

No fairy story in the Tolly final...



Having waltzed through to the final, would Suffolk fall in love with the Tollemache in Hinckley over the Valentine's weekend of 13-14 February? Sadly not - as JONATHAN GREEN reports.

THE first three hands come from the match against runners-up Manchester, in which David and I faced Michael Byrne and Mike Bell.

South dealer; East-West vulnerable

Board 19

NORTH
 ♠ 9864
 ♥ Q7
 ♦ J64
 ♣ AJ104

WEST
 ♠ J2
 ♥ K
 ♦ KQ87532
 ♣ 982

EAST
 ♠ KQ1053
 ♥ J98642
 ♦ 9
 ♣ 7

SOUTH
 ♠ A7
 ♥ A1053
 ♦ A10
 ♣ KQ653

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
		1♣	3♦
P	P	X	P
4♣	All Pass		

Contract: 4♣ by S; Lead: ♣2

What went wrong here for N-S? The first question is whether South should re-open with 3NT rather than Dbl. After all, you have a source of tricks (in clubs), fast tricks on the side, and a positional diamond holding with the makings of a second guard. Risks missing a better heart fit (or even slam opposite such as xx, Kxxxx, xxx, Ax), of course. Should North introduce spades over the Dbl, allowing South to bid 3NT next? Probably.

There was little to be proud of in the play. On a trump lead, declarer won in dummy (preserving high trumps in hand against spades through) and ran the ♥Q, looking to ruff two hearts. West played a second trump, ruffed ♥A on the following trick, then gave the trick back by underleading in diamonds... +130 to Suffolk.

TOLLEMCAHE FINAL 2010			
Rank	County	VPs	Players
1	Middlesex	110	Victor Silverstone; Tony Waterlow; Andrew McIntosh; Nick Sandqvist; Jeremy Dhondy; Ian Pagan; Neil Rosen; Martin Jones; Keith Bennett; Richard Hillman;
2	Manchester	92	John Holland; Michelle Brunner; Mike Bell; Michael Byrne; Dave Debbage; John Hassett; Gary Hyett; Rodney Lighton;
3	Berks and Bucks	89	Ian Reissmann; Mike Perkins; Tim Rees; John Howard; Richard Bowdery; Simon Cope; Dick Davey; Richard Palmer; Chris Burley; Ed Scerri;
4	Gloucestershire	70	Dan McIntosh; Andrew Kambites; Joe Angseesing; Graham Sadie; Paul Denning; Patrick Shields; Richard Butland; Richard Chamberlain;
5	North East	65	Clive Owen; John Atthey; Val Gibson; Bill March; Martin Kane; Malcolm Oliver; Steve Ray; David Roberts; Julian Gibson; Damien Hassan
6	East Wales	63	Filip Kurbalija; Diane Kurbalija; Adrian Thomas; Jim Luck; Patrick Jourdain; Tony Ratcliff; Trevor Towers; Simon Richards; Geoff Evans; David Birt;
7	Suffolk	38	David Price; Jenny Price; Chris Chambers; Jim Gobert; Peter Gemmell; Peter Sutcliffe; Andrew Moore; Jane Moore; Jonathan Green;
8	Bedfordshire	33	David Harris; Iain Roberts; Brian Keable; Alexander Foley; Ron Davis; Graeme Robertson; Alan Shillitoe; Greg Ward;

Tollemache final

West dealer; both sides vulnerable

Board 20

NORTH
 ♠ 105
 ♥ AQJ974
 ♦ KJ2
 ♣ 64

WEST
 ♠ J76
 ♥ -
 ♦ A108765
 ♣ AK73

EAST
 ♠ A832
 ♥ 108653
 ♦ 3
 ♣ QJ8

SOUTH
 ♠ KQ94
 ♥ K2
 ♦ Q94
 ♣ 10952

What should South call at each of his turns? Once partner has overcalled 1♥, 1NT (rather than Pass) is reasonable (showing around 10-12HCP) though this is a dangerous position with both opponents bidding. North's 2♥ shows a decent hand opposite a silent partner: a good 6-card suit and an opening bid. South must therefore come to life, as game is still possible. With decent trumps, it feels right to double 3♠, though this is borderline.

