

Coffs Harbour Online Teams

Last round reshuffle

by RAKESH KUMAR



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

Once again, the much-loved Coffs Harbour Congress could not be held as an ABF Gold Point event at the Opal Cove Resort, but this year it was run as an NSWBA Super Congress on RealBridge. The Friday-Sunday format of the tournament was largely preserved, with Swiss Pairs over the first day and a half, followed by Teams.

The Teams event had 52 entries and was won by CRICHTON (Pam Crichton - Ross Crichton - Niek Van Vucht - Graham Wakefield) from COUTTS (James Coutts - Paul Dalley - Liam Milne - Andy Hung - Jessica Brake) with GIURA (Nicoleta Giura - Nick Hughes - Sandra Richman - Andrew Richman) in third place.

COUTTS found their way into the top 3 after the second round and led from round 5 through round 8. Indeed, coming into round 7 on the Sunday morning, they appeared to be well ahead, with the VP rankings thus:

COUTTS	113.07
GUMBY	95.56
CRICHTON	94.46
GIURA	92.01
KALMIN	91.98

However, there's usually quite a bit of action towards the end of any Swiss tournament, and so it was with this one. My team had played CRICHTON and GIURA early in the event, scoring -1 IMP and +3 IMPs respectively against them, which we felt was pretty respectable. We finished nowhere, though, so I thought it might be interesting to examine what these two teams did in the last 3 rounds on their way to success.

The review proved to be instructive. Here is one swing deal from Round 7. In our match, the swing went against us as one table reached 6♣, which proved difficult to make, whereas the other table had no problems in 3NT.

Board 29

Dealer N | Vul All

♠ JT764
♥ 654
♦ A943
♣ 4

♠ Q
♥ KT82
♦ KJ762
♣ J32

♠ AK82
♥ A73
♦ T
♣ AKQ76

♠ 953
♥ QJ9
♦ Q85
♣ T985

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	6	4	5	4	5
W	6	4	5	3	5

In the GIURA match, Nick Hughes made 6♣ by drawing trumps and then playing on diamonds, running the 10 and then ruffing out ♦ Q to establish the jack for his twelfth trick, which he reached via the carefully preserved ♥ K. This yielded a large swing in their favour. In the COUTTS and CRICHTON matches, both tables played in game contracts.

Also from round 7 is this potentially challenging board. At our table, West opened a weak 2♦ with a 5-card suit at adverse vulnerability, North passed and East raised to 3♦. Realising that I was having the teeth stolen out of my head, I dared to bid 3♠ as South, but of course that was promptly raised to 4♠, which went down against tight defence – no one ever continued diamonds for me!

Board 32

Dealer W | Vul E-W

♠ 842
♥ A65
♦ AJ5
♣ A753

♠ T73
♥ 874
♦ KQT93
♣ Q8

♠ K
♥ KQT9
♦ 8764
♣ KJT9

♠ AQJ965
♥ J32
♦ 2
♣ 642

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	2	-	-	3	3
S	1	-	-	3	3
E	-	2	1	-	-
W	-	2	1	-	-

Across the field, 21 declarers made 10 tricks in a spade contract, although just 4 of those were in game – another 4 went down in 4♠. Only one North-South pair reached the unbeatable 3NT: that was Andrew and Sandra Richman, who thus contributed another 6 IMPs to the huge win for the GIURA team in this round.

In round 8, the board shown below generated significant swings across the room when one table reached 3NT and the other did not. We lost 11 IMPs by failing to compete effectively enough after a strong club opening by West ...

Board 40
Dealer W | Vul None

♠ QJ865
♥ QT
♦ KQ
♣ T742

♠ AK92
♥ KJ863
♦ J98
♣ A

♠ T3
♥ 942
♦ 7653
♣ Q653

♠ 74
♥ A75
♦ AT42
♣ KJ98

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	3	1	-	2	3
S	4	2	-	2	3
E	-	-	1	-	-
W	-	-	1	-	-

When North-South settled for playing in a part-score in spades, that yielded 8 IMPs to GIURA and a double-digit swing to CRICHTON in their match against COUTTS.

With one round to go, COUTTS was still in the lead, 9 VPs ahead of CRICHTON. A casual observer looking at the hand records for round 9 might have thought they were rather dull boards, but it didn't prove to be that way in practice.

First came this:

Board 48
Dealer W | Vul E-W

♠ A984
♥ 742
♦ A72
♣ 864

♠ J73
♥ KQ3
♦ T6
♣ AT972

♠ 65
♥ AJ9865
♦ Q984
♣ 5

♠ KQT2
♥ T
♦ KJ53
♣ KQJ3

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	2	3	-	3	-
S	2	3	-	3	-
E	-	-	2	-	-
W	-	-	2	-	-

In the GIURA match, Nick Hughes led his singleton club against 4 ♠ by North-South. He received a ruff and, having noted Nicoleta Giura's suit preference ♣ 10 return, underled his ace of hearts to put partner in for another ruff. This earned their team 10 IMPs when 4 ♠ was made at the other table. In the other two matches of interest, COUTTS lost 5 IMPs after they went down in 4 ♠ at one table while their opponents stopped in 3 ♠, making. CRICHTON gained 6 IMPs when both tables made 10 tricks in spades with South as declarer, but their side bid to game whereas their opponents did not.

Then came two more boards that generated large swings, collectively +24 IMPs for CRICHTON and +17 IMPs for GIURA, thus being major contributors to their last-round wins of over 18 VPs. On the deal below, if 3NT is played by South after e.g. 1♦-2♣-2NT-3NT, everything depends on the lead – the contract is quickly defeated if West starts with a spade, but otherwise makes on the club finesse.

Board 50
Dealer E | Vul N-S

♠ Q2
♥ AJ3
♦ QT5
♣ KJ853

♠ T94
♥ KJ65
♦ 932
♣ QT6

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ AKJ85
♥ 742
♦ J74
♣ 97

♠ 763
♥ Q98
♦ AK86
♣ A42

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	5	5	3	2	2
S	5	5	3	2	2
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

Things are potentially more interesting after an auction such as 1♦-3NT when East is on lead. Now a spade lead is more or less automatic, but unless East leads the ♠ K, receives a count card and continues with ♠ A, the contract will make. On the lead of a low spade, North wins the queen and prays hard that the club finesse will work! That's what happened at our table.

The other major swing deal of the last round was this one:

Board 51
Dealer S | Vul E-W

♠ JT53
♥ JT72
♦ 5
♣ T953

♠ AK642
♥ Q63
♦ J3
♣ AQ7

	N	
W	—	E
	S	

♠ 987
♥ A985
♦ AQ84
♣ 86

♠ Q
♥ K4
♦ KT9762
♣ KJ42

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	1	2	3	4	3
W	-	1	3	3	3

North-South for both the GIURA and CRICHTON teams successfully defeated the opponents' 4♠ contract, while their counterparts made 10 tricks. Nick Hughes - Nicoleta Giura had stopped in 2♠, so this was worth 7 IMPs for their team, while for CRICHTON the swing was a full 12 IMPs. In the COUTTS match, both sides made 4♠, so it was a flat board! All this turnover led to a last-round win for the CRICHTON team by a margin of almost 2 VPs. 🟩