



Cambs & Hunts Bridge



Newsletter Number 32

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



This and previous newsletters can be found on the County Web page, whose URL is given above.

Congratulations to Paul Barden and Helen on the birth of their son Isaac.

The County could still use assistance in running its competitions – if you know of anybody who would like to be Tournament Organiser, or would like to assist in the running of some County events, please talk to a member of the County committee.

Apologies for the omission from last Newsletter of Philip Wraight's report on the County Individual championship, due to editorial (JM's) incompetence. The missing article can be found on the County Website.

STOP PRESS: Congratulations to John Constable, Fiske Warren, David Kendrick and Chris Larlham on winning the NICKO Plate



In this slender issue Jonathan Mestel reports from the Brighton Swiss Teams and covers from Aunt Agony's vitriol. Chris Jagger advances over 3NT and John Turner advises us never to give up. There is the usual round-up of News and Results.



No chance

♠ J8		♠ KQ96543
♥ AKQJ62	W N E	♥ 984
♦ A	S	♦ 7
♣ A874		♣ 103

South deals and you are East. The auction begins 1♣-X-1♦-4♠; and then opponents are silent as partner drives you to 6♠. South leads ♣K. Is there any chance at all, or should you concentrate on what you are going to say in the post mortem? South holds ♠A.



Letter to Aunt Agony

Dear Auntie,

Partnering Cathering Jagger in the Brighton B-final, I reached the following slam:

Dealer S	♠ AJxx	Both Vul
	♥ AQxx	
	♦ Axx	
	♣ Ax	
♠ Kxxx		♠ x
♥ K10	W N E	♥ xxx
♦ Jxx	S	♦ Q10xxx
♣ 109xx		♣ Jxxx
	♠ Q109x	
	♥ J9xx	
	♦ Kx	
	♣ KQx	

South	West	North	East
1NT	P	2♣*	P
2♥	P	6♥	P

The ♣10 was led. I was fairly sure LHO would have led a singleton spade if he'd had one and that holding ♠K he would cover ♠Q if I led it, so at trick 2 I led ♠Q to the K and Ace. I now took the best chance of avoiding two trump losers by playing ♥A and another. Unfortunately, LHO won and gave his partner a ruff. Opponents made 13 tricks in game. Surely, even you will concede I was unlucky?

Yours, Jonathan Mestel

♣♦♠♥♣♦♠♥

Dear Nephew,

Your play would have been exemplary in 6NT, but not surprisingly, you didn't manage to bid to that contract.

Your logic (for want of a better word) seems to be that if ♠K is offside you must hope to

avoid a trump loser by playing small to the Q and cashing the ace, whereas if the spade finesse is right you can 'safety play' in trumps. Of course, as you found to your cost, there is more than one way of losing a trump trick.

Your line **only** gains when RHO holds a singleton ♥K. Note that if RHO holds ♥K10xx you will only lose one trick even if you play hearts in a less imaginative fashion. Your line loses in the actual layout and also if LHO holds ♠K ♥xx(x) when he is unlikely to have led his singleton. I don't think one needs do the arithmetic to realise you went against the odds.

But your line wasn't so bad, and a tiny improvement would have saved you. After winning ♠A, it costs little to come back to hand with ♦K and lead a small heart intending to go up with the ace and continue with ♥Q from dummy if LHO follows small. When LHO actually plays ♥10, you may as well now insert ♥Q and all's well. True, a defender holding ♠K ♥108xx could scupper you by playing ♥10, but if they did they'd deserve it and anyway you'd flatten the board against people like me who play the correct line of a heart to the Q at trick 2.

So were you unlucky? Maybe a little. It was certainly unlucky to be playing a team incompetent enough that your mistake cost you 2×13 IMPs, whereas against me it would only have cost you 17 IMPs. No, my sympathies lie mainly with your partner. Not only needs she put up with one editor on a daily basis, she had to suffer the follies of another for an entire weekend.

