

Till the Fat Lady Sings, the Conclusion – Part 4

The Shenkin's team have now narrowed the deficit to 15imps with 2 boards to play. The second last board:

<p>♠ K1075 ♥ AQ102 ♦ J93 ♣ A10</p>	<p>♠ 92 ♥ KJ975 ♦ K74 ♣ Q96</p>
<p>♠ AQ643 ♥ 84 ♦ Q1065 ♣ 42</p>	<p>♠ J8 ♥ 63 ♦ A82 ♣ KJ8753</p>

Bidding

Shenkin		Coyle		Haase		Cuthbertson	
W	N	E	S	W	N	E	S
			p				2♦*
1NT	p	3♣	p	x	2♠	3♣	p
3NT	p	p	p	p	p		

Shenkin, Haase and co are still chasing the win

1NT was 11-14 hcp and 3♣ was an invitational bid that Shenkin happily accepted. North led a heart into West's ♥AQ and west just needed either 6 club tricks or 5 club tricks and an outside trick somewhere as well as the ♦Ace. Shenkin cashed the ♣Ace and then played the ♣10 and carefully overtook with the ♣J in case North held four clubs to the ♣Q. But all was well and E/W finished with 10 tricks for +430pts

* The offbeat Multi 2♦ showed a weak 2 in a major or strong 4-4-4-1 17+hcp had the effect of causing E/W to miss a not unreasonable game. North's 2♠ response had shown a fit for hearts as he was prepared for South to show his hearts at the 3 level if that was his suit. E/W made 10 tricks for 130pts to E/W and 8imps. Shenkin is now down only 7imps with one final board to play.

It is now 0130hrs in the morning and this last board is actually the 64th in the match. Players are getting tired:

♠ 10632
♥ A865
♦ 954
♣ 64

♠ 97
♥ KQ94
♦ Q1083
♣ Q98

♠ Q
♥ J1032
♦ AKJ72
♣ 1053

♠ AKJ854
♥ 7
♦ 6
♣ AKJ72

Bidding

Shenkin		Coyle		Haase		Cuthbertson	
W	N	E	S	W	N	E	S
1NT!!	p	3NT	4♠	p	p	p	2♣
p	p	5♦	p!!!	p	2♦	p	2♠
p	p!			p	3♠	p	6♠
				p	p	p	

Shenkin decided, no guts no glory and opened 1N which should have had 11-14 hcp with only 9 points. Coyle also trying for a swing raised to 3 without looking for a heart fit. South with limited options bid 4♠. When East bid 5♦. South decided to pass! and his partner who should have bid 5♠ passed also. So, our remarkable 5♦ contract went down 4 for minus 200. If their teammates could produce a reasonable result that would be enough to win the match!

Haase and Cuthbertson bid sensibly and effectively to 6♠ and made 12 trick for 1430. This was a gain of 15imps for our team who had just got up at the post to win the match by 8 imps.

When the team finally came out to score the boards, Shenkin said that they may have a small chance. The "Mad Doc" quickly replied in his inimitable way "That means we've won", and he was right. Gerald Haase and George Cuthbertson had bid 5 slams in 8 boards and made 4. They stopped to check for keycards only once and finding 2 short had bid it anyway and gone down. Their opponents had bid no slams. One slam they bid was an amazing steal. Shenkin and Coyle had played their part in their room doing what they could to get some points. In forty years of playing bridge Shenkin claims he had only made a comeback like this once in such a short number of boards. The

chances of the hands coming up to give you a shot is very small. Their team had been incredibly lucky to get the boards but had taken advantage of them.

Their team moved into the final the next day to take on the favourites. Zia Mahmood, Jeremy Flint, Robert Sheehan, Irving Rose, Victor Silverstone. The opponents and Chris Dixon were all great players. Three Englishmen, two Scots and the wizard that is Zia. The opponents played very much out of form for a team of such calibre. They were 60 imps down with 8 boards to play. They did not concede the match but there was no second miracle as Shenkin's team won by over 100 imps.

The 1982 Gold Cup stands out as an example for bridge players not to give up when there may still be a small chance and to take your chances accordingly. Whatever made the "Mad Doc" open 1♦ on board 57 holding just 3 diamonds and 7 hearts we will never know? *Perhaps The Fat Lady whispered in his ear.*

I have described these articles as though Barnet Shenkin may have been captain; however, in photographs it is Gerald Haase who holds the cup. Does it matter? It was a team effort and Barnet is to be thanked for recording such an astonishing series of boards.

I am sure that as we try to keep our interest while confined to our homes as a result of the Covid-19 crisis that Barnet will accept my plagiarising of his articles.