

Slam battle in Friendly Pairs *by Derrick Browne*

In the Friendly Pairs Congress held on 15 March, the morning winners were Mimi Clerici and Santosh Arora, while Wendy Ashton and Tony Nunn won in the other direction. However, Mischa Solar and George Bilski had a big afternoon win to take top spot over the whole day.

In the Under 50 Masterpoints category, winners were Loraine Neville and Jeanette Weaver. They were one of the pairs to reach 6S on these cards:

WEST	EAST
S A74	S KQT95
H Q63	H 7
D QT754	D AK2
C A8	C KQ74

West opens 1D and East responds 1S. Some West players chose to raise to 2S, even though responder might have only a 4-card suit. East would then bid Blackwood en route to 6S. If West instead rebids 1NT, East will continue exploring to find the spade fit and slam is still reached. Only a heart lead keeps declarer to 12 tricks, otherwise declarer's heart loser can be discarded on the fourth round of diamonds.

In the next deal, East's S10 and D10 are attractive cards and some players considered the East hand too good for a favourable vulnerability weak two and instead opened 1S. What action should South take?

Dealer North, NS vul.

	NORTH	
	S 954	
	H AT95	
	D A9764	
	C 3	
WEST		EAST
S 73		S AQJT86
H 84		H 73
D 532		D QJT
C KT8762		C 95
	SOUTH	
	S K2	
	H KQJ62	
	D K8	
	C AQJ4	

South looks to have a 2H bid, but an overcall is commonly played as showing up to around 16 HCP. To show a hand too good to overcall, double then bid again (power double). In answer, North might jump in hearts which excites South. Gary Goldsmith and Henrietta Hohnen were the only pair to find the slam.

East leads the DQ; over to you. The opening bid marks East with the SA so the SK can be made on a finesse. That just leaves the question of what to do with South's club losers. It will be awkward to ruff clubs three times, and finessing in clubs carries some risk.

Instead, declarer drew trumps then played diamonds, ruffing the third round of the suit. North's last two diamonds were now winners so two of South's clubs could be discarded there, and there were still trumps left to ruff the other one. Slam bid and made was an outright top.