Griffith Online IMP Swiss Pairs

Recursive… but not the same outcome

by RAKESH KUMAR

Rakesh Kumar describes himself as an enthusiast who makes enough errors to have plenty of material for bridge columns.

The Griffith Ex-Servicemens Bridge Club Online Swiss Pairs was held in mid-November and had a field of 52 pairs. The format was slightly unusual, as there were 10 matches of 5 boards each. Scoring was by cross-IMPs, which is normal for BBO not-quite-Swiss competitions. The event was very convincingly won by Margaret Foster – Colin Clifford, who finished on +82.6 IMPs with 8 wins out of 10. In second spot were Andrew Markovics – Tony Burke on +59.0 and third place was taken by Terry Heming – Brian Thorp, who had +49.6 IMPs.

Why did I say "not-quite-Swiss" above? One of the quirks of the BBO version of a Swiss Pairs event is that one may play the same pair more than once – this is correctly referred to as a Danish format. It's not unusual to play a pair early in the day and then to encounter them again later on – it's happened to me a number of times, including in the Griffith event. However, Foster-Clifford had to grapple with quite a special version of this particular oddity.

Although they were never out of the top 10 all day, in round 7 they finally made it to the top 3, reaching second place. Here, they came up against Peter Gill – Jane Dawson, who were in first place at that point. Quite remarkably, they then played the same opponents not once, not twice, but 3 times in succession. Only the BBO computer could produce a non-movement like that.

Have you ever seen this entry from the computer programmer's dictionary?

`Recursive, adj.; see Recursive`

That's how it must have felt for Foster-Clifford! Their first encounter was a small loss to Gill-Dawson, so the positions of the two pairs were unchanged. However, Foster-Clifford then won the next two by substantially greater margins and took a firm grip on first place, consolidating their position in the last round with a further small win against Heming-Thorp.

Anyway, time to tell you about a few boards. Before I do, here's a little brain-teaser for you:

	♠ 97 ♥ 872 ♦ AQJ ♣ A9872	
		♠ AK62 ♥ A53 ♦ K87 ♣ J53

Nil vulnerable, you are East and South as dealer opens 2 ♦, alerted as a weak major suit, possibly only 5 cards. Partner passes and North bids 2 ♥, alerted as pass or correct. Naturally, you bid 2NT, which partner raises to game. South leads ♦3. How are you going to play this?

Very early in the day, along came this slam deal:

Board 3
Dealer S | Vul E-W

	♠ J654 ♥ 2 ♦ AJ86 ♣ 8432	
♠ AT3 ♥ KJT97 ♦ Q5 ♣ KJ9	N W E S	♠ K92 ♥ AQ63 ♦ K3 ♣ AT76
	♠ Q87 ♥ 854 ♦ T9742 ♣ Q5	

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	6	1	6	3	6
W	6	1	6	3	6

At our table, Lauri Perino – Kevin Tant bid 1♥-2NT (Jacoby, game forcing with 4+ support)-3NT (14-15 balanced)-4NT-5♥-6♥ and made it with no effort at all when partner led a club. Sadly for us, only 6 of 26 East-West pairs bid and made 6♥, so this earned them 10.7 IMPs – most of the field stopped in game. What was remarkable was that both Foster-Clifford and Heming-Thorp gained 13.4 IMPs when their opponents, who were the other 2 pairs in 6♥, went down.

In the 3NT contract that was the play problem above, the auction I described was the one at our table, where South was Helen Lowry, whom I've mentioned a couple of times lately as being a very pushy bidder. After her 2♦ opening, I thought it was reasonable to assume that both missing club honours would be on my right and I figured I could cater for a holding of ♣KQ10x by playing a low club towards my hand. Disaster!

Board 27
Dealer S | Vul None

	♠ Q854 ♥ Q9 ♦ 652 ♣ QT64	
♠ 97 ♥ 872 ♦ AQJ ♣ A9872	N W E S	♠ AK62 ♥ A53 ♦ K87 ♣ J53
	♠ JT3 ♥ KJT64 ♦ T943 ♣ K	

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	4	2	2	2	2
W	4	2	2	2	2

Things were very different at Foster-Clifford's table, where Margaret as East opened 1NT after 3 passes. Hearts were led against 3NT, ducked twice, and a small club was led towards dummy, which solved all further problems. This gained 5 IMPs because across the field, 13 pairs made 3NT but 10 went down.

Later in the day, one of the biggest swings for Foster-Clifford, in their largest win against Gill-Dawson, was on this deal:

Board 44
Dealer W | Vul N-S

	♠ 53 ♥ A ♦ AQJT72 ♣ KQ92	
♠ AJT ♥ KT8742 ♦ K6 ♣ 54	N W E S	♠ Q642 ♥ J65 ♦ 953 ♣ J76
	♠ K987 ♥ Q93 ♦ 84 ♣ AT83	

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	5	5	-	3	4
S	6	5	-	3	5
E	-	-	1	-	-
W	-	-	1	-	-

After West kicked off proceedings with 1♥, what would you do as North? A sensible approach with a notionally 4-loser hand is to double first and hope that by the time the auction gets back to you, there is still room to show your hand. If East doesn't get involved in the proceedings, South with 9 hcp and 4 spades can reasonably make a jump bid of 2♠. Now when North rebids 3♦ showing a good suit and a 16+ hcp hand, South has choices. Colin Clifford took forward-going action by bidding 3♥, West doubled, but Margaret Foster bravely bid 3NT. Foster-Clifford were thus one of only 3 pairs to reach the notrump game, which was worth +9.3 IMPs.

At our table, I muddied the waters with a raise to 2♥, showing 3 cards and 2-6 hcp after the double, South bid 2♠ and partner raised to 3♥. However, when North now bid 4♦, South decided her doubleton support was sufficient and raised to 5♦. This was worth 8.3 IMPs to the two pairs in the minor suit game. The rest of the field languished in part scores.

Obviously the moral of this story is that one should bid, bid and then bid some more. Well done to the winners!