

Day 6 Asia Pacific Bridge Federation Championships, Hefei, China

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The heat is on both weather-wise and in the tournament. Day 6 of the 2025 APBF is the penultimate day of the teams event. Three matches against capable opponents.

Match 2 RR 3 vs Chinese Taipei (Hugh & George, David & Maurits)

A team that has probably under-performed so far - dangerous.

Quite a few IMPs traded but more to us fortunately, a 16 IMP win (39-23) for 14.42 VPs. A good start to the day.

[Board 18](#) saw first blood to us. George and I bid a light 4S which made when I guessed the club position. This guess was based partly on the bidding and partly on the tempo of the opponent's defence (a fast switch to a low club seemed more likely to be from the Ace than the Q). 8 IMPs to us when David and Maurits saved in 5D for 2 down.

Two hands later on [Board 20](#) George played carefully in 4S, losing a heart, the CK and a trump to score 620. When the contract failed at the other table this was another 12 IMP gain.

[Board 22](#) was a big hand that saw most pairs in the field bid a slam and 2 pairs tried a grand slam. At our table the Chinese Taipei pair had a very conservative auction ending in game. David and Maurits showed good judgment avoiding bidding the grand slam which would have failed on the bad layout in the minor suits. 12 top tricks in 6NT resulted in 13 IMPs in the plus column. A good example of the dangers of bidding grand slams in teams competition – often the small slam is enough to win the board.

[Board 24](#) was a missed opportunity at our table. After a 2D Multi opening from George and double from the opponent I bid 3H 'Pass or Correct' asking George to pass if he had hearts or correct to 3S with spades. The opponents lost their way and ended in 5D. If I had led a H George could ruff and return a C for another ruff to beat the contract. Sadly, I led a S and the contract made.

On [Board 25](#) both tables played in 6C in their 5-3 fit missing the superior 6D contract in a 7-3 fit. 6D by East is an easy make via a textbook elimination and endplay (trump 2 hearts in the E hand, draw two rounds of trumps, cash the spades ending in the dummy then run the CJ - South must lead another C or concede a ruff and discard). In 6C a Heart lead by me, followed by a H continuation from George when he won the first C resulted in 2 down for a 3 IMP gain.

After 9 boards we were cruising with a 37-0 lead. The worm was about to turn.

[Board 26](#) was played in 3NT at all tables in the event. Half of the declarers made and half went down depending on the opening lead. At our table I declared the contract after W had overcalled 1H. East led a S and they took the first 5 tricks. At the other table South was the declarer and West led a H resulting in an easy 9 tricks. George and I could both have bid differently, and we were left regretting our decisions! 12 IMPs to Chinese Taipei.

[Board 29](#) was another disappointment. At our table they bid 3NT and made when they played the spades for three tricks. I made this easy for them by playing the SJ on the first round of the suit, but the indications were that they were going to guess correctly. David and Maurits were uncharacteristically conservative in the bidding and ended in 1NT which they played safely for 7 tricks. Another 11 IMPs away.

A good win but some results to regret (as usual!).

The other match results were favourable for us with Indonesia losing badly to lowly Korea, and close results in the other two matches. Our lead has extended to over 22 VPs.

Match 3 RR 3 vs Hong Kong, China (Hugh & George, David & Maurits)

A very experienced team who are capable and dangerous.

A loss by 23 IMPs (19-42) for 4.15 VPs.

The [first board](#) did not feel great at our table when I bid an aggressive 4H in a competitive auction and got doubled. The cards were fairly friendly, and I escaped for only one down. Unfortunately, this meant that they could not make anything their way either. At the other table the Hong Kong pair managed to bid even higher with our cards and played 5HX. They lost an extra trick for 500 to our guys which translated to 9 IMPs.

I was declarer again on the [second board](#) in 4S. This was not hopeless but losing the diamond finesse to the singleton K resulted in 2 down. At the other table David and Maurits bid on to 5H and were lucky not to get doubled. 2 down for 7 IMPs away.

The next 2 boards I continued as the declarer. Both contracts failed but were replicated at the other table. Not a great feeling going down on 4 consecutive hands!

On [Board 5](#) 13 tricks were available in spades, NT or clubs. Two finesses were available – you probably needed one to work to make the slam. One of 2 finesses is 75% so a very good slam. Our opponents bid 6C making 7 while teammates ended in 4NT making 13 tricks. 9 IMPs to Hong Kong.

[Board 7](#) was an interesting S contract. At our table the opponents bid to 4S after I had overcalled 1H. I led a small trump. George was marked with very few values but there seemed like a chance that I could take 4 tricks myself. Declarer won in the dummy and ran the DJ to my K. What now? I could play the CK hoping that partner had the Q or I could play another trump. After some thought I decided that another low trump was best. Declarer won this in hand and led a small C. I won this while they unblocked the J from the dummy. A and another S now got rid of all the trumps. Declarer was able to finesse the C10 but only had 9 tricks. At the other table David and Maurits were only in 3S but made 10 tricks. 7 IMPs.

