

IBA Chris Diment Memorial Congress

When you're on a roll, good things happen

by RAKESH KUMAR



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

In 2019 the Illawarra Bridge Association held its major annual tournament, the Chris Diment Memorial Congress, over the weekend of 22nd and 23rd June. Once again, the Figtree Community Hall was full on both days, with enthusiastic visitors from Sydney, Canberra and the Southern Highlands joining a large number of keen local players. The atmosphere was friendly and of course, being a regional congress, the food was wonderful!

On Saturday, the 32-table Pairs was won by Jenna Gibbons – Julian Foster, with Les Grewcock – Rakesh Kumar in second place and Ross Stuart – Chris Sundstrom third. There were some really interesting bidding problems in the afternoon session. Let me show you a couple.

Firstly, both vulnerable, what will you bid as dealer with this almost all-black hand?

♠ QT98532
♥
♦ 3
♣ KQ942

Secondly, vulnerable against not, partner deals and opens 1♣, showing 2+ cards. RHO overcalls 1♠. You double to show 4 hearts and LHO now jumps to 4♠. Partner and RHO pass. What will you bid?

♠
♥ K762
♦ AQ2
♣ KJT942

W	N	E	S
1C	1S	X	4S
P	P	?	

The first hand in principle has just 4 losers, but that assumes a useful fit. With only 7 high card points and a 7-card suit, it could perhaps be regarded as just an ordinary pre-empt, the weakness of the suit being made up for by the excellent distribution, thus justifying a bid of 3♠ vulnerable. Or one could argue that there is no problem with rebidding (and rebidding, and rebidding) so why not upgrade (more than just a bit) and open 1♠?

A slightly crazy friend of mine suggested opening 2♣ (well, maybe he's more than slightly crazy!) but I'm definitely not persuaded by that approach. However, I do agree that 3♠ is an underbid on this hand, so I'd recommend opening 4♠ in an attempt to convey the playing strength. Of course this would normally promise a 6-loser hand with a suit that had at least 2 of the top 3 honours, but life is as usual imperfect ...

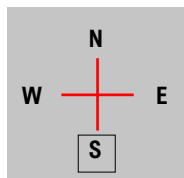
Partner turns out to have a rock-crusher of a hand: the challenge is to reach 6♠, because there appear to be 2 potential heart losers and a 4NT inquiry reveals that opener has zero keycards. Then again, if you open 4♠, partner surely knows your playing strength has to be based on something other than top spades!

Board 23

Dealer S | Vul All

♠ AKJ4
♥ 92
♦ AQ52
♣ A63

♠ 76
♥ JT653
♦ K984
♣ 85



♠ QT98532
♥
♦ 3
♣ KQ942

♠ AKQ874
♥ JT76
♣ JT7

W	N	E	S
			?

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	7	-	-	7	1
S	6	-	-	7	1
E	-	-	3	-	-
W	-	-	3	-	-

It was clearly a difficult hand to bid, because relatively few pairs reached the slam: only one in the Final, two in the Plate and another 3 across the two Consolation sections. We weren't among those who got there.

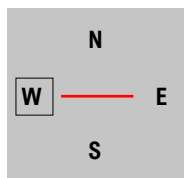
For the second hand, I was West and started proceedings with 1♣. Yes, it's quite a minimal opening, but our partnership agreement is that with 11-13 balanced, one must have "8 losers or better, with at least 2 quick tricks" and this has a mere 7 losers, so what's the problem?

Board 16

Dealer W | Vul E-W

♠ AQT95
♥ J4
♦ JT98
♣ A3

♠ 763
♥ AQT9
♦ K5
♣ Q875



♠ KJ842
♥ 853
♦ 7643
♣ 6

♠ K762
♥ AQ2
♣ KJT942

W	N	E	S
1C	1S	X	4S
P	P	6C	//

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	1	-	2	-
S	-	1	-	2	-
E	6	-	5	-	1
W	6	-	5	-	1

When 4♠ came back around to Les Grewcock, he correctly inferred that I must have some sort of real club suit plus values in hearts, so he bid 6♣! The slam proved to be absolutely cold. We were the only pair to reach this contract across all 4 fields.

On Sunday there were again 32 tables, now playing the 6 x 9-board Teams. This was won very comfortably by WILLCOX (Martin Willcox - Vicky Lisle - Ian Lisle - Kae French) with PHILLIPS (Patricia Phillips - Eric Lindh - Michael Kefford - Margaret Kefford) coming in second, just ahead of HUTCHINS (Geoff Hutchins - Helen Little - Morag Lokan - Chris Lokan) in third place.

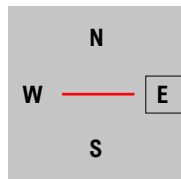
Winning at Teams mostly involves bidding to every possible game, not giving away contracts in defence, and generally making as few errors as possible. But as Martin Willcox said to me, when you're on a roll, good things just seem to happen! He told me the story of one particularly fortunate hand that he played in the fourth match of the day:

Board 6

Dealer E | Vul E-W

♠ K85
♥ AKJ43
♦ JT7
♣ 42

♠ T42
♥ 8765
♦
♣ AKQ876



♠ 73
♥ T92
♦ AK86432
♣ T

♠ AQJ96
♥ Q
♦ Q95
♣ J953

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

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	4	1	-	-
S	-	4	1	-	-
E	6	-	-	6	-
W	6	-	-	6	-

Martin's partner Vicky Lisle sacrificed in 5♦ after the opponents bid to 4♠. He received the lead of ♣K, followed by another top club, ruffed. When he now played a small heart to the ace, the ♥Q dropped. He successfully took the diamond finesse, drew trumps and eventually returned to dummy with a heart to discard both his spades – making 12 tricks! His teammates made 4♠ at the other table, for a gain of 14 IMPs. In fact with only 21 high card points between them, East-West are cold for 12 tricks in spades.

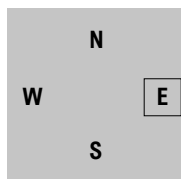
Another example of things turning out favourably for the WILLCOX team was this hand from round 5. Their opposition bid to 6♣:

Board 14

Dealer E | Vul None

♠ KQ
♥ AKQ5
♦ A
♣ JT9432

♠ 765
♥ T98742
♦ J64
♣ 6



♠ AT4
♥ J6
♦ KQ975
♣ K87

♠ J9832
♥ 3
♦ T832
♣ AQ5

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	6	4	4	2	6
S	6	4	4	2	6
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

Making the slam requires a favourable lie of the trump suit, which as it happens is present. However, 4 of the 8 pairs in this contract, including their North-South opponents, were unsuccessful. Thus 11 tricks in the stolid 3NT played by Martin and Vicky proved to be worth another 11 IMPs.

Which is not to suggest that the top-placed teams were just lucky – they played sound and often creative bridge. If only we could all do that!! 📈