Yours ever,

Auntie

Play on, MacDuff! *by* John Turner

A quite common error, I suspect, is to give up too easily. The situation looks hopeless – better to concede now rather than bore everybody stiff by playing the cards to the bitter end, one thinks. But maybe there are possibilities of which, at this moment, one has no conception. Maybe there is a valid squeeze or other type of end-play that will save the day; perhaps there’s an unlikely but possible layout of the cards that will allow success; or maybe the opponents, who won’t necessarily know precisely what’s going on, will take a reasonable though losing course of action. Or of course oppo may simply slip up.

This hand came up recently at a Teams night at the Cambridge Club at Shire Hall.

<p>6♠ by S</p> <p>♠ xx</p> <p>♥ 3</p> <p>♦ Qxxx</p> <p>♣ AKQxxx</p>	<p>♠ QJx</p> <p>♥ Q1085</p> <p>♦ Kxx</p> <p>♣ 10xx</p> <table border="1" style="margin: 10px auto;"> <tr><td>W</td><td>N</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> <p>♠ AKxxxx</p> <p>♥ AK42</p> <p>♦ Ax</p> <p>♣ x</p>	W	N	E		S		<p>♠ xx</p> <p>♥ J976</p> <p>♦ Jxxx</p> <p>♣ Jxx</p>
W	N	E						
	S							

At one table I was South and was playing in 4♠, West having overcalled in clubs. West led ♥3 to the 8, 9 and my K. I drew trumps by playing off the Q-J, returned to the ♥A and discovered that I had a heart loser. My 12 easy tricks had shrunk to 11 – lucky I wasn’t in 6♠! I claimed at this point, cheerfully conceding two tricks (a heart and a club).

At the other table things were more tense. Here, N/S had done extremely well to reach

the excellent 6♠ by South on pretty thin values, West having again overcalled in clubs. West, for our team, led two top clubs, East following with small cards. Declarer ruffed, drew trumps with the Q-J and correctly tested the hearts by starting with the A-K. When West showed out on the second round, the hand seemed dead and a disgusted declarer simply conceded one down.

Both declarers should have played on, for they still have good chances of the extra trick. That innocent-looking ♣10 in dummy could be a killer! If West has all the top clubs (quite possible in view of the bidding) the double-squeeze will operate for certain. Let’s consider what should have happened at the second table. Declarer should at the point reached simply cash the ♥Q and then run the trumps, pitching first the remaining heart then lastly the ♣10 (unless this is now high). In the three-card ending, if West started with all the top clubs he will be squeezed down to just two diamonds, and East will then be squeezed in the red suits.

In practice East has the ♣J and formally the squeeze fails. But closer examination shows that the defenders are not yet out of the woods. West has a tricky choice of discards and has to throw all his clubs, keeping his diamonds – not the other way round, for then East would be squeezed in the reds. Equally, if East is slightly careless and prematurely throws the ♣J, this will resurrect the double-squeeze. How easy is it to see the correct defence? I think it is quite challenging, for it requires an ability to foresee and counter single- and double-squeezes – not trivial stuff at all. And as with so many bridge problems, the situation initially looks innocuous and the first challenge is to see that there IS a problem.

Surely this is just the sort of ending that many defenders are likely to muddle.

At my table declarer should, at the point already reached, try a low club from hand, ducking in dummy. This transposes into the same position as at the second table with the same squeeze chances.

[A useful principle when discarding in situations where both defenders are being squeezed is to try to guard the suit held on your right rather than the left. This is because you may later end up discarding after that hand, and a

“positional” squeeze will not work. That principle doesn’t help here, however, and instead the winning strategy is for both defenders to retain a guard in the suit which has no entries attached to it. Then in order to exert pressure on the defence declarer has to kill entries to one hand or another. Note also that if North held $\diamond 10$ a “guard squeeze” could work as when East throws diamonds, West is exposed to a finesse. In that case the only hope for the defence would be to attack the entries with diamond leads. But few would lead a diamond as West! (ed.)]



