

WARWICKSHIRE V OXFORDSHIRE: 11th September 2011

Oxfordshire A: Ian Angus and Nathan Piper, Chris Cooper and Andrew Murphy,

Dan McIntosh and Stuart McPhee, Denis and Kathy Talbot – won by 61 IMPs

(18-2 VPs)

Oxfordshire B: Joe Clacey and Tim Dickinson, Andrew and Dinah Lintott, Robert Procter and Michael Robinson, John Williams and Chris Wilson – lost by 28 IMPs (6-14 VPs)

Oxfordshire C: Alastair Gidman and Lorna Swadling, Colin Jones and Gillian Lonsdale, Alice Kaye and Aleksander Lishkov, Peter Russell and Ron Quainton – lost by 100 IMPs (0-20 VPs)

Results across the field:	Cross-IMPs	Butler
Procter/Robinson (EW B)	30.5	33
McIntosh/McPhee (EW A)	17.83	25
Cooper/Murphy (NS A)	16.17	32
Angus/Piper (NS A)	11.5	21
Talbots (EW A)	8	16
Kaye/Lishkov (EW C)	-8.33	-14
Williams/Wilson (NS B)	-9.17	-1
Clacey/Dickinson (NS B)	-10.5	-6
Quainton/Russell (NS C)	-14	-9
Lintotts (EW B)	-38.5	-40

Gidman/Swadling (NS C)	-40.17	-39
Jones/Lonsdale (EW C)	-55.67	-62

Congratulations to our A team, who enjoyed a solid start and strong finish to cement an encouraging position in the Dawes. The B team looked comfortable at the halftime break but things went badly downhill after that. The C team just had a very bad day... I don't have scorecards but hope this won't lead to errors in the comments which follow...

Board 1: love all, dealer N

West 105 KJ842 Q102 K54 East AJ98742 A10 A5 J3

With DJ and CQ well-placed, and a singleton trump honour out, 4S is a pretty trivial affair. Only 9 tricks at my table but they were only in 2S so ambition was limited in all respects.

Board 3: EW game, dealer S

North Q98732 A3 652 K8 South KJ65 10 Q1032 J732

After North opens 2S (weak) in third and East doubles, it looks normal to bash 4S at green. EW can make an easy 10 tricks in hearts right enough (or 11 if pushed). Five pairs were allowed to score 650 and of the sacrificers, all but one got away for -300. Chris went for 500 at my table when a club was put through and with nothing to go on he misguessed, putting in the jack. Was everyone else cleverer or luckier, or did some defenders just cash the Ace, I wonder?

Board 4: game all, dealer W

Q987

A642

8

K652

6

A1053

KQJ10987	None
Q94	KJ765
A8	10973
	KJ42
	53
	A1032
	QJ4

The EW bidding at my table was 1H-1S-4H, perhaps the only certain way to reach game in hearts. 4H was bid and made only 3 times over the field, Oxfordshire's successful declarer being Michael Robinson. He dropped DQ under the Ace at trick 1. South switched to CQ, won with the A (would South have gone back to diamonds if this was ducked smoothly, North playing the 2?) and when North came in with the trump A he had the chance to underlead CK, giving South the opportunity to wake up and deliver a diamond ruff at the death - but he didn't do it (the underlead I mean) and there were no more chances. At my table declarer in 4H also falsecarded under DA at trick 1 (he could tell I was an idiot, so the 9 would be enough) and I also switched to CQ. But Chris showed how to defend - even opposite an idiot - when he played the 2 under the Ace, won the trump Ace and then led a low club to my J. Even I could put these pieces together and add them up to a diamond back for -1. If South wins DA at trick 1 and plays one back for a ruff, he'll surely ask for a spade return, which clearly does no good. Neither, on this occasion, does Chris Cooper's preference for avoiding a singleton lead when holding AXXX in trumps and leading a club instead, as a prelude to a forcing defence: declarer's trumps are just too good. So the only successful defence is to take A and a ruff in D followed by a club switch, or to do as we did (giving declarer the chance of a daring duck). Altogether, as Tim Dickinson comments, a tough defence to get right.

