

Oxfordshire v Derbyshire (20/05/2007)

Results	IMP	VP
A-team	-9	8
B-team	50	17
C-team	79	19

Summary

Team	Pair	Cross-imping across			Butler IMP across	
		own team	A&B only	all 3 teams	A&B only	all 3 teams
A	Chris Cooper & Nathan Piper	-11.5	-8.50	-10.83	-11	-16
	John Williams & Chris Wilson	18.5	26.75	37.33	22	28
	John Slater & Nelson Stephens	4.0	12.75	12.33	11	4
	Rob Procter & Mike Robinson	-26.0	-18.75	-7.00	-24	-22
B	Andrew Lintott & Diana Lintott	26.0	19.75	19.00	15	15
	Mike Webley & Nigel Wilkes	42.5	33.50	43.67	35	39
	Marian Day & Nick Perceval-Price	23.5	16.75	15.67	15	12
	Krys Kazmierczak & Sandra Nicholson	7.0	-0.75	11.67	-2	0
C	Michael Clark & Luke Porter	46.0	n/a	50.00	n/a	53
	Norman Gascoyne & Ron Quainton	66.0	n/a	47.83	n/a	42
	Alastair Gidman & Peter Jordan	30.5	n/a	34.00	n/a	27
	David Bygott & Jeremy Bygott	10.5	n/a	-13.33	n/a	-33

Well here's my first effort at a write up of the interesting hands – I should apologise for concentrating a little on our own table as I'm more familiar with what happened there, although most of the time my involvement with the play was fairly minimal.

Many thanks to those who've sent me some interesting hands. I've incorporated them into my report where possible.

Overall this was a good day for the county - the B and C team continued the excellent form of last year and managed comfortable wins - 17-3 and 19-1 respectively. Indeed but for a ruling in the C team match, it would have been the maximum 20-0 - A great start!

Particular congratulations are due to Alastair Gidman/Peter Jordan and Michael Clark/Luke Porter for their debut performance for the County. Both pairs produced strong cards with solid play and exploiting a high percentage of errors from Derbyshire. This bodes extremely well for the county and illustrates our strength in depth.

The A team match was close at half time but a poor 3rd set saw us slip too far away. Although there was a late rally in the 4th set, the damage had been done and this led to a 12-8 loss. Still, a narrow loss at least gives the county a foundation to build on.

In addition to those mentioned above, Wilkes/Webley, Williams/Wilson and Gascoyne/Quinton produced fine cards, so congratulations to them. For the rest, the statistics don't tell the whole story as often you can get bad scores simply by having opponents find the right line or bid, but hopefully that will even itself up in the long run. Anyway here's a more detailed look at the hands...

Board 1

N	♠ KJ654
	♥ T
	♦ JT
	♣ AQJ75
S	♠ T9872
	♥ AK6532
	♦ A2
	♣ -

Starting with a bang you might say. Virtually every pair here was floundering in the reasonable spade slam. If you open the North cards 1♠ here, South will get extremely excited. You might just put 6♠ on the table, but most of us would be concerned about missing a thin grand at this point.

At our table, we managed to avoid it after the auction:

1♠ 4♥* *=spades and hearts, a good hand

4♠ 5♠* *=one more go

P

Nathan judged well to pass 5♠, but when dummy went down could see that 6♠ was likely to be a popular contract. The normal lead is a small diamond - how should things go from here?

At the table, Nathan decided to cash the AK of hearts and discard the diamond before running the 10♠. When West shows out, at least you can be reassured that the slam doesn't make. Unfortunately at this point, things have gone a bit wrong and you find yourself a little bit short of tempo and end up having to choose between hearts being 3-3 (correct) or the ruffing club finesse (not today).

Unfortunately when he tried the ruffing finesse, he was doomed to go one off - a shame.

The winning line is simply to ruff out the hearts immediately as you can afford to lose two trump tricks as your pips are so good, which in hindsight does look like the right line.

Similar tales of woe occurred at many tables, but commiserations must go to Gascoyne/Quinton, whose opponents decided that game was the limit of the hand.

