

Till the Fat Lady Sings – Part 1

This is part of a series of entertaining articles by Barnet Shenkin on his website on overcoming a 51Imp deficit in 8 boards in the semi-final of a Gold Cup (the UK's premier teams competition). As a fellow Glaswegian hopefully Barnet doesn't find it appropriate to give me a "Glasgow kiss" for plagiarising his article. I am safe because of Covid-19 he must stay 2 metres away from me (6ft 9ins for his benefit since he now lives in Florida), Barnet formed probably Scotland's strongest ever bridge partnership with Michael Rosenberg in the 1970's and early '80s representing Scotland and Great Britain while both in their 20's.

The Scene – Birmingham England 1982. The occasion the British Gold Cup Finals.

Nearly 700 teams had entered the event 9 months before.

Four teams were left.

The favourites the famous London team were already in the final. Flint, Rose, Sheehan, Mahmood, Silverstone and Dixon were all superstars of British bridge. Their opponents had retired.

The Scottish team of Shenkin, Coyle, Cuthbertson, Haase and Goldberg were 51 imps down with 8 boards to play their semi-final

They had been expected to win this match before the start of the game.

It was 12 midnight the opposition a good but not great team asked if the Scots wished to throw in the towel and retire.

They politely refused and sent Goldberg to the bar to drown his sorrows.

Gerald Haase, a Glasgow GP, was known as the "Mad Doc" due to his bridge eccentricities and behaviour but a good man to have 51 down.

Here is the story of the first board in those final 8 boards.

The eight boards played were played 1-4 in our room and 5-8 in our teammates Haase and Cuthbertson's room.

We will follow the boards from our teammates point of view. So board 57 is board numbered 5 of the set. The first board played in their room of the set.

North (*Haase*) Dealer

♠ 9
♥ AQJ8652
♦ K85
♣ J9

West

♠ AQ1032
♥ 4
♦ J963
♣ 832

East

♠ 64
♥ 973
♦ AQ742
♣ Q64

South (*Cuthbertson*)

♠ KJ873
♥ K10
♦ 10
♣ AK1075

Something told Gerald Haase "the mad doc" to open 1♦. A few bids later and as his partner could not take a joke he was in 6♥. Poor East thought he had the diamonds locked up so led a trump! The Doc scored up his slam in quick time with the aid of the club finesse.

The "docs" wild actions brought him 13 imps when in our room the opponents played in a normal 4 making 5. Haase now down by 38 with seven boards to play.