

# Every Slam an Adventure!

by Rakesh Kumar

The Parramatta Congress was won by CHEN (Kelsey Chen - Andrew Wu - Titus Ling - Yumin Li) from HOEVENAARS (Marcel Hoevenaars - Machteld Baljet - David Priol - Ernie Newman). Both teams stormed home with big wins in the last round, a session that included swings associated with successful 5-level doubled contracts.

In earlier matches, as is often the case, many of the major swings related to slams. This event featured quite a few interesting slam hands, each of which involved significant decisions either in the bidding or in the defence.

Before we look at the full hands, however, how do you evaluate this holding and **what would you bid?**

♠AQ5  
♥KQT763  
♦AQT  
♣K

The hand has 4 losers and a good-looking heart suit. Do you open it with your favourite near-game-force bid and then show hearts, possibly with a jump rebid, or do you do anything else?

And here's an opening lead question to think about – if the opponents bid to 6S, with RHO showing long spades including 2 keycards plus the queen and LHO showing nothing specific, **what would you lead on this hand?**

♠A4  
♥QJ97543  
♦Q9  
♣74


On that first hand, if you did show a strong hand with hearts, it's just possible you will shut partner out of bidding his diamonds, and miss an odds-on slam. However, as it turns out, 6D is not cold if played by South, provided West leads a spade.

Board 13	♠AQ5	
Dealer N	♥KQT763	
Vul Both	♦AQT	
	♣K	
♠T7		♠K8432
♥984		♥J52
♦9864		♦
♣AJ54		♣T9762
	♠J96	
	♥A	
	♦KJ7532	
	♣Q83	

Does that mean you're better off playing in 4H after all? It ain't necessarily so, because it depends on whether the contract is being played by North or South – yes, South can end up playing it if North starts with a multi-2D. Then a spade lead really makes things interesting, because when South cashes the ♥A and attempts to get to dummy with a diamond, the "fun" starts. What would be neat would be to commence the bidding with 2D and then have North playing a 6D contract – that's unbeatable. Or else not worry about trumps at all – 6NT by either hand is also cold.


Not surprisingly, the range of scores on this board was quite something, from 6D and 6NT making (8 times and 2 times respectively, once with an overtrick in each contract) to 4H going 2 off. And double-digit swings of up to 17 IMPs were everywhere.

A lot of the rest of the slam action for the day was compressed into the second match after lunch. The set began with Board 9. Do you really want to be in slam on this hand?

Board 9	♠AJT86	
Dealer N	♥KQ9	
Vul E-W	♦732	
	♣AJ	
♠Q42		♠753
♥54		♥8632
♦AJT		♦95
♣T7542		♣Q983
	♠K9	
	♥AJT7	
	♦KQ864	
	♣K6	


A flat 15 hcp opposite a relatively flat 16 hcp doesn't usually bode well for 6NT, but perhaps the 8-card fit will play better? Oh no. In fact 6D is the only slam that has no chance at all, because West is sitting over the KQ with AJ10. Five NS pairs went down in this contract. Deep Finesse suggests that slam is makeable in hearts, spades or notrump, but of course no one played in a 7-card major suit fit. However, 10 pairs made 6NT (including our opponents!) while 11 made 12 tricks in 3NT. Another 6 went down in 6NT because they weren't successful in finessing the ♠Q. Lots more double-digit swings ...

And they kept coming. Six boards later, this hand was an opportunity for EW.

Board 15	♠9	
Dealer S	♥K852	
Vul N-S	♦KT763	
	♣T75	
♠AKT543		♠Q862
♥QJ976		♥A3
♦8		♦AJ94
♣Q		♣K62
	♠J7	
	♥T4	
	♦Q52	
	♣AJ9843	

Points, schmoints ... 18 pairs bid and made slam, 4 with an overtrick. Actually reaching the contract depends a lot on your methods and how West evaluates his/her hand. Would you get there? We didn't! Another 10 IMPs out ...

On the very next board, along came another challenge. Depending on methods, North could open this 1S, 4S or with some near-game-force bid.

Board 16	♠KQJ9763	
Dealer W	♥A	
Vul E-W	♦J5	
	♣T52	
♠T85		♠A4
♥T8		♥QJ97543
♦T74		♦Q9
♣KJ986		♣74
	♠2	
	♥K62	
	♦AK8632	
	♣AQ3	

If the hand was regarded as too strong for a 4S opening, North could fudge a multi-2D that showed 8 playing tricks in a major (although s/he really has only 7 playing tricks) and that would have the slam played by South, whose initial response would probably be 2S correctable. North would raise this to 3S and then South, with only 4 losers outside spades, ought to make a move. This sequence would have West on lead, which matters, as it makes the slam absolutely cold. On the other hand, things could get awkward if NS reach slam and North is the declarer, because then it all depends on the lead. Did you choose to lead a club on this hand?

Only 3 pairs bid and made 6S, while 4 pairs went off in either 6S or 6NT. Nineteen played in game, making 11 or 12 tricks and often swinging lots of IMPs relative to team-mates who reached for slam ...