Board 2

A thin 24 point 3N was on the cards here by EW which is untouchable. Two Derby declarers managed to miss this one, compared with one Oxford pair who stopped in partscore. Procter/Robinson unfortunately got to the wrong game on this occasion and found that 5♦ has no play. Unlucky!

Board 4

♠ AJ9863	
♥ J62	
♦ J	
♣ T53	
♠ 72	♠ K54
♥ K74	♥ T9
♦ KQT8	♦ A542
♣ Q642	♣ AJ98
♠ QT	
♥ AQ853	
♦ 9753	
♣ K7	

This is a test of your defence. At our table, North opened a weak two in spades and I passed as South. West found the pushy (without 4 hearts and a passed hand) but effective takeout double, and East could then bid 3C which is untouchable. I came to life at this point with 3♠ which ended matters.

Unfortunately, 3♠ goes down on best defence but has been allowed to make at several tables (presumably by trying to defeat 2). On the usual heart lead, you can either run it round and hope they don't return one (which defeats the contract on a later heart ruff) or rise with the A♥ as happened at our table. A diamond to the jack and ace now follows as a partial scissors coup, but East can keep playing diamonds and although you can ruff a club on table now, you will eventually run out of trumps before you can establish a heart trick.

Unfortunately, we were the only pair to go down in this contract but I'll concede this to the opponents winning choice of choosing to protect with a double. Seems like it's a bidder's game...

The Lintotts even managed to emerge with 10 tricks in spades, which is no mean achievement.

Board 5 love all

An interesting hand this.

♠ J97		
♥ AKJ543		
♦ K84		
♣ 6		
♠ T63	♠ AKQ2	
♥ QT872	♥ 96	
♦ T5	♦ QJ72	
♣ KQJ	♣ A32	
	♠ 854	
	♥ -	
	♦ A963	
	♣ T98754	

North deals

1♥ x P 1N
?

Partner found 2♥, which is quickly doubled and is a precarious spot. Fortunately, East after cashing three spades, failed to lead the fourth which would allow West to pitch a losing diamond. As it is now, they can't stop him making 5 trumps and 2 diamonds for 200.

Williams/Wilson did well here to bring home the dicey 3N. After a heart lead helping matters, Chris played a diamond to the 10 and when North ducked, Chris was able to run for home.

Although most managed to avoid the game, it was bid and made three times by Oxon compared to once from Derby - so well done to Wilkes/Webley and Kaz/Nicholson. Gascoyne and Quainton must have enjoyed taking 500 on the hand but full marks to Gidman/Jordan for recording the unusual score of 160 after West unwisely left in a penalty double.

Board 6

The usual contract on this one is the unmakeable 3N when East has two aces and a suit to establish and enough time to do it.

It's unlucky here as you have 20 count opposite a 5 count and AK as stops in the opponents suits. You'd want to be in it, but of course opener has both aces and a 5 card suit to establish. Perhaps it's a hand where you need to look at your top controls to judge whether you want to be in it, but after a typical auction of

1♥ x P 2♣
P 2N P ?

it would be a brave person indeed who passed with their decent 5 count opposite a 19-21 2N.

The Lintotts managed to avoid it which was a good result on the hand and Gidman/Jordan even managed to make it - perhaps if you bid no trumps confidently they might be too scared to lead their suit? One must feel for the Bygotts who were having one of those days where their opponents didn't get anywhere near it. The moral of this one seems to be lead partner's suit though (Wise words Mr Robinson!).

Board 7

In theory this was a dull partscore hand but at Procter/Robinson's table, the Derby pair decided that 3N was the place to be which looks more than a little threadbare. Mike swiftly doubled and although Rob chose a heart rather than a spade (not a lot in it, let's be honest!) this was still an unexpected and welcome 500 to the good guys.

Board 8

A reward for people here who respond on thin air:

W	♠ AT753
	♥ K42
	♦ T98
	♣ AJ
E	♠ -
	♥ JT953
	♦ QJ743
	♣ 653

If partner opens 1♠, do you bid? If you don't, partner won't thank you as South knows what to do in the pass-out seat. If you respond a light 1N, then you will be in a much better position on this occasion. Is it correct? Answers on a postcard (see later).

At our table, East judged well to bid a forcing no trump and passed the 2♦ rebid like a shot. Those opening a weak nt (which would be my style with the West cards, I must admit), will even get to play in 2♥ after a simple transfer sequence which looks pretty safe.

