

Losing our way to a win

No one was more surprised than team BOCK (Steven Bock-Rakesh Kumar, Kevin Davies-Michael Waring) when we came home from the Central Coast Super Congress with a win in the Open Teams.

The 7-round Swiss competition got off to a good start for us, with 3 solid wins, so that at lunchtime we were leading by a fairly large margin. However, our souffle rose much too soon. Two losses after lunch dropped us back to third place, then we had a modest win and regained first place, but were only 1 VP ahead of ROBINSON, with HADAWAY just another 2 VPs behind. Obviously, we needed a good win in the last round.

This didn't happen, because we played McGRATH and lost 12-18. Because McGRATH were 9 VPs behind us after the penultimate round, they did not overtake our score, so it seemed possible we might yet make 3rd place overall, but 2nd seemed most unlikely and winning was clearly out of the question.

Or so we thought. Amazingly, however, ROBINSON also lost 12-18 and HADAWAY lost 13-17, so the first three positions were unchanged after the final round and there were then 4 teams tied in 4th place! We're still bemused.

On to a couple of hands. This one came up in the very first match and contributed to our good start:

Board 6	♠754	
Dealer E	♥76	
Vul E-W	♦AKJT9	
	♣832	
♠AQ93		♠K6
♥J98		♥KQ32
♦Q64		♦8752
♣AQ6		♣J97
		♠JT82
	♥AT54	
	♦3	
	♣KT54	



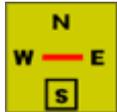
Steven Bock, Kevin Davies,
Rakesh Kumar and Michael Waring

At our table, EW were playing Precision. After two passes, west opened 1NT (13-15 hcp) and played there. Sitting North, I led the king of diamonds, asking for (natural) count. Steven played the 3, showing an odd number, and with four cards in dummy it seemed clear that this was in fact a singleton. Not wishing to give declarer a free trick by cashing the ace, I switched to 8 of clubs, and in due course declarer made 7 tricks, which Deep Finesse states is the limit. Just another boring hand, I thought, feeling pleased with myself for not having donated an overtrick by establishing the diamond queen.

But no, there was nothing boring about the hand at all! At the other table, Kevin Davies opened a strong notrump (15-17 hcp) and was promptly raised to 3NT. North cashed the ace and king of diamonds, South discarding a club, then switched to a

spade. Kevin worked out that this must mean North had no re-entry, so that South would be squeezed in 3 suits! He took the spade in hand, and cashed the diamond queen. Whatever South discards now establishes an extra trick for declarer in that suit, and when that extra trick is cashed, South is squeezed again to yield yet another trick. The triple squeeze meant that Kevin wound up with 10 tricks for +630 and we gained 11 IMPs.

In the first of our losses after lunch, things were very different. This board raises some interesting questions about hand evaluation and the style of pre-empts you and your partner might play. After South's pass, what would you bid with the West hand, vulnerable against not? Despite the 7-card suit and 7 losers, my inclination would be to treat this as a weak two-bid, but at our table Heather Cusworth opened 3S and EW promptly reached 6S, which is cold as the cards lie. At the other table, Kevin did indeed open a multi-2D and played in 4S, so we lost 13 IMPs.

Board 3	♠7	
Dealer S	♥Q8	
Vul E-W	♦876	
	♣AQ98542	
♠KT96542		♠A83
♥KT6		♥A9543
♦T42		♦AKQ
♣		♣K3
	♠QJ	
	♥J72	
	♦J953	
	♣JT76	

In the last eCongress News, John McIlrath asked what makes Country congresses more appealing than City congresses. I'd vote for the cooking – the range of cakes, sweets and other snacks on offer with the tea and coffee was so tempting as to be positively dangerous! The event was also superbly organised and I'm sure all those attending had a very enjoyable time.

Rakesh Kumar



The winning restricted team was:-
Janet Ritchie, Cheryl Platz,
Veronica Antill and Margaret Somers