



## 1 From the Championship Pairs

This month's Wednesday Championship Pairs had some hands where the play was quite delicate. For example:

Board 22  
East dealer  
EW vul

♠ JT9	♠ AQ863	♠ 5
♥ T72	♥ J95	♥ KQ84
♦ KT95	♦ AQ6	♦ J8732
♣ AK8	♣ J7	♣ 642

♠ K742  
♥ A63  
♦ 4  
♣ QT953

Imagine that you are South in the normal contract of 4♠ and that you receive the ♥2 lead. What card do you play from dummy (no peeking!). Should you play ♥J? Probably not: this will succeed only if West has under-lead the ♥KQ but, if she held those cards, she might well have lead one of them. Should you play ♥2? If you do, then you will probably find yourself winning the trick with ♥A which will be fine if you have captured one of ♥K or ♥Q but not so good otherwise. The best card to try is ♥9 hoping that West holds ♥T.

Now imagine that you wrongly played ♡2 and East cunningly

played ♠8 forcing out your Ace. At this point you seem to have two club losers and two hearts losers. Oh dear, is there anything you can do? There is still a chance to make the contract but it risks going down two if it fails. Think what this might be before reading on.

Your chance is to play a diamond to dummy finessing the queen. If it wins then you can discard one of your heart losers on  $\diamond A$ . If it loses the opponents can defeat you by two tricks.

Is it worth the risk? Here we come up against a recurring question in match-pointed pairs (the normal method of scoring at Taieri). There is no simple answer. For a start you have to consider whether you are in the “normal” contract. If you judge that the opponents should have been in a making contract of their own then playing for one down might be advantageous. That is not the case here though. Most pairs will be in 4♠ and so you have to consider whether you have received the “normal” defense so far and judge whether or not you are currently better or worse placed than other declarers. In this case, you are worse placed because you received a lead that attacks your weak suit which other declarers may not have received – and you misplayed trick one. This is the time for desperate measures. You can judge that one down will be a poor result so you might as well take the risk of the diamond finesse trying to tie the other declarers.

Here's a similar match-point question:

Board 2	♠ 832	
East dealer	♥ 95	
NS vul	♦ 542	
	♣ A9542	
♠ 96		♠ AKQ4
♥ AQ874		♥ KJT3
♦ AK76		♦ Q3
♣ KJ		♣ T87
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">           N W     E S         </div>	
	♠ JT75	
	♥ 62	
	♦ JT98	
	♣ Q63	

Without peeking at the East-West hands would you rather be in 6♥ or 6NT? In favour of 6NT is that you beat all the players in 6♥. In favour of 6♥ is that it clearly is a safer contract (you don't have to guess clubs). Many times match-point players want to be in the higher-scoring contract even if it entails some risk (this is why game contracts in a minor suit are infrequent compared to 3NT). So, what is the risk?

If it was the case that all East-West pairs had bid a slam you could reason as follows. It all depends on guessing clubs which is a 50-50 chance. So it seems that half the time you will beat the pairs in 6♥ and half the time you will lose to them. However there is another consideration: you might get a club lead which resolves the club question. So, does that mean that 6NT will make more than half the time?

Well, yes, but there is a counter-argument since not all pairs will bid a slam. If you go down in 6NT you will lose to the pairs

that haven't even bid 6♥. This last argument is, for me, the clincher. So I opt for 6♥.

Confused? You are not alone. These match point decisions are very difficult.

## 2 Club news and comments

**Graded Tournament** It was pleasing to see 12 tables at our Taieri Graded Pairs Tournament with a resulting \$500 approximate profit. The Coutts brothers James and Glenn were clear winners.

**Cancer Society Charity Tournament** Another reminder of our Charity Tournament on 18 August.

**AGM** The AGM is coming up so we are always looking for those of you that may like to consider joining the Committee.

**Returning members** If you are a member that usually plays on a Wednesday night and haven't been for a while we would love to see you back!!

**Bar opening times** An idea has been suggested that the bar may open before play. What do members think about this? Please give your comments to any member of the Committee.

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