

Trumps Summer Teams 2021

Good things in small packages

by RAKESH KUMAR



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

In the last week of February, I drove in from Mittagong for my first face-to-face Congress in 12 months. What a pleasure to be able to play with real people!! However, many bridge players still appear to be reluctant to attend f2f tournaments. As a consequence, the field was just 6 teams.

Still, good things come in small packages. The event was run as a 5 x 10 board round robin and was won by BROWNE (Derrick Browne – Helen Canaris – John Newman with Neil Williams – Peter Fitzmaurice) from LIPPEY (Eric Lippey – Kerry Boytell with Alessandro Gado – Alex Kemeny). It was a genuinely enjoyable day of bridge, with many interesting deals.

I'll focus on 3 boards that involved slams. Before I show any of them to you, here's an opening lead question. Sitting West, you hold:

♠ 4
♥ 8654
♦ T6
♣ Q98765

East is the dealer, neither side is vulnerable and with East-West silent, the auction proceeds:

South	North
2♦ multi	2♥ pass or correct
2NT 24-25	3♣ puppet Stayman
3♦ at least one 4cM	3♥ spades
4♠ to play	4NT RKCB
5♦ 0 or 3	5♥ queen ask
6♣ trump Q + *K	6♠

What are you going to lead?

Derrick Browne was pleased to see players enjoying face to face bridge in the Trumps Bridge Centre clubroom.



The first match of the morning featured the following deal, in which bidding slam was more than a little challenging. My partner Steven Bock opened 1 ♠ as South, West overcalled 2 ♣ and I bid 2 ♦. Now South rebid 3 ♥. Because I had denied 4 hearts (no negative double) and because we play that 16+ hcp hands with 4 losers or better will open 2 ♣, this implied a 14-15 hcp hand with 5+/5+ shape. I had no hesitation in raising to 4 ♥.

Now partner had an interesting problem. His is notionally a 4-loser hand and he is in effect playing with a 30-point deck. But slam needs me to have at least one top honour in hearts. Just how good is my heart support?

Steven solved this by bidding 5 ♥. Usually, this type of raise asks partner to bid 6 if holding 2 of the 3 top honours, but in the context of the auction that made no sense, so with 3 keycards for partner, I continued to 6 ♥, which proved to be unbeatable. We were the only pair in the slam.

Board 10

Dealer E | Vul All

♠ Q96 ♥ 84 ♦ QJ5 ♣ KQJ85		♠ 42 ♥ A73 ♦ 974 ♣ T7643
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♠ AKJ853 ♥ QJT65 ♦ K3 ♣	♠ T7 ♥ K92 ♦ AT862 ♣ A92
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	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	4	6	5	2
S	-	4	6	5	2
E	1	-	-	-	-
W	1	-	-	-	-

Early in the afternoon, our teammates reached 6 ♣ by East on this deal:

Board 6

Dealer E | Vul E-W

♠ AKJT952 ♥ ♦ 754 ♣ AKJ		♠ AQJ42 ♥ ♦ AK3 ♣ Q8762
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♠ 763 ♥ K98653 ♦ JT9 ♣ 9	♠ Q84 ♥ T7 ♦ Q862 ♣ T543
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	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	7	4	4	6	6
W	7	4	3	6	5

How would you play it on the lead of ♦ J? Julian Abel found a very sound line: he won the opening lead in hand, played a small club to dummy and led ♠ J, intending to discard a diamond loser if North did not cover. However, North did cover, so Julian ruffed and led another club to table, discovering the bad break in the trump suit. Still, it mattered not – he was now in full control of the hand and led spades from dummy until North ruffed. Then he over-ruffed, drew the last trump and claimed.

Two other East-West pairs were successful in slam on this board, one each in 6 ♣ and 6NT. The other 3 pairs played in 4 ♠, making 12 tricks every time.

Which brings us to the opening lead problem. Did you lead a heart? Anything else gives the slam away ...

On a heart lead, East takes the ace and sees South drop ♥ K. "Aha!" says East, "Another one of those off-shape 2NT openings/rebids with a singleton top honour!" And now?

Board 14
Dealer E | Vul None

♠ 7652
♥ JT3
♦ A7432
♣ 4

♠ 4
♥ 8654
♦ T6
♣ Q98765

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ T983
♥ AQ972
♦ Q8
♣ J2

♠ AKQJ
♥ K
♦ KJ95
♣ AKT3

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

East needs to play ♥Q – although declarer can ruff this and establish ♥J in dummy, that's irrelevant, because the ruff has to be with one of declarer's top trumps. Now the 4-1 spade break is fatal. A swing of 22 IMPs on the lead ... isn't bridge exciting? 🚩