Do you act in the passout seat after 1♠ P P? With KQJ98 AQ 62 Q874 pass looks tempting and indeed as 3N isn't in the mix, that will work well on the hand.

Board 9

This is a hand to test your rebid. What's your choice here?

♠ A87642
♥ K4
♦ KJ9
♣ AJ

1♠ 1N
?

If you find 2♠ like our opponents, you will play there but if you rebid 2N or 2♦ things will look up as partner holds

♠ J
♥ J7
♦ AT7643
♣ Q865

and will get a chance to put you in the best spot. If you rebid 3♠, partner should really raise to 4♠, which is also hopeless. I lean towards 2N myself, I must admit as it is a rather poor 6 card suit with no pips of any note, but am open to criticism - I think it's a tough call, in all honesty.

Williams/Wilson found a good auction here and were the only pair to get to the right game - I'll let Chris tell it for himself.

1♠ 1N
2♦ (1) 3♦ (2)
3♠ (3) 4♦
5♦ (4)

(1) I was torn between 2♠ and 3♠ but neither was right, so I temporised -

alerted as could be 3 cards

- (2) Either 5♦ or a maximum with 4♦
- (3) Now showing a 6 card suit
- (4) I liked my lack of wasted values in ♠ and the 8 points in ♥/♣ which we would need to develop tricks in.

After a ♥ lead, I needed either ♣ or ♦ to behave. When the ♦ obliged I was home. “

Clark/Porter's opponents managed to get the better of themselves in an uncontested auction: 1♠ - 2♦ - 3♣- Pass! Not exactly the optimum spot.... Two off.

I feel a bit sorry for them, I'm sure if I invented a suit as well - I'd get to play there too.

Board 10

Usually this is a 3N hand. Harsh for Procter/Robinson as after

1♥ P 2♠*

*=weak jump shift,

Rob was a little fixed with

♠ J
♥ A842
♦ AKT76
♣ JT9

as he doesn't really have a sensible call to make other than pass. Although they can pick up 4 vulnerable undertricks, it's stillimps out against the vulnerable game. Unlucky lads!

This was a slightly disappointing board for the county as both the Bygotts and Wilkes/Webley joined Procter/Robinson in settling for defending, but they have my sympathy.

Board 11 love all

Well, no report would be complete without me doing something stupid. Thanks to JW/CW for bringing back 2♥ by NS to partially make up for me going for 300 in 3♦x.

♠ A32
♥ T
♦ AKJ982
♣ K98

1♣ 1♦ 1♥ P
 2♣ 2♦ 2♥ P
 P ?

I knew it was right to act here and should have made a takeout double in hindsight - my 3♦ was backed by the good diamond pips but it was still unsound. The warning signs were there that this was a misfit, but it did look like I would make a fair number of tricks if partner had as little as one trump but of course that wasn't going to happen, was it! So - Mea Culpa.

Procter/Robinson's opponents showed what must be done by protecting in the same situation with 2♠ and reaping the benefits - looks like I have a lot to learn!

Day/Percival-Price also had success on this board, trusting their defence to pick up an unusual 100 for EW on the board.

Board 12

This seemed to cause quite a few problems, and I struggle to see why – I must admit.

W	♠ T8
	♥ AKT8
	♦ 943
	♣ KQT2
E	♠ AQ973
	♥ 9
	♦ AQT5
	♣ 764

West usually opened a weak nt and East bid 2♥ as a transfer. South tended to double despite the poor heart suit (at least they have 6 I guess) and that puts West on the spot. Accepted wisdom here is to redouble with good hearts (probably right on this hand), to pass with 2 spades, complete the transfer with 3 spades and to break the transfer with 4 spades.

I decided to pass rather than redouble and when partner bid a forcing 3♦, 3N was obvious and makes in some comfort. Unfortunately, the auction proved to be a bit tricky for four pairs (two from each side) in the A and B teams, so was a source of swings. This is the sort of hand that we really need to get right as a County if we want to be winning the leagues though, as it's important to have firm agreements about common sequences so you can save your brainpower for the tough decisions!