The vanishing trump trick by Jonathan Mestel

What would make the game easier would be a warning bell or flashing light which goes off whenever an important stage in the play is reached. Something to nudge us and say ‘Your next card matters. Give it a little thought.’ Take this hand from the Brighton Swiss Teams:

E/W Vul	♠ 7	Dealer E					
	♥ A						
	♦ QJ7642						
	♣ AK972						
♠ QJ106		♠ 98542					
♥ J75	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W</td><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td><td style="padding: 2px;">E</td></tr> </table>	W	N	S	E	♥ KQ4	
W	N						
S	E						
♦ K		♦ A105					
♣ Q10854		♣ J3					
	♠ AK3						
	♥ 1098632						
	♦ 983						
	♣ 6						

East	South	West	North
P	P	P	1♦
P	1♥	X	2♣
2♠	P	P	4♣
P	5♦	all	pass

East leads $\heartsuit K$, declarer winning. $\clubsuit A$ and a club ruff are followed by $\spadesuit AK$ on which declarer throws a club, and a spade ruff. Declarer now leads $\clubsuit 9$, and partner ruffs in with the $\diamond 10$. Just then the alarm bell goes off. What card do you follow with as West?

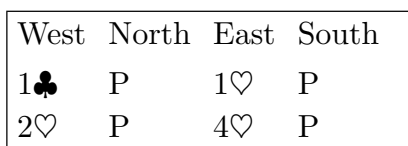
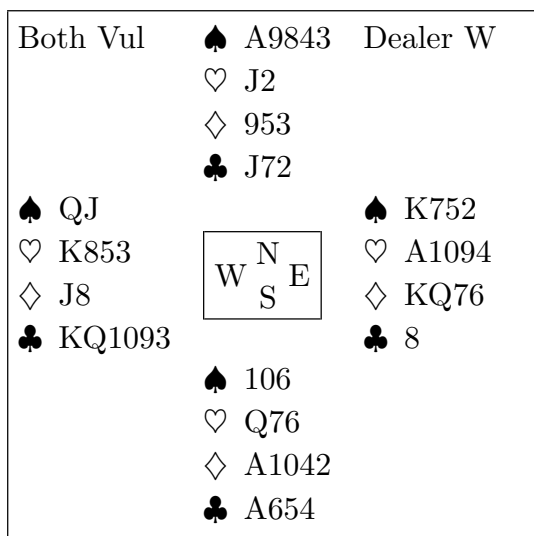
Well, obviously it doesn’t matter. Declarer must be 1-1-6-5 and has no more club losers. Either we’ll set the contract or we won’t, depending on whether or not partner has $\diamond A$.

But hang on... look at it from partner’s point of view. She doesn’t know about the minor kings. It could easily be right to prevent a second club ruff. No sooner was $\clubsuit 10$ out of my hand than the terrible truth dawned on me. Sure enough, Cath switched to $\diamond A$ and declarer claimed the moment my $\diamond K$ hit the table. “Sorry,” I said. “It might have helped if I’d played $\clubsuit Q$.” “Yes, it would,” partner agreed, which coming from Ms Jagger almost qualifies as a stinging rebuke.

The key point is that holding $\clubsuit KQ$, one would of course play the king, to show partner that we can afford it. So playing the queen

denies the king. By inference, playing the 10 should deny the queen, and so declarer must have it and it is imperative to draw trumps. Had I played ♣Q, partner would have known there was no point in drawing trumps. If only my alarm bell had been working. Instead, the resounding clatter of crashing diamond honours could be heard all round the tournament hall, as this misdefence was duplicated many times.

