

# Blue Mountains Bendigo Bank Online Congress

Perfection not required

by RAKESH KUMAR



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

The first of the scheduled NSW club congresses to be replaced by an online event, the [Blue Mountains Congress](#) was held as a one-day Swiss Pairs IMPs tournament on BBO and was a great success.

The format was 6 rounds of 8 boards, Danish style meaning that one could play the same opponents more than once – we did! There were 54 pairs in the Open section, which was won by Liz Sylvester & Peter Gill, who took the lead after the first round and never relinquished it. With 5 wins and one draw, they were indeed worthy winners, finishing with a margin of over 25 IMPs to the runners-up, Mathew Vadas & George Fleischer. They made their way into second place after round three and held on, although Kay & Pat O'Connor finished very strongly and were just 4 IMPs behind in third place at the conclusion of proceedings.

Through the day, there were many swing deals. I thought it would be interesting to see what the top 3 pairs did on a selection of 4 such boards from the event, where I had thought the outcomes were also interesting at our table. Did the top finishers manage to play immaculate bridge on these tricky boards?

This first sample is from round 1 and is a fine illustration both of the benefits of opening 1NT with a 5-card major and of the "who needs stoppers?" theory of bidding notrump games at IMPs.

## Board 8

Dealer W | Vul None

<p>♠ T73 ♥ K87 ♦ K852 ♣ AT6</p>	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		<p>♠ A952 ♥ 2 ♦ T973 ♣ J832</p> <p>♠ 86 ♥ AQT96 ♦ AJ6 ♣ KQ7</p> <p>♠ KQJ4 ♥ J543 ♦ Q4 ♣ 954</p>
	N										
W		E									
	S										

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

Sylvester-Gill bid 1NT-3NT and duly made it, because after 4 rounds of spades, the defender on lead switched to a heart and declarer raked in 6.7 IMPs. Exactly the same thing occurred at our table. Vadas-Fleischer had a much more interesting auction – after East opened 1♥, Fleischer as South overcalled 1♠. West bid 2♠ as a good heart raise and Vadas leapt to 4♠! This was passed out, so although declarer made only half the number of tricks needed, North-South only lost 3.3 IMPs. O'Connor-O'Connor were also North-South on this deal and defeated the opponents' 4♥ contract for a gain of 3.7 IMPs – while the contract is makeable in theory, in practice only 2 of 13 declarers were successful.

Then came this deal from round 2.

**Board 10**

Dealer E | Vul Both

<p>♠ QT52 ♥ Q743 ♦ A5 ♣ JT2</p>		<p>♠ 3 ♥ AJT982 ♦ JT6 ♣ KQ6</p>
<p>♠ AJ6 ♥ K5 ♦ 97432 ♣ A73</p>		<p>♠ K9874 ♥ 6 ♦ KQ8 ♣ 9854</p>

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

Against Sylvester-Gill, East opened 1♥, Gill overcalled 1S and West bid only 2♥. Sylvester made a game-invitational raise by bidding 3♥, which South converted to 3♠, passed out. Although this was down 2, the result was worth 1.6 IMPs to Sylvester-Gill. For Vadas-Fleischer, after the same start Fleischer bid 2NT as a limit raise, so now 4♥ was reached. A diamond was led, the heart finesse taken successfully at trick 2 and 10 tricks claimed for 7.1 IMPs in. Against the O'Connors, West bid 3♣ promising 4-card support and North bid 3♥ as a good raise. South of course signed off in 3♠ – and somehow made it. I think West has a hand worthy of a limit-raise-or-better bid: we also reached 4♥.

In the afternoon, this next board was fascinating. Although 3NT by West is makeable, only one declarer played this contract – and he made it. That was Tomer Libman, against Sylvester-Gill, for a gain of 9.2 IMPs. This board was in effect the reason that Sylvester-Gill had a draw in their fourth match. Vadas-Fleischer played in a modest 2♦ going down one for a gain of 0.4 IMPs. Elsewhere scores for North-South ranged from -800 in 3♦x at our table, to +300 for a failing 4♠ by West – which is what happened when the O'Connors were North-South, gaining them 8.9 IMPs.

**Board 29**

Dealer N | Vul Both

<p>♠ AKJ3 ♥ K52 ♦ KQ32 ♣ K4</p>		<p>♠ 972 ♥ A874 ♦ 9 ♣ J9753</p>
<p>♠ 8654 ♥ QJT ♦ JT8654 ♣</p>		<p>♠ QT ♥ 963 ♦ A7 ♣ AQT862</p>

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

Finally, in the last round there was this intriguing board, which began as a bidding tussle. Against Sylvester-Gill, East started with 1♦, West responded 1♥ and Sylvester overcalled 1♠. East passed and West reopened with a double. East-West then lost their way and stopped in 4♣ making 12 tricks, so they lost 0.5 IMPs. Vadas-Fleischer had much more excitement. After exactly the same start, East (who clearly subscribed to the "who needs stoppers?" theory) decided to rebid 1NT in response to the double, thereafter being duly

deposited in 3NT. Now it was the turn of Vadas-Fleischer to lose their way, perhaps being convinced that declarer really had a stopper – so instead of cashing 5 spade tricks, they allowed the contract to make, which cost them 7.5 IMPs. Meanwhile the O'Connors defended a 3♥ contract in a 4-2 fit, for a 5 IMP gain.

**Board 46**

Dealer E | Vul None

♠ AKQ95			
♥ 95			
♦ 6432			
♣ QT			
♠ T	N	♠ 7432	
♥ KQJ7	W	♥ A8	E
♦ J98	S	♦ AKQT	
♣ AK763		♣ J54	
♠ J86			
♥ T6432			
♦ 75			
♣ 982			

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	6	6	3	1	2
W	6	6	3	1	2

At our table, partner opened a 14-17 hcp 1NT and when I bid 2♣ simple Stayman, our North overcalled 2♠. When this came back to me, I forced with 3♠ and partner had little choice but to bid 4♦, which I raised to game. She duly made 12 tricks.

So did the top finishers play immaculate bridge? No ... I think the moral of this story might be that winning at Swiss Pairs is at least as much about inducing errors by the opponents and taking full advantage of them, as it is about getting to the best contract or finding the best defence. It's reassuring to know that perfection is *not* required. 🟩