

MasterBridge

March Online Swiss Pairs

No-fear youth bridge

by RAKESH KUMAR



Rakesh Kumar describes himself as an enthusiast who makes enough errors to have plenty of material for bridge columns.

The March Online Swiss IMP Pairs was the most successful congress yet held by MasterBridge Online, with 38 pairs in the Open and 16 in the Restricted section. As was the case the previous month, the event was on BBO, although from next month almost all MasterBridge tournaments are moving to RealBridge, which I'd like to nominate as the game-changing (get it?) software innovation of 2020.

The competition was won by David Weston – Kim Morrison, who finished well ahead of Phil Gue – Tony Burke, who in turn were a long way in front of Heath Henn – Alex Cook who came third. However, as Nick Fahrner pointed out to me, the real story of the day was the pair in fourth place. That was 12-year-old Layla Bastick, playing with her father, Liam. Layla has just 14.9 masterpoints (Liam has 37.2) but insisted on playing in the Open field because she "wanted to play against the best players". And she did, playing well enough to challenge both Weston-Morrison and Gue-Burke.

A little further below, there's a story about one of the deals Layla played as declarer, but first let me show you a different and quite challenging play problem. LHO passes, partner opens 1♦ and you respond 1♠. Partner rebids 2♣ and you jump to 3NT. LHO leads ♠K which you duck, then switches to ♣10 which you run to the king. The diamond finesse loses and RHO returns ♠10, which you win with the ace. What will you discard from dummy and what will you do now?

♠ 6
♥ J83
♦ AQ952
♣ AJ53

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ AJ873
♥ AQT4
♦ 83
♣ K6

Layla Bastick played with her father Liam



Here is the full deal, now in its correct orientation: East was the declarer. The defence described is what we received from Tony Burke (South) and Phil Gue (North), whose goal in life is not to make things easy for the opposition ...

Board 15

Dealer S | Vul N-S

<p>♠ 6</p> <p>♥ J83</p> <p>♦ AQ952</p> <p>♣ AJ53</p>	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	<p>♠ T42</p> <p>♥ K92</p> <p>♦ KJ74</p> <p>♣ Q94</p> <p>♠ AJ873</p> <p>♥ AQT4</p> <p>♦ 83</p> <p>♣ K6</p>
N					
W E					
S					

<p>♠ KQ95</p> <p>♥ 765</p> <p>♦ T6</p> <p>♣ T872</p>	<p>♠ KQ95</p> <p>♥ 765</p> <p>♦ T6</p> <p>♣ T872</p>
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	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	3	5	5	3	3
W	3	5	5	3	3

After the above start, you will of course need the heart finesse to work to have any chance, but even then, you will have only 4 hearts, 2 clubs, a spade and a diamond in sure tricks. Where are you going to find a ninth?

It turns out that the only way to make your contract is to concede two spades to South to establish a deep spade trick. That also means that you must not discard ♣5 from dummy. Then if South returns another club the first time he comes in, you can duck and North is endplayed. However, if a diamond is returned, you need to win with ♦A, take the heart finesse and play another spade to South!

Across the Open field, 18 of 19 were in 3NT. Of these, 8 went down and 10 made the contract, although at most tables the defence was rather less challenging than that mounted by Gue-Burke.

Next to a genuinely exciting deal. At just about every table, North opened 1♥ in third seat, East doubled for takeout and South bid 4♥. However, when Layla Bastick was North, East doubled again and West bid 5♦. Layla displayed no fear whatsoever and came back in with 5♥. Now East doubled for penalty.

Board 27

Dealer S | Vul None

<p>♠ 5</p> <p>♥ T53</p> <p>♦ T9653</p> <p>♣ QT53</p>	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	<p>♠ T83</p> <p>♥ KJ874</p> <p>♦ A</p> <p>♣ AJ92</p> <p>♠ AJ72</p> <p>♥ A</p> <p>♦ KQJ</p> <p>♣ K8764</p>
N					
W E					
S					

<p>♠ KQ964</p> <p>♥ Q962</p> <p>♦ 8742</p> <p>♣</p>	<p>♠ KQ964</p> <p>♥ Q962</p> <p>♦ 8742</p> <p>♣</p>
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	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	3	3	2
S	-	-	3	3	2
E	3	2	-	-	-
W	3	2	-	-	-

Unsurprisingly, ♦K was led, won by declarer. Layla now played ♥K to East's ace and ruffed the diamond return. Two more rounds of hearts drew trumps, finishing in hand, and Layla ran ♠10!! When the spade continuation was taken by East with the ace, that was that – the diamond return was ruffed in hand, ♣A cashed to discard dummy's last diamond, and then a low spade was led to the winning spades in dummy. The combination of excellent card reading and a partial dummy reversal earned Layla +650 and 8.9 cross-IMPs. If you play against her, you had better watch out!

The last match of the day included a somewhat challenging-to-bid slam. In fact East-West can make 7♦ or 7NT, but across the field, only 9 of 19 pairs reached any slam.

Board 41

Dealer N | Vul E-W

♠ Q542
♥ KQ9872
♦ 42
♣ 7

♠ AJT9 ♥ ♦ AT63 ♣ AKQT9	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> N <hr style="width: 50%; margin: 5px auto;"/> W ————— E S </div>	♠ K8 ♥ AT543 ♦ KQ985 ♣ 5
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♠ 763
♥ J6
♦ J7
♣ J86432

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	5	7	3	6	7
W	5	7	3	6	7

Part of the reason that East-West often missed the slam was that at a number of tables, North chose to open a weak 2♥ or a multi-2♦, despite having 4 cards in the other major. After that, several East-West pairs stopped in game, although a weak 2♥ opening didn't stop 2 pairs from bidding 6♦ anyway.

However, even without interference, only one pair managed to reach a grand slam. That was Pam and Ross Crichton, who have featured regularly in these columns of late. Their auction to the cold 7♦ was quite straightforward:

West	East
	1♥
2♣	2♦
2♠ Fourth suit forcing	2NT
4♦ Minorwood	5♣ ^{2+Q}
7♦	

Would you have done as well? 🎯