 2nd on the ECL tie-splitting procedures (hardly unfair as we contrived to lose 1-11 to Essex). The "B" team were 5th (out of 8) in their division and the "C" team 7th (out of 7).

In the **South Cambs League**, Saffron Walden were convincing winners, with Cambridge Club 2nd and Cottenham 3rd.

In the **Tollemache Final** Cambs came 7th out of 8, though it was so close that a good win (instead of a 12-8 loss) in the last match would have made it first place!

The **Garden Cities Qualifier** was won by Saffron Walden A (Briscombe, Constable, Larlham, Midgley, Mr and Mrs Orde-Powlett, Oxley, Warren) with 120 VPs, followed by University (116), Cambridge A (111), Cambridge B (83), Thursday A (78), Huntingdon (77), Saffron Walden B (58), Balsham (52) and Thursday B (25).

County Pairs Final: (leading places)

1. Catherine Jagger, Giles Woodruff
2. Kath Haddock, Derek Oxbrow
3. Harold Bergson, Paul Huggins
4. Philip and Sally Wraight
5. Joanne Caldwell, Kevin Smith
6. Eric and Sheila Lancaster
7. David Carmichael, Gladys Gittins
8. Michael Desai, Ron Fertig
9. Eileen Gardiner, Penny McCann
10. Margaret and Roger Chaplin

County Individual Final: (leading places)

1. Len Scofield
2. Malcolm Anderson
3. Linda Ledwidge
4. Ian Hill
5. Wendy Lefort
6. Philip Wraight
7. Zona Lacy
8. Ted Shaw
9. Philip Jones
10. Ken Jackson

Other Results:

Congratulations to Don McFarlane and Alistair Brodie for winning the **National Pairs**.

Catherine Jagger and Sharleen Robson have been selected as a reserve pair for the **Lady Milne**.

Lior Zivan's team won the **National Swiss Teams**. Young, Roberts, Jagger and Jagger won the **Harrogate Congress Swiss Teams** (former BBL congress). John Young won the **Portland Pairs** with Sandra Landy.

Cambridge Club: Victor Milman and Jimmy Cheung won the Club Pairs. Cynthia Kirkby and Bob Speller won the Mixed Pairs. The Jacob Shield was won by Sonia Zakrzewska and Gareth Birdsall and the Cradock Bowl by Bryan Last. The Collis Plate was won by Woodruff, Kendrick, Siklos, Wightwick and Johannsson.

University: The **President's Teams** was won by Hazel, Green, Barden and Mestel, with Fleet's team 2nd and Woodruff's team 3rd.



Letters to the editors: Graham Badger writes:

The last newsletter stressed the importance of the Essex County match for the progress of Cambs and Hunts in the Eastern Counties League. Yet on the day the best players failed to turn up and my partner and I found ourselves playing in a sub-standard "A" team and a final Butler score in which only one of 12 pairs gained a plus result. At the next match some of the better players did turn up but boasted that they saw this as practice for the Tollemache. (Much good did it do them!!) This is only too common. An analysis of Tollemache players' contributions to the Eastern Counties League reveals that in the last three seasons 3 Tollemache selections have never played in the ECL, that 6 others have stacked up 8 appearances between them, that one has played in 3/7 and that only 2 have met a reasonable target of 2/3. Should there not be an expectation of 2/3 appearances in the ECL as a passport to Tollemache selection?

It is not that my partner and I wish to be selected for the "A" Team or the Tollemache on the basis of loyalty. It is just that we become frustrated by playing in a sub-standard "B" team merely because we regularly field a sub-standard "A" team.



