

The Chairman's Cup

This is the most prestigious Bridge Tournament in the Swedish calendar, one could liken it to the Spring Foursomes in England (unfortunately Wales has nothing comparable). It is held in a small city, called Orebro, in the very centre of Sweden, here there is a Convention Centre which can hold up to 500 tables. The above competition is held in conjunction with all of Sweden's national finals, plus numerous other subsidiary competitions, all running simultaneously. These subsidiary competitions are open to anybody who wishes to play – just turn up, sit down, pay your table money and play. There are three main categories, which are based on the master points which can be won in them, Bronze (our black), Silver (our green) and Gold. These competitions start at 9.00 a.m. and finish at 22.30 p.m. so you can really play any time you want – the prize scale is the same in each and is based on the table money and goes to the top 10%.

This year the WBU received an invitation to send a team, with free entry into the Cup competition, and free accommodation in the hotel opposite the playing area. This accommodation consisted of two double/twin rooms, with a very good buffet breakfast included, for the week of the congress – regardless of whether we were knocked out on the second or third day. This year due to the various other International events, it seemed nobody was interested so Diana Harris, Liz Hutchinson, Alan Screen and I decided to take part. I think that if these invitations are not accepted they will not be forthcoming in the future for other people to take advantage of.

There are two ways to get to this out of the way place – fly or drive. The flying option is not that easy as although Orebro has its own small airport, this is for internal flights only. So one has to go to one of Stockholm's airports and either hire a car or take a train. So we decided to drive – 1200 miles, two ferries and a bridge/tunnel into Sweden from Denmark – a pleasant trip with two stops one in Holland and one in Denmark.

Now comes the painful part, on Saturday morning, I go to the Captains meeting and get told all the rules, usual stuff – no mobile phones, punctuality essential etc. There are National teams from Iceland, Lithuania, Estonia, Belgium, Ireland and several other countries whose flags I did not know plus an extremely strong team from England. In all there are 114 teams playing in the first stage which consists of 13 rounds of Swiss teams (8 boards a round). After these 13 rounds the first 32 will then go on and play for the Cup, the second 32 teams will play in the Plate competition, whilst the rest are left to their own devices (the side competitions).

As a team we played to our abilities and at the end of the first day were lying in 50th position (only 9 VP's behind England), which we thought was OK, most of our matches being very close, either winning or losing by single figure imps. However the second day proved our undoing (as per the Mid-Wales Congress where we led overnight), and after several heavy defeats we were ceremoniously dumped from the event, even our best win in the last match (24 – 6) was not enough to make our position tenable. The other teams from the UK could only qualify for the Plate event, with Ireland exiting in the first round of the Knock Out matches and England being soundly beaten in the semi-finals.

So what now – a side event – next morning I played with Liz Hutchinson (Di does not do mornings) in the morning Bronze event, 24 boards of barometer scored pairs. The organisation is something to be marvelled at, after each six boards you received a piece of paper showing your results and present position within the field. In this particular event there were 320 pairs – yes that's right 320. Liz and I played well and with our fair share of good luck, finished 38th, just outside the prizes.

The city of Orebro has many good restaurants but in general eating out is very expensive, we have tried several and the average cost per person (without drink) is £30 a head. The buffet breakfast is superb and probably saves the cost of lunch. There is a cafeteria inside the centre which has various snacks, the best of which is a frankfurter type hot dog at £1.50, coffee and teas are £1.00 – all of these are available from dawn to dusk.

On Tuesday we all played in a Silver event (table money is high at £15:00 per person) but this is for 42 boards and tends to have better players than the Bronze events, there were ONLY 194 pairs, and both pairs ended just below average.

It was the 20th anniversary of the Chairman's Cup this year and we were invited to the banquet celebrating this. The meal was excellent and the entertainment first class with dancing to a live rock group and when they played Delilah the whole team singing and dancing. I am told that this went on until 1:00 in the morning, we however left after the first break (seniors need their sleep).

Wednesday morning Di actually decided that she was fit for action, for a 10:00 a.m. Bronze event, so we tried – in this event there were 394 pairs, and after a reasonable 18 boards slumped into mediocrity on the last 6 boards. There is some luck in which section you are in, there may be good players from teams knocked out of the CUP in the last two days or there may not. A flat board is not something that happens, the scores on any one board can vary from -1100 to +1100 and how some of these scores arise we cannot work out. I must say that only in Sweden can they actually use the amount of paper that is given out in these events – they must make it!!!

On the Wednesday evening Di and I decided we had better try our luck at another Bronze event, these **ONLY** cost £8.00 per player, and after driving 1200 miles to play bridge we thought we should play. On the hand below we were unfortunately sitting E/W.

