

Duplicate Pairs Tactics with Andrew Robson

IT is fitting to begin my series on Duplicate Pairs tactics by recounting Graham Kirby's pithy tale entitled 'The Magic of Pairs':

'Board One. Partner Brian Callaghan psyches, I'm confused, Five Clubs redoubled minus eight, -3000 (old scoring).

'Board Two. Callaghan sneaks an overtrick in routine Four Hearts. An average round.'

Although most of you play mainly Duplicate Pairs, very little is written on the tactics. Because of the scoring method, these are totally different to all other forms of the game.

Your real opponents are the pair sitting in your direction at other tables. For each of those pairs you beat on a given board, you score two points (regardless of how much you beat their score by); one point for a tie (same score); and no points for a loss (regardless of how much your score is worse).

This means that you merely have to beat the other scores by a small amount. If partner plays a 1NT contract brilliantly and, with a little help from those friends to

his left and right, scores nine tricks, do not regret that you did not bid game. +150 will be a 'top', the same top as bidding game and scoring 400 or 600 for bidding and making 3NT. Therefore do not push for close games. Take this deal:

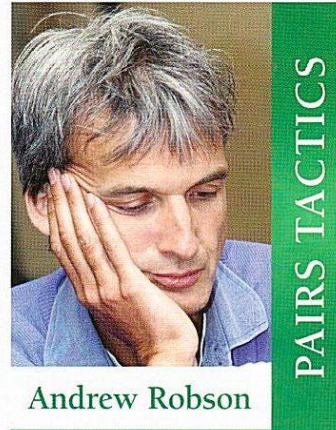
Love All. Dealer South.

♠ A Q 7 2	♠ 9 8 5 3	♠ K 6
♥ 10 7 2	♥ K J 5	♥ Q 8 6 3
♦ 10 9 8 7	♦ Q 5	♦ J 6 4
♣ Q 8	♣ A J 6 4	♣ K 9 7 3

♠ J 10 4	♠ 9 8 5 3
♥ A 9 4	♥ K J 5
♦ A K 3 2	♦ Q 5
♣ 10 5 2	♣ A J 6 4

West	North	East	South
All Pass			1NT

North's 11-point hand is awful. No tens, no five-card suit, no sequences. It is not likely that game will be on (remember that



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12 points opposite is more likely than 14). Vulnerable at Teams, with a 500 game bonus at stake, you might invite game. Not at Pairs.

How should the play go? First of all, what is your trick target? No, not seven – you must maximise. West leads the ten of diamonds; note that this passive choice is far wiser than a spade, in the quest to reduce the all-important overtricks. You win the queen, and should attack spades, the suit in which you have *top* losers and are not creating *extra* losers. A spade to the ten loses to West's queen; diamonds are continued and you win in hand and lead the spade jack. This goes to East's king and you win a third diamond (best) and lead a third spade. West wins his ace, cashes his promoted diamond (you have thrown two clubs from table), and is now in difficulty. His best defence is to exit passively with a fourth spade (again, giving nothing away being the priority). You win on table and need to read the ending for your overtrick. East has been forced to make three discards, and very likely these will be a heart and two clubs. In that case you play ace and another club to set up your ten (if East threw two hearts, then ace-king would fell his queen and promote dummy's jack). Eight tricks made, but much less pressure than being in 2NT.

Andrew's Tip: Pass partner's 1NT opener with a moderate flat 11 points.

Why am I talking about a dull 1NT? Remember Kirby's words – this board is just as important as the Grand Slam on Board 19. □

1st – 6th February 2008

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