Ed. Not quite sure I agree with JW here - I think that an initial club lead beats it to as you always have time to get a ruff when in with the ace of hearts. On best defence, by getting two ruffs you will hold it to 8 tricks. Both Oxon A team pairs managed to make game here too.

Board 5: NS game, dealer N

North 105 Q43 K1043 AJ87

South AKJ6 A9875 76 K6

After North passes and East opens a weak NT, what would your choice be between 2D (majors) and a pen X? The two Chrises (Cooper and Wilson) were both disappointed by their partner's failure to produce a double, which would have resulted in defending 2S* for 300 or 500, or going for game in NT or 4H. Neither game is a cake-walk (3NT by South on DQ lead is particularly horrid) but there were two 620s and two 600s scored, to go with one 500 penalty - only two good scores coming Oxon's way. The two Chrises had to put up with 170 in hearts. I think the choice is very close and I'm fairly unrepentant about the failure to double opposite a passed hand.

Board 6: EW game, dealer E

West 6 Q10652 1054 A842

East AQJ42 J4 AK QJ95

This was overbid for no good reason at many tables. After 1S-1NT, 2NT looks like a reasonable try whilst 3C is surely too much (at my table, this was followed by 4C-5C and a minus score). The only pair in the entire EW field to go plus were the Talbots, who evidently had the system to play in 3C (or was it 2H?). Mind you, strong clubbers will often fare better on hands like this, where one can open strong and then backpedal.

Board 8: love all, dealer W

North 32 A6 9732 KJ1087

South KJ8 KJ8754 KQJ8 None

Another awkward choice for S after East opens 1NT in third. Despite partner's club suit being a waste of space, 10 tricks rolled in in hearts at some tables including mine, but only two pairs (Cooper/Murphy for Oxon and a Warwicks C pair) got to game. Chris says he got lucky: his sequence was (1NT)-2D-(P)-2H-(P)-P- (2S)-3H- (P)-4H. 2D showed a single-suited major hand, 2S was very unwise and North could now afford to persevere with 3H knowing that 2NT by him would have shown a better hand at this stage. With SA onside, game proved comfortable.

Board 11: love all, dealer S

West A6 K8 AKQ865 A105

East 532 AQ976 J1092 6

No EW pair got to the grand in diamonds – indeed only 5 pairs (including just two from Oxon) got to even 6D. I’m sure all those who languished in game have indulged in soul-searching already, so no point in labouring on, except to say that any who thought West’s hand worth only an off-centre 2NT maybe deserved their fate. Old-fashioned methods revealing an Acol 2 in diamonds meet the mark much better.

Board 12: NS game, dealer W

	A96	
	732	
	AKJ32	
	AJ	
QJ1074		K2
AK84		J10965
986		74
3		KQ87
	853	
	Q	
	Q105	
	1096542	

At my table West opened 1S (fair enough), North (Chris W) overcalled 1NT, East doubled for pens and I redoubled (system on for a long suit). When asked about the XX Chris had a lapse and offered some garbage explanation which I could correct at a later stage (he won’t mind me mentioning this, as this is the first such instance in his entire lifetime). It mattered not because West couldn’t wait to show his limited values with a shift to 2H, after which he managed to refuse partner’s 3H invite for +140 (an inevitable 5 MPs out when scoring up with the Lintotts). Clacey/Dickinson had fun with this one: the bidding started the same (except for a correct explanation of the XX, after which West passed and NS got to play 2C*. SK was led to the A, followed by a heart to Q and K. On SQJ East was able to discard a diamond. A diamond switch was then won in dummy, followed by a trump to the A and a despairing low diamond towards dummy. East discarded on this, however (goodness

me!) and the result was +180 to the good guys, a 10-IMP swing, and a few sharp words by West.