Board 13

Both Wests in our mini-match felt some sort of action was necessary over a weak nt and were allowed to make 2♣ and 2♥ respectively. Defending 2♣, South did well to lead a heart but South unfortunately for them failed to duck, so Nathan was able to smuggle 8 tricks.

Clark/Porter showed us how it was done by preferring to defend 1N and leading the obvious club. This went to the ace and back and South won the third round. Unfortunately for them, a wheel now fell off and when the Derbyshire declarer tried a spade to the queen, West could win cash some clubs and then exit in hearts. Things went from bad to worse when South then won the heart continuation and..... took the diamond finesse! Oops. 3 off.

Mike Robinson did well to made 1N on a club lead by finding the K♦ singleton.

Board 15

♠ A96
♥ AT7
♦ T43
♣ 754
♠ K32
♥ J85
♦ 98
♣ AJ962

Defending some number of NT, South leads the 4 of spades. If West plays low – do you play the 9 or the ace? Fortunately at the other table in our mini-match, after a wild auction to 3N, Chris W had no difficulty when declarer rose with the K♠. Unsure of the spade position, he found the heart switch so the defence could cash 4 spades and 4 hearts when partner actually has led from QJxx spades. At my table, defending 1N, North just rose with the A♠ and returned a spade, so I ran for home.

Board 16

6♠ is on here which is dependent on picking up trumps (trumps are 1-1 with the king onside) and the heart finesse. Which are pretty poor odds, you'll probably agree. Bad luck to the Bygotts, whose opponents managed to find this poor slam.... the criticism of the substandard dummy disappeared rapidly when 12 tricks were secured. Strange that....

Board 17 love all

♠ A3
♥ J
♦ T32
♣ KJT9873

What do you bid if RHO opens a strong nt? 2♣ (if natural)? 3♣? 4♣? I chose 4♣ in the end as I thought that if LHO has equal length in the majors, they might just fall into the wrong game after a takeout double. Amusingly enough, my 4♣ bid ended the auction and it sidled quietly 1 off with 4 of either major making their way. Should they reach it at our table? West holds

♠	T654
♥	Q863
♦	A9875
♣	-

And perhaps should find a takeout double, if that is your agreement, opposite a strong nt. In practice opposite a preempt, a takeout double is pretty useful here (and partner will always convert to penalties with a reasonably defensive hand).

Elsewhere most East's are opening 1♠ (as they have 5 of them) which will ensure that the opponents always get as far as 4♠. 5♣ is a good save (only 300) but judging by the scores, only two Oxon pairs settled for defending 5♣x with most bidding 5♠ over 5♣. What with three Derbyshire pairs being allowed to make game, this was a poor board for the county

Board 18

4♥ or 4♠ both make on this one. I had high hopes after our auction

W	♠ AKQ8
	♥ Q
	♦ A642
	♣ A854
E	♠ JT43
	♥ KJT652
	♦ J5
	♣ 2

I don't really understand what was going on but the opponents bid unopposed

1♦ 1♥
 1♠ 2♠
 3♣ 3♥
 4♥ P!

I'm still trying to figure out why East didn't correct to 4♠ but still 4♥ is untouchable *despite* the 5-1 heart split. There was a gain here in the A team when Slater/Stephens opps failed to get to game but there were a few going off here although, I haven't yet heard the gory details.

Board 19

A routine game bid and made here except at Slater/Stephens table who managed to induce a plus and a good swing in for the county.

Board 21

Fireworks here. Most are finding a takeout double here with the East cards which I will admit isn't to my taste (it's not even good enough to open a weak no-trump with) but then I've been told that I don't double enough.

W	♠ 5
	♥ A9653
	♦ QJ32
	♣ A86
E	♠ JT64
	♥ KQ7
	♦ 95
	♣ KQ73

Most seemed to be going off in 4♥ which has 3 obvious losers but in practice, best defence can stop you ruffing both diamonds on table or secure a trump promotion. At our table we managed to defeat 3♥, although I'm not convinced that declarer took the best line. Well done to the Bygotts and Kaz/Nicholson for somehow bringing home 4♥. Looks like cashing spades isn't a winning defence! I note a 500 appearing on the Lintotts card and Clark/Porter happily picking up a part-score *the other way*. Good if you can get it!

