

Canberra in Bloom 2016

Thoroughly wild at Thoroughbred Park

by RAKESH KUMAR



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

What did one little horseracing track say to another? “When I grow up, I want to be a venue for a bridge tournament!”

Well, maybe not, but with the Sydney Spring Nationals first at the Australian Jockey Club in Randwick, then at Canterbury Racecourse, and now the Canberra in Bloom Festival at Thoroughbred Park in Lyneham, it could almost be true.

The Festival comprised Matchpoint Swiss Pairs, Swiss Teams and Swiss Pairs events, each with an Open and a Restricted/ Novice Section. There was a strong turnout for the Saturday-Monday events (36 Open Teams, 10 Restricted/ Novice; 68 Open Swiss Pairs, 28 Restricted/ Novice).

Perhaps the distinguishing feature of the Festival was the sheer number of wildly distributional hands. Indeed, hands with 6511 distribution were almost mundane, given the number of 6610 and 7510 hands that the dealing software emitted!

Here’s an example from the second match of the Teams: East held a 6-6 in the majors, North held a 6-5 in the minors. The bidding wasn’t about stop any time soon, so a considerable number of East-West pairs finished in the spade game or higher, often doubled. Of these, 6 incurred a -500 score, 9 went for -300, while another 14 escaped with lesser numbers. Only 4 took the money by doubling 5 of a minor.

Board 18

Dealer E | Vul N-S

<p>♠ 96 ♥ 62 ♦ 5432 ♣ KQ764</p>	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td> </td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		<p>♠ KQT532 ♥ AKT754 ♦ 9 ♣</p>
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	<p>♠ AJ874 ♥ Q93 ♦ JT7 ♣ A2</p>										

11
5 12
12

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	3	3	–	–	2
S	3	3	–	–	2
E	–	–	2	2	–
W	–	–	2	2	–



This hand from the third match of the Teams illustrated an interesting point in the play of 4♥, which was bid by most of the field. After losing the first 2 tricks to the ♠AK and then successfully dropping the outstanding hearts, the challenge is not to lose 2 spade tricks as well. What's required is to ruff out the diamonds and lead a spade from dummy, ducking it to South if North follows low. Given the actual holding, North is unlikely to rise with the ♠10, so South will be endplayed to either return a spade into the ace-queen or give a ruff-and-slough. Across the field, 12 made the game and another 6 made 10 tricks in 3♥, while 10 went down.

Board 21

Dealer N | Vul N-S

♠ T432
♥ K
♦ Q983
♣ Q986

♠ 876
♥ T98763
♦ 2
♣ JT4

♠ AQ5
♥ AQJ52
♦ AT7
♣ 73

♠ KJ9
♥ 4
♦ KJ654
♣ AK52

7
1 17
15

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

Here are a couple of bidding challenges for you. On both occasions, you are sitting West, vulnerable against not. Firstly, after 1♠ by North, a 2♦ overcall by partner, a bid of 2♠ as a stopper ask by you and 3♦ from partner, what will you do now?

♠ 743
♥ AQJ3
♦ 75
♣ AKJ5

You	N	E	S
	1S	2D	P
2S	P	3D	P
?			

Secondly, after a multi-2♦ opening by South, 2♥ correctable by North and 2 passes to you, what will you do?

♠ A843
♥ A6
♦ J932
♣ AJ3

You	N	E	S
			2D!
P	2H	P	P
?			

The first hand is from the Teams: we finished in 5♦, which has no hope. However, if West bids 3♥, East might raise to 4♥, which requires skilful play and some luck. If North starts with ♠Q, overtaken by South and a spade returned, West must ruff ♠Q with ♥K and play for trumps to be 3-3. Then if North ducks the ♦A, West has to take the club finesse. Believe it or not, 5 pairs made this contract!

Board 9

Dealer N | Vul E-W

♠ AQJT82
♥ T97
♦ A8
♣ 82

♠ 743
♥ AQJ3
♦ 75
♣ AKJ5

♠ 95
♥ K42
♦ KQJT94
♣ T9

♠ K6
♥ 865
♦ 632
♣ Q7643

11
15 9
5

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

The second hand is from the first match of the Swiss Pairs. It's often said that one should not open a weak 2 in a major with 4 cards in the other major, even if all the strength is concentrated in the 6-card suit. However, with 6-4 in the majors and all the strength in the *short* suit, partner decided to completely ignore this recommendation.

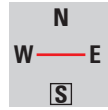
Board 3

Dealer S | Vul E-W

12
14 6
8

♠ A843
♥ A6
♦ J932
♣ AJ3

♠ 5
♥ KQ4
♦ AK765
♣ 9542



♠ KQJT
♥ T98732
♦ Q4
♣ T

♠ 9762
♥ J5
♦ T8
♣ KQ876

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

I fully expected my correctable bid of 2♥ to be converted to 2♠, which I intended to pass. But partner passed, showing a 6-card heart suit. Unsurprisingly, West doubled for takeout, so I promptly rebid 4♥, which bought the contract and happens to be cold. Did you double too? Oh dear, that's -6 IMPs ...

Here's an interesting hand from Match 7 of the Teams, with a focus on defence. North-South routinely reach 4♠ (possibly after a 1♥ opening by West, if South initially passes) which Deep Finesse makes every time via the double hook in clubs. However, in the real world it's much more difficult for South. After ruffing the second heart, low to the ♠Q reveals the 4-0 break and now South has to use the club entries to be able to lead spades 3 times from the table to draw trumps. Meanwhile, West has to discard 2 hearts, a club and a diamond. When South now exits with a club, West is endplayed if she has kept ♥Q – but if she jettisons that card, she can exit with a heart to East's remaining JT and the contract goes down! In real life, 18 made 10 tricks or more and 8 collected useful scores by penalising the opponents in hearts, while only 6 were defeated.

Board 31

Dealer S | Vul N-S

16
13 2
9

♠ AKQ84
♥ AKQ84
♦ Q865
♣ QT43

♠ Q753
♥ 653
♦ AK9
♣ AK9



♠ AK964
♥ 9
♦ J73
♣ J862

♠ JT82
♥ JT72
♦ T42
♣ 75

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	4	2	-	5	2
S	4	2	-	5	2
E	-	-	1	-	-
W	-	-	1	-	-

A beautiful rainbow over the racecourse gave a nice touch to the award giving ceremony.



To finish the story of the thoroughly wild hands, here's another 6-6 in the majors, from Match 5 of the Swiss Pairs. This has only 3 losers, so are you going to open 2♣ or your other strongest bid with the East hand? If so, once you show your spade suit, partner is going to propel you into 6♠, which happened at 16 tables.

Board 5

Dealer N | Vul N-S

<p>♠ Q93 ♥ Q95 ♦ J3 ♣ AKJ98</p>		<p>♠ KT ♥ T432 ♦ 975 ♣ QT64</p> <p>♠ 82 ♥ KJ876 ♦ A4 ♣ 7532</p>	<p>♠ AJ7654 ♥ A ♦ KQT862 ♣</p>
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5
13 14
8

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	3	6	1	6	5
W	3	6	1	6	5

If South finds a heart lead, as occurred 5 times, this is going to be a somewhat scary experience, because most of partner's "riches" are neither useful nor accessible. There's little choice but to lead towards the ♦J, in the hope of being able to take the spade finesse. The lead of the ♦A (5 times) or of a low spade (5 times) solves the problem. Whew! 🙄