Board 13: game all, dealer E

	65	
	4	
	AQ432	
	AKJ104	
7		AQ984
Q1092		A75
985		K106
87653		Q9
	KJ1032	
	KJ863	
	J7	
	2	

Unlucky for some. One or two NS pairs went for a small minus but two scr*ped into 3NT and played well/got lucky. No doubt the EW pairs concerned thought they had achieved the worst possible result, but not so... Against Cooper/Murphy East preferred a 1NT overcall to the more obvious 1S and South's double paved the way to 800 against 2C*. Colin Jones bravely reports his own auction as EW: (1D)-1S-(P)-P-(2C)-X-(P)-2H-(P)-3H-(X), which led to -1100 out. South's pass of 2C looks odd but West should realise that South seems to be marked with good holdings in the majors nonetheless, and take the God-sent opportunity to defend. Bidding 2H freely was rash and the dubious 3H raise probably only increased the penalty by 300. At my table I also made a penalty pass of 1S (one has to react fairly quickly in these situations to stay ethical and gut instinct comes into play). We have a rule to re-open with a double on any respectable hand where partner's pass in tempo suggests the possibility of a penalty (and is undisturbed), so 1S* became the final contract. I led DJ and the sight of dummy was re-assuring. Chris won DA and switched to H4, ducked to my K. What on earth was declarer thinking about - or rather not? Rising with the A and playing A and another spade

seems to have some merit, to say the least. The consequences of not doing so were dire. I was able to win and give Chris a heart ruff. CAK allowed me to discard my second D so a D ruff was followed by a further H heart ruff and D ruff. At this point we had taken the first 8 tricks and I had still had SKJ10 plus two exit cards, so could claim two more trump tricks for +1100. The distant strains of the Last Post broke the ensuing silence.... If you ask whether the re-opening X carries some risk when I haven't got the desired hand - well, yes, but I am expected to remember the rule as well. When we come unstuck in one of these situations (probably next week) I'll send you all a postcard.

Board 16: EW game, dealer W

North A1042 87 10864 A105 South 9 A106 KQJ975 J32

Chris Cooper comments that when South protects with 3D after West's weak 2S is passed round, there is no real alternative to bidding the doomed 3NT (partner has a good 6-card D suit but lacks the A). Agreed. He adds that 3NT has a chance if defenders are sloppy (ie don't switch to hearts) and they were at my table, so Chris W recorded the only +400 in the field. Perhaps they were still reeling from board 13...

Board 17: love all, dealer N

	AKQ8	
	65	
	Q107	
	Q732	
J5432		10
J87		AK104
K5		AJ832
J84		AK6
	976	
	Q932	
	964	

1095

Surprisingly few penalties against NS are recorded on the sheet (just two 500s and a 300) and only 3 pairs had the consolation of bidding and making 3NT as EW. In the B match both Warwicks Souths bid 2D (D and a higher suit) after 1NT*. I believe I'm right in saying that the Lintotts had NS in 2D* at one stage for a potential cricket-score, but it got removed, so the consolation was a mere +460. In my case I passed 1NT* as South and the result was -500 but Tim Dickinson records a sorry tale in his: Joe Clacey, North, playing a stong NT, opened 1C (alerted as being possibly short) and now West mistakenly alerted his own partner's double as showing the reds (which it would have done against a strong club system). He bid 1H but after Joe passed this he woke up and blurted out that he'd mis-explained. Oh dear, most improper. East then took advantage of the unauthorised information and instead of showing his 4-card trump support with a bid of 4H, tried 3NT instead. This rolled in via a diamond finesse and 3-3 break, of course. The contract was ruled back to 4H-1 but a subsequent appeal accepted the sad fact that 4H was actually a making contract. OK but where, one wonders, was the procedural penalty which should have been imposed on EW?