Board 22

EW vul

	♠ A843	
	♥ JT852	
	♦ AKT	
	♣ K	
♠ Q62		♠ KJT75
♥ AQ		♥ K93
♦ QJ63		♦ 92
♣ AQ52		♣ 964
	♠ 9	
	♥ 764	
	♦ 8754	
	♣ JT873	

Ah well, arguably the crucial hand in the A team match this one. We were the unfortunate party on this occasion who could only sit back and grudgingly admire the Derbyshire declarer's accurate play and good *nose*. Defending 3N, North kicked off with a heart, which was won in hand. Declarer now played on spades and Nathan correctly held up until the 3rd round and then exited with a heart. Declarer won this and after some thought cashed the A♣ felling the singleton king. He could now exit with the Q♦ and what could North do? The best you can do is cash the AK and another diamond but West can simply duck the third round of diamonds and North is forced to play a major to provide a stepping stone to the table. Hats off the Derbyshire man who was the only person in all three matches who found the winning line in 3N.

We did pick up the odd 500 in the B team - well done Day/Percival-Price and there was a 180 in the C team from the Bygotts, but elsewhere declarers just had a hard time. The most amusing story comes inevitably from the Clark/Porter match who managed not only to persuade their opponents to play in 2♠ but then managed to defeat it! On the face of it that requires some doing but it appears that having ducked the spade twice, Luke managed to cause declarer to lose trump control by persisting with hearts. When it came down to the ending, having unexpectedly got in following an unsuccessful finesse singleton king of clubs, declarer has a memory squeeze on the last round of hearts. After some thought, they discarded a diamond allowing Luke to cash the rest of the diamonds for one off and an unusual way of gainingimps.

Board 23

Do you respond opposite a club with the South cards?

N	♠ 752
	♥ A7
	♦ A65
	♣ AKJ87
S	♠ JT98
	♥ KT653
	♦ 8
	♣ 653

Playing 5 card majors and a weak nt, I felt that bidding 1♥ wasn't unreasonable as I had some club tolerance at least. I was less pleased when partner rebid 1N but it seemed like a decent contract. On a spade lead and a diamond switch, looks like it's on the club finesse which needless to say didn't work. So that was 300 out. After a strong nt at the other table, they just transferred to hearts which played quite a lot better. It's unfortunate that on this occasion responding light didn't work so well compared with board 8 where it did. Just shows there's no right answer. Perhaps the key here is to be happy to play in clubs with 3 card support but to be enthusiastic if the auction doesn't die on the first round.

That was balanced in the other mini-match in the A team where the same thing happened for our counterparts for the same swing back, so well done to

Slater/Stephens for finding the right spot. Unsurprisingly, on such a good day, Clark/Porter also found the top spot.

Mike Robinson observes that another no trump contract went off by leading partner's suit..... sometimes bridge is a simple game.

Board 24 love all.

N	♠ A94
	♥ KQJ8653
	♦ Q
	♣ K2
S	♠ K87
	♥ 2
	♦ J974
	♣ Q8743

Another 300 at our table here – the most common score of the day for us. After a 1♠ opening, partner had an easy 2♥ overcall. This was passed smoothly by RHO and my heart started to sink. I passed as well and needless to say West reopened. Partner then not unreasonably raised his 2♥ to 3♥ (surely the right time to barrage) but was sucked into East's previous penalty pass. Although he could get out for 300 on accurate defence it was still a disappointment. At the other table in our mini-match, I believe that they got all the way to 4♥, which is a little more expensive in theory but the odd trick must have slipped here and there for a flat board.

A cracking hand for the C team where both Oxon pairs, Gascoyne/Quainton and the Bygotts, managed to bring in 500 - obviously lots of robust bidding! Wilkes/Webley also found the useful 500 to bolster the B team's tally of imps.

One pair who shall remain nameless got to the dizzy heights of 6♦ but the auction has been censored for the good of mankind.

