

Central Coast Congress 2019

Featuring the high-flying bunnies...

by RAKESH KUMAR



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

It's exactly 6 years since I started writing columns for eCongress news and this is number 70! If you go to the archive [here](#) you'll find that the very first one was about the Central Coast Congress in 2013 ...

This year's Congress was held over the weekend of 6 and 7 April. As ever, it was well organised and generously catered for by the numerous local volunteers. A particularly noteworthy feature this year was the strong turnout of players in the Novice and Restricted sections – for the first time, the Swiss Pairs had more Novice+Restricted entries than did the Open.

It proved to be an excellent bridge weekend for Tony Burke and Nigel Rosendorff. First they won the Open Swiss Pairs on the Saturday, then pulled off the double on the Sunday when they combined with George Fleischer and Mathew Vadas to win the Open Teams!

Of course, all the rest of us had fun too. That certainly included my team (Mick McAuliffe – Wing Roberts, Jenny Michael – Rakesh Kumar) which started the Open event with no more ambitious goal than to try to finish in the top half. However, things went rather better than we expected in the morning, so that after 3 of 7 rounds we were somehow running second.

A few years ago, Michael Wilkinson introduced me to the term "high-flying bunnies". This rather uncharitable designation refers to a team of relatively inexperienced players, who don't necessarily know what they're doing but have somehow risen high in the early rounds of a Swiss Teams event – the expectation being that they are about to come crashing down when they encounter "real" bridge players. Michael explained it as he described the team in which I was playing at the time ...

It occurred to me over lunch that once again, the label was probably apt, but this particular collection of rabbits recovered after their crash and eventually finished quite respectably!

Here's a bidding problem for you. You are vulnerable and the opponents are not. After partner passes as dealer, RHO opens 1♦. Do you bid 2♦ or something similar to show both majors?

- ♠ AKT76
- ♥ AK952
- ♦ T96
- ♣

Let's say you play Michaels cue bids as either weak or strong, not intermediate, and judge this hand to be strong so you bid 2♦, planning to raise partner's preference to game. LHO bids 3♣, partner chimes in with 3♥, but RHO jumps to 5♦. What will you do now?

We had plenty of other bidding problems through the day. This one arose in the very first match. How would you and your partner bid the East-West hands?

Board 5

Dealer N | Vul N-s

♠ 9863
♥ Q8
♦ K6
♣ J8753

♠ AJT4
♥ 53
♦ 5
♣ AKQT92

♠ K752
♥ J9764
♦ 943
♣ 4

♠ Q
♥ AKT2
♦ AQJT872
♣ 6

W	N	YOU	S
	P	1D	P
2C	P	2H	P
2S	P	3D	P
4C	P	?	

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	6	7	4	4	7
W	6	7	4	4	7

At our table I opened 1♦ as East and partner responded 2♣. My rebid of 2♥ by agreement showed shape and 14+ hcp. Partner now bid 2♠, fourth suit forcing to game, but lacking a spade stopper I rebid 3♦. With a potential misfit, things now got a bit complicated. Partner showed slam interest by bidding 4♣, which we play as minorwood (i.e. Roman Keycard Blackwood in clubs) but I didn't feel good about simply responding to show my 2 aces, as I had no support for clubs and an exceptionally strong diamond suit of my own.

How would you resolve this? Maybe I should just have jumped to 6♦, but I bid a wimpy 5♦ and easily made 13 tricks, which turned out to be a flat board ... in the Open field, 13 of 33 reached a slam, 9 in diamonds and 4 in notrump.

One of the more exciting hands of the day turned up just before lunch, when vigorous competition saw the auction at our table go 1♠ – 2♠ (Michaels cue bid) – 4♠ – 5♥ – 5♠ – all pass. Unfortunately for North-South, this contract was doomed.

Board 23

Dealer S | Vul All

♠ 8432
♥ A7
♦ A42
♣ Q972

♠ JT654
♥ 65
♣ AKJT63

♠ AQT765
♥ K2
♦ QJT
♣ 84

♠ KT9
♥ Q983
♦ K9873
♣ 5

W	N	E	S
			1S
2S	4S	5H	5S
//			

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

Only 17 of 33 pairs were allowed to play unmolested in 4♠, the scores at the remaining tables ranging from +850 to -200.

*Bunnies?
Mick McAuliffe and Wing Roberts with
Jenny Michael and Rakesh Kumar – the team
finished fifth.*



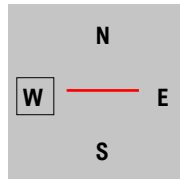
Late in the afternoon, there was another Michaels cue bid auction, featuring the hand presented earlier:

Board 32

Dealer W | Vul E-W

♠ Q3
♥ 84
♦ AKJ7532
♣ A8

♠ 542
♥ QT76
♦ 8
♣ QJ972



♠ J98
♥ J3
♦ Q4
♣ KT6543

♠ AKT76
♥ AK952
♦ T96
♣

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

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

Doubling North's 5♦ bid seemed likely to yield no more than +300 even if both ace-kings were cashing, so I decided to try for +650 and bid 5♥. My reasoning was that as both opponents obviously had plenty of high card points, partner must have at least four hearts to the queen to have bid at all. In addition she might well have a singleton diamond, or something useful outside such as the queen of spades.

Partner played the hand with great care, ruffing the opening lead of ♣A, then ducking a diamond to ruff 2 more in hand and later ducking a spade to South. With hearts 2-2 and spades 3-2, she finished with 11 tricks and a huge sigh of relief! There was an amazing range of scores across the field on this board, from +180 for North-South (in 1NT by North, with a fourth-highest spade led) to +990 for East-West (in 4♠X by East, somehow making an overtrick). 🟩