

# Battle of the Sexes

Bid boldly, play carefully...

by RAKESH KUMAR



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

**B**ack in 2005, the late Les Lowe summarised his approach to IMP events for me: “*bid tight games, then play the cards carefully*”. The value of that advice is enduring, as is my inability to put it into practice ...

There was no shortage of practitioners of the art of making tight games during the Same Sex Teams event, played over 3 consecutive Thursday nights at North Shore Bridge Club in February. The 21 teams played as a single field but there were separate prizes for the top Women’s and Men’s teams, who were respectively ICHILCIK (Lorna Ichilcik - Lynn Kalmin, Giselle Mundell - Avril Zets) and JOHANSSON (Axel Johannsson - Arthur Ramer, Peter Jeffery - Julian Abel), with the ICHILCIK team finishing first overall.

Here are a couple of bidding judgement questions for you. Firstly, after RHO opens 1NT showing 15-17 hcp, would you overcall with this hand when vulnerable against not?

♠ T75  
♥ AJ98753  
♦ 54  
♣ 5

Secondly, on this hand, you open 1♦, partner responds 1♥ (surprise!) and you rebid 1♠. Partner now bids 1NT. What are you going to do?

♠ AK65  
♥  
♦ K9876  
♣ AJ94

Bidding with the first hand was not as crazy or suicidal as I might have thought. At our table, Margaret Klassen showed her hearts and Linda Aubusson promptly put her in 4♥. I led a low spade.

## Board 18

Dealer E | Vul N-S

♠ A  
♥ 642  
♦ AQJT2  
♣ KJT7

♠ K832  
♥  
♦ 9876  
♣ Q8632



♠ QJ964  
♥ KQT  
♦ K3  
♣ A94

W	N	E	S
		1NT	2H
P	4H		

♠ T75  
♥ AJ98753  
♦ 54  
♣ 5

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

15  
5  15  
5

Of course, depending on system, East may not open 1NT, but in any case the challenge is now to make the contract. Put yourself in Margaret's position as declarer. Having perforce taken the first trick in dummy with ♠A, you lead a heart. East plays ♥Q, you win with ♥A and West shows out. You can't ruff 2 spades in dummy because you must lead hearts through East again, and in any case you never had the entries for this, so you *will* lose a spade. Therefore you have to find a way of getting rid of your virtually certain diamond loser.

Timing is everything. You ruff a spade and play a heart towards hand. East rises with ♥K and exits with his last heart to stop any further ruffs. Now you play a club to the 10, praying hard, and East wins the ♠A. He cashes a spade but you ruff the next one, cross to the ♦A and discard your other small diamond on the ♣K. Whew!

Of the 21 tables, 7 North-South pairs made 10 tricks in hearts, but only 4 were in game. Another 6 played in 4♠, which as it turned out was a relatively cheap save.

Bidding to 3NT on this next hand certainly didn't feel like bidding a tight game, because North-South have 28 hcp between them. But after 1♣ (by South)-1♥-1♠-1NT-3NT, a diamond lead from East is more or less inevitable, which makes things look very fragile indeed.

**North – South**

♠ K64
♥ AQ976
♦ 96
♣ 964

♠ AJ93
♥ K2
♦ A7
♣ AQJ87

W	N	E	S
			1C
P	1H	P	1S
P	1NT	P	3NT

Sticking with the notion of playing the cards carefully, what are you going to do? You have 7 top tricks. If the ♣K is with East it will all be easy, but if not, you will go down, possibly more than one. Is there any alternative?

Of course there is – hearts might be 3-3 or the ♥J10 might drop doubleton. That way you would have 5 heart tricks, 2 top spade tricks and 2 aces, so clearly it's worth testing. And there will be a re-entry to hand with the ♠K if the hearts don't break, so that you can take the club finesse twice if it succeeds.

Hearts *were* 3-3, so most declarers then proceeded to cash their 9 tricks, discovering that virtue was its own reward. The ♣K came down singleton and the ♠Q came down doubleton, which meant 12 tricks became automatic. And if the ♣A was cashed before the spades, declarer could come back to hand to take the marked finesse against the ♣10! In fact 14 pairs made overtricks in 3NT. However, 2 went down, while 3 played in a contract in clubs, making game twice but (unsurprisingly) going down after having bid to slam.

**Board 13**  
Dealer N | Vul All

♠ K64
♥ AQ976
♦ 96
♣ 964

♠ T872
♥ JT4
♦ QJT42
♣ K

♠ Q5
♥ 853
♦ K853
♣ T532

♠ AJ93
♥ K2
♦ A7
♣ AQJ87

9  
7   5  
19

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	7	1	7	6	7
S	7	1	7	6	7
E	–	–	–	–	–
W	–	–	–	–	–



Back to the second question at the start of this article. It's probably a good idea to bid out your pattern and rebid 2♣ after partner's 1NT, which makes it clear that your shape is most likely 4-0-5-4. Partner raises you to 3♣. Now what?

Lorna Ichilcik jumped straight to 5♣, the only person to reach that contract. It turned out to be unbeatable: on a trump lead (hardly likely given East's holding) the diamonds can be set up, while otherwise, the hand makes on a cross-ruff.

**Board 25**

Dealer N | Vul E-W

♠ 742  
♥ K984  
♦ J32  
♣ Q32

15  
6  9  
10

♠ AK65  
♥  
♦ K9876  
♣ AJ94

N
W — E
S

♠ J983  
♥ JT65  
♦ AT5  
♣ K5

♠ QT  
♥ AQ732  
♦ Q4  
♣ T876

W	N	E	S
	1D	P	1H
P	1S	P	1NT
P	2C	P	3C
P	5C		

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	5	4	2	2	2
S	5	4	2	3	2
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

The 10 IMP swing on the board was a significant part of the winning margin for the ICHILCIK team in the final round. Three North-South pairs played in club partscores, one in a diamond partscore, while 5 pairs were allowed to make 3NT and another 5 went down. 🍀