Board 26

♠ K7
♥ AJ64
♦ Q96
♣ KT85

A nasty opening lead problem this one. 4♠ was a popular contract here after 1♠ 3♠ 4♠ or something similar. Tough this one and a diamond/club are the obvious candidates. Unfortunately both A team pairs found the club lead and both Derby pairs found the diamond lead. In theory there's not a lot in it - with a diamond lead, if partner has the A, K, JT or J9 with the 10 on table, of diamonds then a diamond will work well - things could go wrong if partner has the Jack bare though as you could

allow them to pick up the suit. With a club lead, you need partner to have either the ace of queen.

On balance, though I'm rather taken with the decision of the Derby defender who found the Q♦ lead against Williams/Wilson! I think this is a fine card as you get the same advantage if partner has the A, K or JT of diamonds but also declarer might well misguess the suit and play you for QJx, if partner actually does have the Jack and some small ones.

As it happens partner has the jack of clubs and the JT of diamonds, so a diamond is the winner on this occasion.

So a very good board for Derby in the A team, then. Krys K tells me that on a club lead he even managed to endplay North for the overtrick in 4♠ after they failed to unblock the Q♦ and led a club. A good effort!

Overall though more Derby players were bringing home 4♠ than us, so that was a shame.

Board 28 NS vul

♠ KT3	
♥ KT872	
♦ QJ	
♣ A64	
♠ 96	♠ J752
♥ J654	♥ 3
♦ AKT83	♦ 97652
♣ 83	♣ KQT
♠ AQ86	
♥ AQ9	
♦ 4	
♣ J9752	

Good hand for a weak two in diamonds here - After Nathan judged well to open 2♦ at favourable vulnerability backing his decent 5 card suit (and ignoring the 4 card major), the opponents had no winning solution after we quickly bid to 5♦. Although they can pick up 300, the vulnerable game is out of reach.

As it happens, 4♥ is a mite tricky. After the defence starts with two rounds of diamonds, it looks like you now have to get the spades right by unblocking the 10♠ and then finessing the 8. I've been reliably informed that there are also squeeze possibilities but haven't quite got my brain in gear enough to remember what they are!

Board 29

I'm pleased to see that some got to the Moysian 4♥ - well done Gidman/Jordan - as I thought it looked a little tricky to say the least. At our table, North's strong no trump ended the auction, but we managed to take 3 clubs, 4 hearts, 1 diamond and a spade for a useful 300.

Board 30

What's the best way of preempting with the North cards here holding:

N	♠ 63
	♥ A875
	♦ JT964
	♣ J9

If the auction beings

1♦ 2♥ 2♠ ?..... how many hearts are you looking at? Our opponent's choice of pass wasn't great, as I could bid 3C to show extra values, but surely some number of hearts is appropriate? The opponents will brush off 4♥ so maybe 5♥ is the right action. Who knows... Anyway - enough people were missing the excellent spade slam to suggest that it wasn't quite as easy as you might think.

Board 31

A confusing hand this one. We happily defended 3N after their spade stop wasn't adequate enough to stop us taking 5 tricks. When they opened 1N at the other table, Williams/Wilson were able to gleefully defend 2♦x which was rather messy. Wilkes/Webley also enjoyed collecting 800. Porter/Clark had the unusual sequence

1N x 3N!! Apparently 3N is right over the takeout double Strangely, our boys declined to double again...

Gascoyne/Quinton managed 11 tricks in 3N which was an excellent result.

Board 32

N	♠ KT863
	♥ AKT65
	♦ Q3
	♣ J
S	♠ 975
	♥ Q942
	♦ AJ8
	♣ 652

How lucky do you feel? 4♥ looks rather good indeed but it proved difficult to get to at several tables. after 1♠ 1N 2♥ do you act again with the South cards? In this case, fortune favours the bold as North doesn't need a second invitation to drive to game. Well done to Procter/Robinson for being the only Oxford declarer to get there and commiserations to Slater/Stephens, Day/P-P and Gidman/Jordan for watching their opponents merrily crunch there way to the icy game. Oh well!

So all in all, lots of good things particularly from the B and C team but some work still to do in the A team to get us back to winning ways.

Hopefully next time, I can get a bit more of an idea of what's going on as I was a little short of information this time – thanks to Chris Wilson, Mike Robinson, Michael Clark, Jeremy Bygott and Kryz K for supplying some useful stories.

Chris Cooper 29/05/07