Board 18: NS game, dealer E

109864	
J7	
93	
9753	
32	KQJ75
AKQ4	1092
AQ875	J64
KQ	64
A	
8653	
K102	
AJ1082	

I'll let Chris Cooper tell the story: "I have to record my disaster here. We were defending 3NT after partner (South) opened 1C. I led the 5 of clubs (3rd and 5th) and Andrew inserted the 10. Declarer won and played the 3 of spades to the King and partner's Ace. Now what does he do? If I have 3 clubs he must play a small club, if I have 4 he must play the Ace. How can he tell? Answer - what spade did I play. I didn't Smith-Peter as I didn't realise that partner needed to know 3 v 4. If I'd played the 10 of spades he should get it right. He should still get it right, perhaps, but it's hard". I couldn't possibly put this any better, having been in the same position myself as South, and having (in similar fashion) played a small club back instead of the Ace, to retain communication with partner and hope for his presumed heart entry. If partner plays S10 it's still awkward (1) because the concept of a Smith Peter to indicate 4 rather than 3 small cards is not universal (in my case the opening lead had been C7, second from 3 or 4 small) and (2) the 10 could even be length-showing in case partner has a meaningful win/hold-up option. I had a further problem: we tend to strain to bid with as little as a decent 2-count and 4 trumps and declarer didn't have to hold quite his actual 20-count. All in all, I'm amazed that 3NT made only 3 times across the field, which suggests either that NS were properly wired most of the time or that many Souths just bashed out the Ace (I know that against the Lintotts, South played CA at trick1 and got welcome news.) Frustrating!

Board 20: game all, dealer W

North A KQ863 AQ7 Q975

South Q1093 J1092 KJ9 K8

You open 1H as North and partner bids 2NT, showing a raise to 3 or more Hearts. You make a try/cuebid of 3C and partner values his CK to jump to 4H. You now make a slam try, rejected, and play in 5H. This is down 1 on Ace and another Club lead, ruffed. It only happened twice - and was somewhat unlucky - and if I add that the two tables it happened at were both Oxon NS in the B match, you'll begin to understand some of the downturn in our fortunes.

Board 25: EW game, dealer N

North AKQ843 A 9 AQ962

South 7 Q9876542 AJ64 None

This would be an unfair question in any bidding competition. The answer would be to play 6H, essentially because trumps are 2-2, with East holding K10. So on the probable D lead you can win, cross to HA and run 4 black

winner discarding diamonds. On the last of these East ruffs with HK and your Q now drops the J. Easy! From which you can conclude that those who punted the slam were lucky punters. There were only three of them – Joe and Tim for Oxon B and two pairs of Warwicks aeronauts. Tim had a 1S opener from Joe to conjure with and started with 1NT (I bet that didn't happen too often!). When he heard 3C he tried to apply the brakes but they'd evidently broken. The full sequence was 1S-1NT-3C-3H-4C-4H-4S-5H-6H. You can just picture the pregnant pauses... It's ironic how often the lowest possible opening bid can lead to the highest result: at my table I didn't have half that number of opportunities to bid hearts, despite partner opening proceedings with the full majesty of a Benji 2D (I would have awarded it a 2C myself). Still, this meant I could respond with a semi-positive 2H (6+ points or at least 1 control). We continued 2S-3H-4C-4H-P.

Board 26: game all, dealer E

West KQ10873 AK64 A4 2

East J42 105 KJ876 1086

Only 5 of the EW pairs reached this pretty solid game after South opened 1C - including, for Oxon, Procter/Robinson in the B and Kaye/Lishkov in the C, so well done to them. I guess it's a matter of partnership method and style: clearly, East might have to realise the need to try for game at some stage. Old-fashioned methods involved West doubling and then jumping in spades to show this short of hand, which works ideally, but styles have changed. So maybe West has to adopt a still more positive approach; after all, he needs only two cards and/or a bit of shape from partner to make game a good prospect. Andrew Murphy scored a goal for Oxon A by promoting the South hand to strong NT status: difficult for EW to reach game now (a double would not have been for penalties).

