

Reminiscence of a National Championship

Six months have gone by since Mike and I won the IMP Pairs at the Miami Nationals. I thought that I would remember all the hands from my first national championship (and most likely my only), but when I started thinking about this article and reviewing the hand records, I was amazed to discover that several of them have been erased from my memory bank.

To recap the event, it is a two-session qualifying event followed by a two-session final on the next day. For those of you who may not be familiar with the IMP Pairs event, it is played exactly like any pair game, only the scoring is different. After the results of a board are known, the highest and lowest scores are dropped and an average result or "datum" is determined from the remaining scores. Your result is then "imped" against that datum using the IMP or International Match Point Scale that's at the bottom of a convention card. If your score is greater than the datum, the difference is plus IMPs and if it's less than the datum, the difference is minus IMPs.

Our first session was our worst as we were only +3 imps at its conclusion. However, our second session was much better, a +67, which qualified us tied for 18th-20th overall and provided us with a +70 for the day and a whopping 9.7 carryover. The leaders at the end of the qualifying were Fred Hamilton and Kyle Larsen with a score of +146 so their carryover was considerably greater than ours. So was that of sixteen other pairs.

Playing the third session, or first final session, on the next day we managed to score +29 which with our carryover gave us a +38.7 going into the second final session. It was during that final session that the following hand occurred:

Dealer: North
Vul: N-S

North
♠ A64
♥ 8742
♦ K95
♣ 1082

East
♠ KJ109
♥ J109653
♦ J
♣ J3

West
♠ 853
♥ A
♦ Q842
♣ Q9764

South
♠ Q72
♥ KQ
♦ A10763
♣ AK5

The bidding may seem a little strange but I'll report it anyway:

North West		South East	
(Albert)	(A.Wildavsky)	(Me)	(S.Beatty)
Pass	Pass	1 ♦	1 ♥
Pass	Pass	1 NT	Pass
2 NT*	Pass		3 ♣** Pass
3 NT	<u>DOUBLE</u>	Pass	Pass
Pass			

The auction may need some explaining. The 2 NT* was actually a transfer back to ♦'s and 3 ♣** by me was a super-acceptance based on my holding of 5 cards in the ♦ suit. It may be aggressive bidding on both of our parts, but I liked holding extra length in ♦'s and the fact that West, Mr Wildavsky, had not raised ♥'s. However, I must admit that I expected to find 4♦'s in my partner's hand.

The play was rather easy considering the defense. After the ♥ lead was taken by the Ace, West (Mr. Wildavsky) didn't know what to shift to. He

eventually tried his long suit by returning a ♣. Much to his regret, the lay of the ♦ suit made it possible to win five ♦'s tricks, one ♥, two ♣'s and one ♠ for a total of nine tricks and a score of + 750 and +10 imps.

It fairly obvious that a ♠ switch by West would have made the play much more interesting, but we'll never know if I would have played correctly by ducking in both hands. But I do remember that in my thought process (Partners, please note that I do occasionally think), I was aware that East had to have good ♠'s for his original overcall since he didn't have good ♥'s and that the ♦'s rated to be in West's hand for his double.

The double by West actually cost him only 2 imps as very few North-South pairs were in 3 NT. Who knows what the auctions were at other tables!

This was one of our good results in the second final session. Our score for this session was +70 imps for a final score of +108.7. It's rather interesting to me that Mr. Wildavsky and Mr. Beatty, our opponents in the above deal, were second in the event with a score of 91.8.

MHem