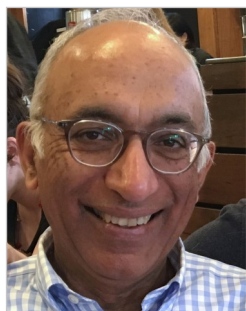


Brisbane Water Congress 2018

All about hand evaluation ...

by RAKESH KUMAR



Rakesh Kumar describe himself as an enthusiastic non-expert who makes enough errors to have plenty of material for bridge columns.

The 2018 Brisbane Water Super Congress was held over the weekend of 7/8 July and was as usual a well-organised and friendly event. There was an endless supply of cakes, slices and other delectables to ensure that all those participating were in no danger of hypoglycaemia!

On Saturday, the Open Swiss Pairs was won by Michael Courtney - Linden Raymond (NS) and Julian Foster - David Weston (EW). On Sunday, the Open Teams was won by LI (Yumin Li - Wayne Zhu - Wei Zhang - Simon Zhang) with BOCK (Steven Bock - Kevin Davies - Julian Abel - Rakesh Kumar) in second place and HUDSON (David Hudson - Anita Curtis - David Fryda - Michael Cartmell) finishing third (although they had led for most of the day).

The weekend seemed to involve one difficult decision after another, mostly about the true value of one's hand in the context of the bidding. It seems to me that if bridge players were paid at corporate executive rates for the number of decisions they had to get right in a single day, we'd all be rich ...

Here are three of those problems for you. Firstly, you hold this exciting collection:

♠ 74
♥ QT53
♦ T95
♣ JT92

Not vulnerable against vulnerable opponents, you pass as dealer. So does LHO and partner opens the auction with 1♣. RHO overcalls 1♦, you pass again and LHO raises to 2♦. Partner rebids 2♥ and RHO passes. Will you bid anything now?

Next, a slightly better hand:

♠ K5
♥ 874
♦ AT84
♣ QJ82

Both vulnerable, RHO passes as dealer and so do you. LHO bids 3♦ and partner doubles. You bid 3NT and partner now bids 4♠. Your call?

And thirdly you hold this, vulnerable against not:

♠ J87
♥ 64
♦ KQJ
♣ AT872

LHO passes, partner bids 1♥, RHO overcalls 1♠ and you bid 2♣. After a pass by LHO, partner now bids 2♥. What will you do?

The first hand, from match 5 of the Swiss Pairs, illustrates that there are times when counting points is irrelevant, the real question being "How much worse could my hand be?" For partner to have backed in after your first two passes surely indicates better than bare minimum reversing values – say at least 18 hcp with shape, and possibly an even stronger hand. In that context, your hand is worth quite a bit more than 3 hcp, given the double fit and the two 10s in partner's suits. If you raise to 3♥, partner is in fact strong enough to bid game:

Board 12

Dealer W | Vul N-S

<p>♠ 74 ♥ QT53 ♦ T95 ♣ JT92</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> W </div>	<div style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> N S </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> E </div>	<p>♠ T985 ♥ K2 ♦ Q87 ♣ A763</p> <p>♠ KQ63 ♥ 987 ♦ KJ6432 ♣</p>	<p>♠ AJ2 ♥ AJ64 ♦ A ♣ KQ854</p>
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	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	2	-	2	-
S	-	2	-	1	-
E	4	-	4	-	1
W	4	-	4	-	1

However, in the Open, only 4 of 21 East-West pairs reached 4♥. We weren't among them – I was too wimpy!

The second hand is all about the difference between a direct jump to game in a suit over a pre-empt, versus a double followed by a game bid. Clearly partner has long spades but equally clearly s/he also has a lot of high cards, because otherwise a direct bid of 4♠ would suffice. With that precious ♠K in your hand, there must be some possibility of slam, so it's your job to indicate this to partner while providing as much additional useful information as you can. A cue bid of 5♦ should do the trick, as it not only makes clear that your 3NT bid was based on possession of at least the ♦A but also implies spade support. Partner can now bid 6♠ with reasonable confidence.

Board 23

Dealer S | Vul Both

<p>♠ K5 ♥ 874 ♦ AT84 ♣ QJ82</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> W </div>	<div style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> N + S </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> E </div>	<p>♠ T2 ♥ J93 ♦ KJ97632 ♣ 9</p> <p>♠ J97 ♥ QT652 ♦ Q ♣ 7643</p>	<p>♠ AQ8643 ♥ AK ♦ 5 ♣ AKT5</p>
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	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	7	1	3	7	7
W	7	1	3	7	7

In match 3 of the Open Teams, 8 of 33 East-West pairs reached 6♠, 2 bid to 6♣, and one bold pair actually got to 7♠!

The final exhibit from the weekend is another tricky decision, from the last round of the Open Teams. Partner's 2♥ rebid could be anything from 10-11 hcp with long hearts to a decent 14-15 hcp hand. You've already shown 10+ hcp by bidding 2♣ over the 1♠ overcall, so bidding 3♥ now will limit your hand and show doubleton support. However, it might encourage partner to bid on when there are in fact 3 quick losers in spades (or two quick losers and a ruff) plus another loser in a minor. So how can the problem be resolved?

It didn't occur to me at the time, but the best bid is probably 2♠, asking for a stopper. This allows partner to bid notrumps if appropriate, in which case your ♠J will actually be worth something – and indeed if partner has a maximum, her/his next bid might well be 3NT!

In fact both 4♥ and 3NT were good contracts, but the decision to bid game in either denomination wasn't easy. Across the Open field, 13 East-West pairs reached 4♥, 10 stopped in 2♥ and just 4 played in 3NT. 🟩

Board 25

Dealer N | Vul E-W

<p>♠ J87 ♥ 64 ♦ KQJ ♣ AT872</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; width: 40px; margin: 0 auto;">N</div> <hr style="border: 1px solid red; width: 80%; margin: 5px auto;"/> <div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; width: 40px; margin: 0 auto;">S</div>	<p>♠ 54 ♥ KQ8 ♦ 98642 ♣ J95</p>	<p>♠ KQT ♥ AJT952 ♦ A5 ♣ 64</p>
<p>♠ A9632 ♥ 73 ♦ T73 ♣ KQ3</p>			

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	2	1	4	2	3
W	2	1	4	2	3