This is perhaps an appropriate place for:

Dates for your diary:

- 11th June 2000 ECL v Norfolk (H)
- 2nd July 2000 ECL v Beds (A)
- 16th July 2000 ECL v Suffolk (H)
- 15th October 2000 ECL v Herts (A)
- 12th November 2000 ECL v Essex (H)
- 11th February 2001 ECL v Northants (H)
- 25th February 2001 ECL v University (A)



From Margaret Jude, Membership Secretary:

Many members will already have received a letter from the EBU in Aylesbury reminding them that annual subscriptions are due. This is a new procedure and nothing to do with the 'fees overdue' reminders that are sent out in August. As before, you may pay your Club Treasurer, the County Membership Secretary, directly to Aylesbury or you can always opt to pay by Direct Debit. The combined EBU and County fees are £16.50 for full adult membership, £4.50 for juniors (17 to 25) and £1.50 for under 17s. We hope that the new reminder system will make life easier for everyone.

Results of the Four Card Bridge competition *by Jonathan Mestel*

Last newsletter, I set a competition to find the best bidding system for four card bridge. This uses a 4-card deck, containing the ♠A, ♠2, ♣A and ♣2. The legal calls are 1♣, 1♠, 1NT (contracting for one trick) together with pass, double and redouble. The scoring system ignored redoubles:

To make a contract undoubled:	+100
To make a contract doubled:	+130
To go one off undoubled:	−90
To go one off doubled:	−180

Two questions were set:

- What are the best defensive methods against a ‘Natural’ system, where 1♠ shows ♠A, 1♣ shows ♣A and pass denies an ace?
- What is the best system of opening bids?

This game gets more confusing the more you think about it. Exchanging information helps the opponents, and to assess even the simplest methods, you have to consider the best countermeasures. Perhaps for this reason, I received no sufficiently detailed answers for part (b). As everyone soon found, part (a) is quite complicated enough.

The best two answers received were from Chris Chambers and Ross Midgley, who draw similar conclusions. Chris hails from Suffolk, and so should perhaps be disqualified, but I don’t want to be accused of Countyism, so I’ll award them both a prize. Ross sent a particularly detailed and lucid analysis, which I could forward to anyone interested.

If RHO opens 1♠, showing ♠A, they both recommend passing if we hold ♣2, otherwise bidding the ‘Gambling 1NT’. 1NT makes 50% of the time, when LHO holds ♣2, but otherwise it goes one off doubled. The expected score for this strategy is $(-100)/3 + (+100)/3 + (-180)/3 = -60$. However, perhaps a better

strategy is for second hand to pass, and fourth hand to reopen with a double provided he doesn’t hold ♣2. If then we hold ♣2 we pass for -130 , but otherwise we bid the laydown 1NT. So this would expect to score $-100/3 + 100/3 - 130/3 = -130/3$.

But responder can do better than passing meekly if he holds ♣2, as he knows our defensive methods will transfer to 1NT. He therefore does best to bid 1NT holding ♣2, which makes half the time. We would then score $-100/3 + (180 - 100)/6 - 130/3 = -190/3$. But if we know he will do this, then partner doesn’t have to reopen with a double! We then score $\frac{2}{3}(-100) + \frac{1}{6}(180 - 100) = -160/3$. Who has to declare their methods first? I think responder’s bid must be defined first – we begin to see the need for probabilistic strategies...

If RHO opens 1♣, showing ♣A, our winners differ slightly. Ross overcalls 1♠ on all hands! (Will the EBU license this?) This will make unless LHO has ♠A. If LHO holds ♠2 he should try 1NT. Our expected score is $-180/3 + 100/3 + (180 - 100)/6 = -40/3$.

Chris prefers passing with ♠2, bidding 1♠ with ♠A and 1NT with ♣2. This give LHO perfect information, and so the expected score is $\frac{1}{6}(+100 - 100 + 100 - 100 + 100 - 180) = -30$ and Ross’s method is preferable.

Over an opening pass (showing a two), both our winners bid naturally, showing their ace or passing. I am not convinced this is optimal. Curiously, the best card to hold over a pass is the ♠2. If partner holds ♠A he bids 1♠; if he holds ♣A he gets to bid 1NT before opener can.

It’s a difficult game! Thanks to all who entered, and I apologise for any suffering caused.