We were a little lucky on [Board 8](#) when a slightly optimistic slam try on George's part resulted in me playing 5H in a 5-4 fit missing 2 aces and the trump Q. Fortunately, I was not tested in the play and the trumps were friendly, so I made 12 tricks. 2 IMPs when only 10 tricks were made at the other table in 4H.

[Board 9](#) was fascinating. At our table I opened 4D, the next hand passed and George bid 4S. When W bid 5H neither of us could see any reason to bid so we defended 5H. I led a S and this resulted in a swift 13 tricks. We could have taken the DA but 6H was always cold. At the other table David and Maurits bid 6H and the Hong Kong pair made a good decision to save in 6S. Maurits led his singleton D. Declarer led a H preparing to ruff a H in the dummy. After cashing the 2 club winners David returned a trump. Maurits won this with the A but declarer had the rest for 500 and a 5 IMP gain. Maurits pointed out in the postmortem that he had erred by winning the SA. If he had ducked declarer would have been able to trump a H in the dummy but could not then get off the dummy without David being able to ruff for 800. If declarer instead continued trumps they could cash the H winner.

[Board 10](#) was played in 4H four times and a heart part score four times throughout the field. 10 tricks were easy and declarer made 11 at our table when we didn't cash one of our winners. At the other table teammates played a conservative 2H. Another 10 IMPs in the minus column.

[Board 11](#) saw me fail to star. I played 3NT after partner had shown 5 hearts and 4+ diamonds. I had not shown any suits. The lead was a S and I had to make a plan. I had 9 easy tricks if the spades divided 3-3. I could make 9 tricks if the diamonds divided 3-3 but I had to commit to that at trick one. My other possibility was to win the lead in the dummy and take the C finesse. If that succeeded, I could make 9 tricks if the spades broke 4-2. I decided on the last option which failed when the CK was off-side and the spades broke 5-1. I'm still not sure what was best but the diamonds did break 3-3. Fortunately at the other table they played 4S which failed when the trumps broke badly. 2 IMPs away when I could have gained 10.

[Board 12](#) we played in 3S after an uninterrupted invitational auction. This made 9 tricks on a friendly layout. Maurits and David got too high and were doubled in 4H for 3 down and -500. Their discussion afterwards centred on who was most deranged in the bidding. As good partners do they were both claiming that distinction for themselves! I like my teammates to be active in the bidding – sometimes that leads to tragedy but will not get my blame since I want them to forgive my transgressions.

A disappointing result with many lost opportunities. Such is bridge in the fast lane. We are still leading by about 10 VPs from Japan with China another 6 back.

[Match 4 RR 3](#) vs New Zealand (Hugh & George, Phil & Terry)

Our traditional enemy again. They have been struggling but are always very dangerous. This time we are playing on Viewgraph so our brilliancies and blunders are going out live to the world just to add to the stress!

This was a very flat set which must have been tedious for the viewing audience. The closest match so far with the lowest turnover ended in a losing draw by 1 IMP (8-9) for 9.67 VPs.

[Board 18](#) was played in 3NT at every table in the event, making 4 times and going down 4 times. It all depended on the lead. East opened 1D, George overcalled 1H, W showed a good diamond raise then bid 3NT when opener showed a minimum. I held three small hearts and AT8xx in spades. Which are you going to lead? Not leading a heart when you have three in the suit that they bid may put you in a poor position in the postmortem – this is definitely the safe option. You are rarely crimed for leading partner's suit. I chose a spade, and this worked splendidly when the declarer had only one stopper and partner had the DA. A heart lead would result in an easy 10 tricks. Disappointingly a flat board when the same lead was made at the other table.

On [Board 20](#) we defended 1NT. George led a club which was won in the dummy. A diamond to the J lost to the Q and a club was continued. Now a diamond to the A revealed the bad news for the declarer. I won the next D and led a S to partner's Q. He cashed his clubs and I had to find 3 discards. I erred by pitching hearts and keeping the spades. I could have worked this out so -90 was a frustrating result. At the other table South showed a major and a minor over 1NT and played in 2S. This did not go well so 200 meant 3 IMPs to us.

[Board 24](#) was a good slam on light values. Again, this was at worst one of 2 finesses. Neither EW pair managed to bid it and were last heard discussing how the auction should have gone. Have a look at the hand and see if you would have done better.

[Board 26](#) was the team's worst result for the match losing 5 IMPs when George had an uncharacteristic flight of fancy in the bidding. 4S was lucky not to be doubled and went 3 down for -300. I could have got out for -200 after they misdefended if I had diagnosed the bad trump break. EW could make 4H but did not have the values to bid it. Our teammates were even more unlikely to bid it since Phil missorted his hand and thought he had only 4 hearts so did not open the bidding. Tiredness becomes a factor at this point in a tournament.

On the [last board](#) I could have taken our two aces to flatten the board and get a draw but I didn't so we lost an IMP and that was the margin.

A frustrating result but at the end of the day we are still leading but only by 7.5 VPs from Japan with Indonesia another 4 behind. We have a tough day tomorrow with China, Japan and Indonesia to play.

All the scores and hands are available [here](#).