North Deal	♠ AKQ8
NS Zone	♥ AK53
	♦ AQ1093
♣ J63	♣ 975
♥ QJ	♥ 862
♦ Q1076	♦ AKJ3
♣ J872	♣ K65
♠ 1042	♣ NT
♥ 10974	♦ 9
♦ 98542	♥ 12
♣ 4	♦ 13
	♠ 9
	♥ 9
	♦ 9
	♣ 9
	NT
	N 9 8 12 13 9
	S 9 8 12 13 9
	E 2 5 1 0 4
	W 4 5 1 0 4

The Swedish couple we were playing against bid it in the following way

2C (strong)	2D (negative)
3C (natural)	3D (natural)
3S (natural)	4S (natural)

What happened to the heart suit we will never know? After the AD lead which was ruffed, North proceeded to make all 13 tricks, by ruffing two rounds of C's. Obviously looking at the hands H's is a much safer haven, but you can only make 12 tricks as you must lose a trick to the 8H after ruffing two clubs and drawing trumps. So although they did not bid the slam we ended up with only 6 match points out of a possible 146 and so the evening proceeded, another bad night was had by all – we will try again tomorrow on our last day.

The last day arrives and Liz and Alan decide to take on two Bronze events, morning and afternoon, whilst Di and I decide upon the Silver event which starts at 15:30. We arrive for the event and notice that there are no movement cards on the table, so what sort of event will it be? It turns out to be a Swiss pairs event with a difference, there are 85 tables and at each table boards 1 and 2 are distributed. On the first board our opponents bid and make 7NT (there are 15 top tricks) – not a fortuitous start, the second board is not much better. We are then told to move up one table and boards 3 and 4 are delivered (by young Swedish ladies with long legs and very short shorts). After we have played 1 board a piece of paper is delivered – showing the results of the first 2 boards, where you are lying and your move for the

next round. As expected our first round was not brilliant (only 30% on the 2 boards), but after that we rose like the Space Shuttle – getting the unattainable top on one hand (yes 100%) – 2C* +3 vulnerable – strange scores give tops in Sweden. At this point we were on Table 3 with a running score of 64.5% and our names on the projected screen (we had arrived) but then this hand came up :-

♠ AKQJ92 ♥ ♦ 1042 ♣ A432		♠ 4 ♥ KQ1073 ♦ AQJ ♣ Q1065
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The auction progresses like this :-

S	W	N	E
P	1S	2H	P
P			

Here is the first problem area, should W double or re-bid S's???

3S	P	4NT
P		

Here is the second problem area – to show the void or not????

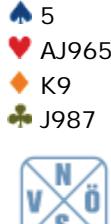
6D	P	6S
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The 6D bid showed 3 controls plus a useful void.

OK it seems that the slam looks a reasonable place to play, even if the decisions were questionable.

The lead from North is the 8C's.

What now??

South Deal NS Zone ♠ 5 ♥ AJ9652 ♦ K9 ♣ J987		♠ 4 ♥ KQ1073 ♦ AQJ ♣ Q1065	Optimal contract: 7 ♠ V = -1510 <table border="0"> <tr> <td>♣</td> <td>♦</td> <td>♥</td> <td>♠</td> <td>NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>N</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>4</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>S</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>4</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>E</td> <td>12</td> <td>10</td> <td>8</td> <td>13</td> <td>12</td> </tr> <tr> <td>V</td> <td>12</td> <td>10</td> <td>8</td> <td>13</td> <td>12</td> </tr> </table>	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	N	1	2	4	0	0	S	1	2	4	0	0	E	12	10	8	13	12	V	12	10	8	13	12
♣	♦	♥	♠	NT																												
N	1	2	4	0	0																											
S	1	2	4	0	0																											
E	12	10	8	13	12																											
V	12	10	8	13	12																											
♠ AKQJ92 ♥ ♦ 1042 ♣ A432		♠ 108763 ♥ 84 ♦ 87653 ♣ K																														

Unfortunately I played the 10C's at trick 1 and as such the contract was doomed to failure.

As you can see the optimal contract is 7S – how, without looking at all 4 hands, I do not know.

Any way to finish the story I managed to go 2 off, and we dropped in to the mid 50% area where we remained.

The main reason for telling this story is the event, it was a new and excellent way to play Swiss Pairs, which could be tried in one of the one day events. If paired with a Patton teams on the Sunday it would make an exciting change in the British Bridge arena – and maybe encourage more people to take part.

I would like to conclude by thanking the WBU for allowing us to represent Wales in the Chairman's Cup in Sweden. We would definitely go again – I think by plane this time – especially if the accommodation is free, a car is then not a necessity.

Best Regards

Diana and Paul