On a low trump lead, the contract can be made by rising with ♠J and taking ♠A, ♦A, two top clubs, two heart ruffs in dummy, and two diamond ruffs in hand. This requires guessing which minor is breaking evenly. When Declarer played low on the trump lead and later tried to cash three top clubs (neither defender giving true count, of course), that was two down, +500 to Suffolk.

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
			1♦
1♥	1♠	P	2♣
2♥	P	2NT	3♠
P	P	X	All Pass

Contract: 3♠X by E; Lead: ♠4

North dealer; North-South vulnerable

Board 21

NORTH
 ♠ 864
 ♥ Q103
 ♦ KJ86543
 ♣ -

WEST
 ♠ Q2
 ♥ 964
 ♦ 1072
 ♣ K8653

EAST
 ♠ A953
 ♥ J72
 ♦ Q9
 ♣ AJ72

SOUTH
 ♠ KJ107
 ♥ AK85
 ♦ A
 ♣ Q1094

South faced further tough decisions in the next auction. Overcall immediately over 1♣? 1NT is off-shape and the hand has a lot of trick-taking potential (imagine ♠Q and ♥Qxxx opposite). I passed hoping at my next turn either to double diamonds for take-out or a 12-14 1NT rebid for penalties. What does South's Dbl of 3♣ mean? This can be played either as take-out or penalties (sometimes as both!). Whichever, I had it. With such uncertainty over David's 3♦ bid (no doubt assuming penalties), I tried 3NT and was doubled.

How would you play on a club to the Ace and ♣J return, covered and ducked by West? Four heart tricks and a spade to the King would provide nine tricks (1 spade, 4 hearts, 2 diamonds, and 2 clubs), but probably not before five losers (2 spades, 1 diamond, and 2 clubs; though, on the actual hand, switch ♦T and ♦Q and you are still OK). Other than diamonds coming in immediately, what other chances? I tried a heart to T at trick 3. Had this held, I had a second entry to establish diamonds on any 3-2 break. When it lost, I had to rely on the actual layout. 3NTX+1 was worth 950 to us.

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
P	1♣	P	2NT*
P	3♣	X	P
3♦	P	3NT	X

All Pass * Weakest club raise

Contract: 3NTX by S; Lead: ♣5

	Mids	Manc	Berks	Gloucs	NE	E Wales	Suff	Beds	Total VPs
Middlesex		7	11	13	20	19	20	20	110
Manchester	13		12	16	15	5	11	20	92
Berks And Bucks	9	8		15	10	15	17	15	89
Gloucestershire	7	4	5		14	12	15	13	70
North East	0	5	10	6		13	20	11	65
East Wales	1	15	5	8	7		18	9	63
Suffolk	0	9	3	5	0	2		19	38
Bedfordshire	0	0	5	7	9	11	1		33

The final hand comes from our match against winners Middlesex, when we were up against Andrew McIntosh and Nick Sandqvist.

North dealer; North-South vulnerable

Board 18

NORTH
 ♠ Q1098
 ♥ A
 ♦ J1064
 ♣ K1086

WEST EAST

♠ 654 ♠ AKJ73
 ♥ 1074 ♥ J653
 ♦ K8 ♦ 752
 ♣ QJ974 ♣ 5

SOUTH
 ♠ 2
 ♥ KQ982
 ♦ AQ93
 ♣ A32

Tosh's double as East of 3NT (requesting an unusual lead, normally dummy's first bid suit) was well judged. On a spade lead, ducked (or won and a low spade returned), 3NT is one down; on the natural club lead, it makes. My decision to pull as South, though correct, is dubious: in effect, I'm trusting the opponents ahead of partner.

5♣ is a reasonable spot but on a spade lead and club return, it had no chance – down one.

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
	P	1♥	P
1♠	P	2♦	P
3♦	P	3NT	P
4♦	P	5♦	All Pass

Contract: 3NTX by S; Lead: ♣5

Contract: 5♦ by S; Lead: ♠6