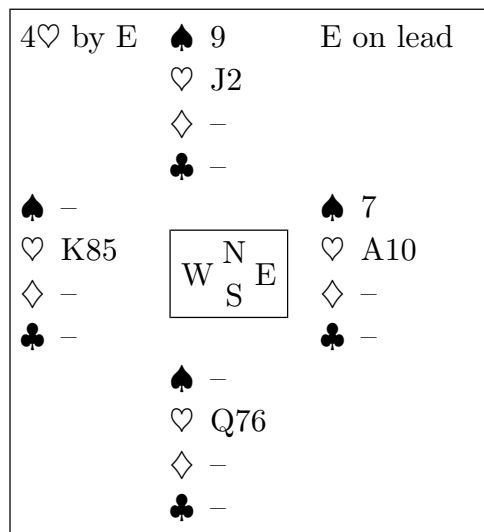
Another trump trick might have disappeared on this board.



I led ♠10, and two rounds of diamonds followed. Declarer led ♣8 which I won and hoped for a misguess in trumps. In fact declarer led ♥10 from hand and ran it, and my dismay changed to bafflement when partner produced the ♥J.

So why is this hand of interest? Because, as Giles Woodruff pointed out, of what might have happened. It is the closest I've come to participating in a 'Devil's Coup,' albeit in a somewhat passive rôle.

Declarer has the genuine chance of a doubleton ♥QJ, but an attractive alternative, which works as the cards lie, is to cash ♠KQ, the minor kings and ruff two clubs and a diamond to reach:



South has already declined to ruff one spade, but when the last spade is led, his best shot is to ruff with ♥Q. But declarer knows there are four trumps left and so should finesse against ♥J. The trump trick vanishes.

Of course, declarer can go wrong, in particular by attempting the coup the other way round, ruffing twice in the West hand. As the cards lie this will not work, but it would make a good hard luck story.

Curiously, I suspect the Devil's Coup may be easier to pull off as defenders in practice. If declarer has a weak trump holding Qxxx opposite Jxxx say, he won't usually draw trumps, and one can well imagine reaching the diagram with South as declarer. Of course the defenders have been spared the need to shorten their trumps, which makes the whole process simpler. It's not happened to me yet though – or maybe I never noticed it.



Bidding after a 3NT overcall *by* Chris Jagger

Suppose opponents open a weak two or three bid against you, and your partner overcalls 3NT, do you know how to proceed? I'm not sure there is a common method, but we shall present a sensible, reasonably simple system.

To start with, when they open a three level preempt, what does 3NT show? A stop and a minimum of a 15 count, with a balanced hand, or alternatively with a stop and a good minor suit. With a major suit he would tend to overcall in the major. Bear in mind that normally you should pass – partner has probably already bid your hand for you!

If you think your hand is strong enough or distributional enough to bid on, we suggest the following methods:

4♣ is used as an enquiry, with 4♦/♥/♠ being transfers (with the transfer to their suit showing diamonds). Thus

3♥-3NT-P-4♣ = asking bid, with responses:

4♦ = Hand based on a long diamond suit (then cue bids, with 4NT natural)

4♥ = Hand based on a long club suit

4♠ = 15-17 points, balanced

4NT = 18-19 points, balanced

Higher = Natural five card suits, and 20+ points.

If they open three of a minor, the same applies, except that now there is only one long minor we might wish to show over the 4♣ bid. Thus 4♦ and 4♥ are both used to show that minor, but 4♦ shows above minimum.

When opponents open a weak two, essentially the same system is played, but now partner will bid 2NT with 15-18 or 19. Over 2NT you should play your usual methods over a 2NT opener.

If partner overcalls a weak two with 3NT, showing 19+, you can enquire with 4♣ as

above. Now partner shows 19-21 by bidding 4♠ or 22-23 with 4NT.

An alternative system is to double with the stronger balanced hands, reserving the 3NT bid for long minor hands. A disadvantage with this style is that partner frequently responds to the double with a Lebensohl 2NT, and you end up playing 3NT the wrong way up.



Give them some rope

Australian international Cathy Chua showed us this hand from the front page.

