

## The Crockfords Plate Competition, 2006/7

### Commentary provided by club member Tim Prior

Alaric,

I said I'd send you some hands from the final of the Crockfords Plate which was played on 19/10/2007 as a straight knockout. In the final my team (D & J Keen, M Foster & me) took on P Jourdain (T Ratcliff, M Tedd, G Davis) \*\*. The final was a tight affair. We started well and carried a small lead through to the end, winning by about 25 imps after 40 boards.

Below are two hands. One comes from the final and is a missed opportunity for our side with some interesting points. The second is from an earlier match which has a classic book play in it and is interesting.

In each case I present Matt Foster as North and Tim Prior as South.

Regards,

Tim

\*\* Editor's note: three of these players in Jourdain's team are recognisable as full Welsh Internationals, having represented Wales recently in the European or Commonwealth Championships)

#### **First hand - from the Final, Love all**

|        |         |       |
|--------|---------|-------|
|        | K743    |       |
|        | AKQ1052 |       |
|        | 10      |       |
|        | Q9      |       |
| Q5     |         | J86   |
| 763    |         | J9    |
| AKQ753 |         | J62   |
| J4     |         | K6532 |
|        | A1092   |       |
|        | 84      |       |
|        | 984     |       |
|        | A1087   |       |

South dealt and passed and the auction continued like this:

|    |    |    |     |
|----|----|----|-----|
| S  | W  | N  | E   |
| No | 1D | 1H | No  |
| 1S | 2D | 3S | End |

There are 10 easy tricks. North / South could both have done more.

#### **Instructive points**

- 1) A 1H overcall is greatly preferable to double as it suggests a lead and describes a suit of quality. If partner cannot bid, game cannot be on, so we do not need to explore spades.
- 2) The 1S response to a simple overcall: a good one to discuss with your regular partner. Is this forcing or just encouraging? One could agree to play it as always forcing, or forcing only when an un-passed hand, or forcing at the two-level. Alternatively one could agree to play it as not forcing but constructive.

(My own preference is for forcing for one round and this seems to be a common treatment)

- 3) North should really try more than 3S. Give partner ace to five spades and 4S has good play. The hearts are an excellent source of tricks.

## Second hand – from the quarter final

You might want to try this one as a quiz - it's a classic position, which makes it easy to spot what to do. Fortunately I got it right at the table!

The opposition bid like this:

1D            2C  
2NT          3NT        (2NT is 12-15 balanced)

Partner leads the S8 and Dummy goes down with this hand:

A64  
1052  
Q8  
AQJ63

You hold:

K7  
KJ94  
J752  
984

Declarer plays low from Dummy and you win with the King. How will you continue?

One of my rules (particularly in 1NT) is to stop and consider a switch if I win the first trick at no-trumps. So I stopped and considered a switch. It is impossible for partner to have a spade honour after the lead of the 8, so there is no future there. So a switch is likely to be a good idea.

The club suit looks menacing, especially as they seem to be splitting well. So we need tricks fast.

The right way to beat the contract is to play a heart. If you play the king, the suit will be blocked if partner has Axx. If you play the 4 or the 9, the 10 in dummy becomes important. The correct return is the HJ which leave you with K94 of hearts which 'surround' the 10 in dummy. The play of the HJ is called a surrounding play and it proves necessary as the full hand is this:

|      |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|
|      | 10852 |       |
|      | A63   |       |
|      | K103  |       |
|      | 1052  |       |
| QJ93 |       | A64   |
| Q87  |       | 1052  |
| A964 |       | Q8    |
| K7   |       | AQJ63 |
|      | K7    |       |
|      | KJ94  |       |
|      | J752  |       |
|      | 984   |       |

The S8 runs to the S King. Declarer now has nine winners (8 black winners and the DA). Only the HJ will beat the contract now. Finding it is good enough for a game swing in.

### Tips:

(1) When you win the first trick at NT (especially 1NT) do not woodenly return partner's suit. Think whether a switch is likely to be more productive.

(2) Plays where cards in dummy can be surrounded come up quite frequently. Be aware of the need to choose the best card when leading through declarer.