Winter 2026
Match 8 (7 September 2026)

Try, try and try again

Last week's column rashly predicted that friendly breaks would grace the end of this season's OPL this week. As we look at the last three boards of our Division 1 top scorers Ted Griffin and Bruce Neill, it's less a matter of enjoying the layout and nimbly pulling rabbits out of the hat trick, and more a matter of valiant persistence.

When King Robert the Bruce was leading the fight for Scotland's independence against the English, he suffered crushing defeats, had his family members captured or executed, and was forced into exile. Hiding in a cave and contemplating giving up, he noticed a spider trying to swing its thread to a wall to anchor its web, but repeatedly fail and fall. Eventually the spider succeeded and so did Robert the Bruce.

If that seems like ancient history, check the news and you will see that Prince Harry and Meghan Markle (both direct descendants of Robert the Bruce) continue the heroic tradition, having recently returned from their own exile and commenced combat with the British king.

Thanks to Monty Python, Bruce is now known as the archetypal Aussie bloke name, so let's get onto those final three boards of our protagonists, Bruce Neill and Ted Griffin. On Board 10, West (Ted) opened 2NT and Bruce raised to 3NT. North led the SJ (whereas some led a helpful heart). Ted won with the SQ and played on hearts, a safe way to make the contract.

	BOARD 10	
BD: 10	♠JT953 ♥AJ873 ♦ ♣J65	**Dlr: E** **Vul: ALL**
♠AK4 ♥QT54 ♦KQ7 ♣AQ4		♠Q6 ♥K92 ♦A9864 ♣T82
	♠872 ♥6 ♦JT532 ♣K973	

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N T
N					7
S					20 9
E	4	4		5	4
W	4	4		5	

Div 1 FREQUENCIES FOR BOARD 10

Contract	Result	Score	Frequency
3NT by EW	-1	100	1
3NT by EW	+1	-630	3
3NT by EW	+2	-660	4

On Board 11, South opened 1C, Ted doubled on the West cards, North bid a disruptive 1NT, and Bruce (East) refused to be disrupted and bid 4S. South cashed the two clubs and switched to hearts and the contract went two down, but if opener had held the DK, the contract would surely have been made.

BOARD 11

BD: 11 **Dlr: S** **Vul: None**

	♠987 ♥J983 ♦K54 ♣Q64	
♠KJ62 ♥652 ♦AQJ8 ♣72		♠AQT54 ♥AT7 ♦97 ♣JT9
	♠3 ♥KQ4 ♦T632 ♣AK853	

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	2	1			6
S	2	1		11	11
E			2	1	12
W			2	1	

Div 1 FREQUENCIES FOR BOARD 11

Contract	Result	Score	Frequency
4♠ by EW	-2	100	1
3♠ by EW	-1	50	1
2♠ by EW	=	-110	2
3♠ by EW	=	-140	1
2♠ by EW	+1	-140	2
2♠ by EW	+2	-170	1

Their fall did not prevent them from attempting to weave another web. On Board 12, Ted opened 2H, North overcalled 3C, and Bruce bid 4H on the East cards. This was passed back to North, who backed in with 4S. East has a lot of spades but also a massive fit with hearts, and Bruce took the push to 5H. This can be made by establishing the long spade (not easy) or with helpful defence. However, South tried 6S and our latter day Bruce had his Bannockburn, doubling and scoring 1700 points for 15 IMPs and a decisive win in the contest.

BOARD 12

BD: 12	♠KJT7 ♥ ♦J8 ♣AQ96542	**Dlr: W** **Vul: NS**
♠ ♥KT9754 ♦QT432 ♣K7		♠Q6542 ♥AQ632 ♦A ♣J8
	♠A983 ♥J8 ♦K9765 ♣T3	

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N T
N	3	1	3		11
S	3	1	3	8	13
E		5		8	
W		5			

FREQUENCIES FOR BOARD 12

Contract	Result	Score	Frequency
3♠ by NS	-2	-200	1
4♥ by EW	=	-420	1
4♥ by EW	+1	-450	1
4♥ by EW	+1	-450	1
4♥ by EW	+2	-480	1
5♠X by NS	-3	-800	1
5♣X by NS	-3	-800	1
6♠X by NS	-6	-1700	1

North-South winners in Division 1 were Ella Lupul and Jeff Fallon. In Division 2, NS winners were Sherlock Shao and Kelsey Chen, and EW Mrinal Dey and Bal Krishnan.

Division 3: NS Tony White and Bill Boulton, EW Jacky Gruszka and Tony Georgeson. Division 4: NS Jan and Richard Johnston, EW Neil McMaster and Jennifer Bissett. Division 5: NS David Drake and Chris Bauer, EW Lionel Harry Murray and John Apthorp.

If at first you don't succeed… Spring Season starts October 12th, just before the Spring Nationals.

Comments or questions?
You can interact with Derrick about his analysis on the Bridge NSW Facebook page by commenting on the post for that week of OPL.

About Derrick Browne

Derrick Browne is the author of over 40 books and pamphlets on bridge. He is also owner of Trumps Bridge Centre in Mosman, Sydney, which offers training, duplicate games, bridge books and accessories, and holidays including Canberra 20-23 September and Leura 22-25 November.