6♠ by E	♠ 7	♣K led
	♥ 1052	
	♦ QJ1098643	
	♣ 6	
♠ J8		♠ KQ96543
♥ AKQJ62		♥ 984
♦ A	W N S E	♦ 7
♣ A874		♣ 103
	♠ A102	
	♥ 7	
	♦ K52	
	♣ KQJ952	

If North holds ♠A and a stiff club you have real chances, and you may as well first unblock ♦A before leading ♠J. This technical play showed curious benefit on the actual layout. South won the first spade and cunningly returned the ♦K to lock declarer in dummy, noting that a club loser could not vanish. Partner's 8 diamonds came as something of a shock, as Cathy ruffed in hand and claimed. Of course South's defence would have been poor even had he held a stiff ♥10, but it's amazing how helpful opponents can be if you give them a chance.

Results Round Up

Jubilee Pairs

- 1 Peter Oxley & Kit Orde-Powlett 84
- 2 Bryan Last & Peter Last 82
- 3 Tapan Paul & Eryl Howard 81
- 4 Roger Chaplin & Margaret Chaplin 79
- 5 David Collier & David Hodge 77
- 6 John Turner & Ann Curtin 73
- 7 Rod Oakford & Sue Oakford 72
- =8 Gina Dunn & Mary Knights 71
- =8 Wendy Pollard & Dominic Clark 71
- 10 Nadia Stelmashenko & Victor Milman 69

The **County Plate Final** was won by Toby KENNEY, beating PINTO by 22imps.

The County has had a good start to the **Eastern Counties League**: Suffolk 14-6, 16-4 and 15-5; Herts 18-2, 11-9 and 0-20; Essex 18-2, 3-17, 16-4.

In the **Bournemouth Congress**, Alastair Brodie and Giles Woodruff were joint 5th in the teams, though playing in different teams! Gareth Birdsall represented England and came 6th in the **European Youth Championships**. In the **Pachabo**, Sonia Zakrzewski, Gareth Birdsall, Don McFarlane and Jonathan Mestel came 7th. Victor Milman, Nadia Stelmashenko, Rod and Sue Oakford won the Bedfordshire Swiss Teams.

In the **Shrewsbury Summer Congress**, Catherine Jagger was second in the pairs and teams, unably assisted by Chris Jagger in the teams. In the **Scarborough Northern Summer Congress**, Chris Jagger won the pairs and teams, ably assisted by Catherine Jagger in the teams. Mary Knights won the **Summer Seniors Congress** pairs.

At the **Brighton Summer Congress** Chris Jagger won the **Mixed Pivot Teams** and

Midweek Knockout. He was 4th in the A Final of the **Swiss Teams**, whilst Jonathan Mestel and Catherine Jagger were 5th in the B final, and Giles Woodruff, Roger Gibbons and Suzanne Cohen were 3rd in the Consolation Final.

In the **NICKO**, the Cambridge Club reached the semi-finals, losing to Bradford, whilst in the **NICKO Plate**, Saffron Walden have reached the final. [Stop press: they won!]

Masterpoints Update:

At the end of last season, the County has five grandmasters, namely Young, Jagger, Gibbons, Jagger and Woodruff. Warren is getting very close now to being the sixth! Young was the leading scorer for the County this year, coming (a very low for him) 8th in the national rankings. Milman was 6th nationally in Level 2 (National and Premier National Masters). The level 4, 5 and 6 categories within the County, were won by D. Allen, C. DeVries, and Mrs A. Green respectively.

Dates for your diary

- 13 Oct 2002 ECL v Northants (H)
- 18 Oct 2002 County Knockout closing date
- 3 Nov 2002 Newmarket Open Swiss Teams
- 8 Nov 2002 Golfprint Trophy closing date
- 15 Dec 2002 Garden Cities Qualifying Round
- 5 Jan 2003 ECL v Norfolk (H)
- 26 Jan 2003 County Individual Final
- 9 Feb 2003 ECL v Beds (A)
- 16 Feb 2003 Swiss Teams Club Challenge
- 22 Mar 2003 New Players Tournament
- 30 Mar 2003 County Pairs Final
- 1 Jun 2003 Jubilee Swiss Pairs