Board 27: love all, dealer S

West 732 AK7 AKJ QJ54

East AKJ106 Q96 5 A763

EW have the values for 6C, 6S or 6NT (just about) but the first of these is perhaps the least likely if South opens a weak 2H (as I did). Our oppo reached 6S after I'd doubled a 4C cue: after a club lead declarer could win the A, cash SA and use red card entries to finesse trumps twice. Had I kept my rosebud shut he would have had to win a heart lead in hand and finesse S10 immediately (said he would have done too, but I'd chosen the wrong moment nonetheless). Slam was bid and made 4 times, twice by

each county; 3 pairs (two from Oxon) went off in slam and everyone else made game.

Board 28: NS game, dealer W

West K952 8654 A10 QJ3

East AQ84 KQ73 Q982 2

Not easy for EW to locate 4H after North opens 1D but HAJ2 are onside and North duly holds DKJ, so it's a fair game to reach. NS might also help a little by trying to cash CAK at some stage. Our Warwicks EW pair bid 4H (I don't remember how) and managed most of the hand OK, failing only when the first spade played was low to the K, meaning that The J763 I held as South was a certain defensive trick. Of course, I've realised that 4S is equally possible as a game contract but don't know if any tried that. There were only four +420s and three of them belonged to Oxon pairs. Rob Procter relates a fortunate turn of events for him in 4H. On a D lead he won the A, won HQ (North could have won the A, cashed DK and delivered a ruff). After a S to the K and another H off dummy, North won HA, cashed DK and underled CA to his partner's K, confidently expecting a S ruff. But South preferred to lead to his partner's marked CA, so declarer could ruff, draw trumps, ruff a D in dummy and discard the S loser on CQ. Phew! Thinking about it, game isn't actually that great after all....

Board 29: game all, dealer N

West 762 AK6 108542 K7

East AQJ3 873 AKQ 864

You arrive in 3NT as East and a heart is led. Looks like a fair spot, doesn't it, assuming CA is right? You win and lay down top diamonds, discovering that S has a singleton. Not so good now, is it? S discards two spades so you can force out SK, which seems to allow you 8 tricks, but you still have to lead to CK for the 9th and, by then, South has cleared the hearts and has three more to cash along with his CA. So only two declarers (one for Warw B and one for Oxon C) managed 600 on a misdefence by S, who let go a heart and a spade. I have to admit that one of the stupid defenders was me. Can't believe I did that. I can plead old age, I suppose, and diminished brain cells - the few I have left were further depleted on this deal..

Board 30: love all, dealer E

West AKJ65 K1062 73 J10

East 42 A85 AKQJ6 A82

10 EW pairs played in 3NT and made 9 or more tricks (at my table I found a lucky C lead from KXX and declarer didn't take any risks in spades, settling for his 10 top tricks). The other two pairs were in slam. One of these was Kaye/Lishkov for Oxon C, who found spades 3-3 onside (as they needed to be) and rolled home in 6NT. The other was from Oxon B, who went down in 6D. Difficult to see how (trumps were 4-2), but there you go...

Board 32: EW game, dealer W

West 3 AQJ75 109763 QJ

East A1087 K984 A5 654

At first sight this looks like an unlikely 4H for EW to reach. It's a good hand for Lucas-style two bids (limited major/minor two-suiters), though, as the cards lie (diamonds are 3-3) because West can open 2H and East can bash 4H. This happened when Procter/Robinson were in charge and maybe elsewhere (4H was bid and made 4 times and also led to three EW 500 penalties (4S* has six losers). Without the benefit of an opening bid from West, the only way to get to 4H is for East to open light in 3rd. Two Aces and a King are good cards to justify this but what to open with? 1NT, 1H, 1D (short, playing strong club) or 1C (short, playing 5-card majors) are all candidates, I suppose. Chris and I felt particularly aggrieved when our East chose an opening bid of 1S (!) and was lucky enough to hear a 2H response: he raised to 3H and West scr*ped up the fourth. Ugh! This put the tin lid on a dismal second half.

I hope I haven't missed any brilliancies reported by those who took the trouble to email.

Bye for now.

John Williams

20/09/2011