

Mollymook Online Swiss Pairs

Risk vs. reward

by RAKESH KUMAR



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

Delta-induced lockdown meant the popular Mollymook Congress had to be cancelled once more, but its partial replacement – a Swiss Pairs event run on BBO – had a huge field of 102 entries. Exceeding 49 tables triggered a hitherto unrecognised "feature" of BBO. The system automatically split the event into 2 sections, but then generated cross-IMP scores across both, even though competitors did not play those in the other section! As a consequence, separate section winners were eventually declared. One section was won by Dagmar Neumann – Maurits van der Vlugt and the other by Jenna Gibbons – Julian Foster.

As ever, there were many interesting boards. The ones I have selected this time illustrate the theme of taking risks (isn't that always the way at Swiss Pairs?) and attempting to reap the rewards. These deals led to significant swings at one or the other of the winners' tables. Before I show them to you, let me present a couple as problems. Firstly, how will you play this:

♠ T742
♥
♦ AQT84
♣ K854



♠ AQJ93
♥ Q986
♦ 7
♣ J73

You open a somewhat light 1♠ in first seat, LHO overcalls 2♥ and partner jumps to 4♠. RHO doubles and LHO leads ♥K. You embark on a cross-ruff, noting that things will be easy if hearts are 5-4. Your second and third diamond ruffs bring down ♦J and ♦K from RHO. Unfortunately RHO over-ruffs your fourth heart with ♠K and returns ♠6, LHO following with ♠5. This is the position after 9 tricks:

♠
♥
♦ Q
♣ K85



♠ A
♥
♦
♣ J73

What now?

Secondly, a bidding problem. As dealer, vulnerable against not vulnerable, you hold:

♠ 62
♥ 63
♦ K
♣ AKQ97654

The auction proceeds 1♣ -P-1♥ -1♠ -2♣ -2♠ -3♥ -P to you. What will you bid?

This board from round 1 relates to the first problem.

Board 8

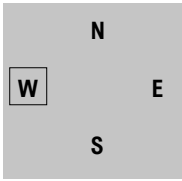
Dealer W | Vul None

♠ AQJ93
♥ Q986
♦ 7
♣ J73

♠ K6
♥ 432
♦ KJ96
♣ AT96

♠ 85
♥ AKJT75
♦ 532
♣ Q2

♠ T742
♥
♦ AQT84
♣ K854



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

What did West double on? You've seen ♦ KJ and ♠ K, but surely s/he also holds ♣ A. It makes no sense to lead a club up and rise with the king if East plays low. Instead, you need to draw the last trump and duck a club to West, who is endplayed.

I didn't find this line, so we lost 4 IMPs instead of gaining a double-digit swing. Across the field, 10 pairs made 4♠ (undoubled) but 19 went down (3 of them doubled). One of those who made the contract was George Fleischer, who took the suggested line, although his problem in clubs was solved when East rose with ♣ Q on the lead of a low club towards dummy.

Maurits van der Vlugt made it differently – after ruffing the third heart in dummy, he played ♦ Q and allowed West's king to hold as he discarded ♥ Q. At this point, unwilling to exit with a low spade, West threw in the towel by cashing ♣ A. Meanwhile, North-South at Julian Foster – Jenna Gibbons' table were among those who weren't successful. Making 4♠ was worth 8 IMPs for North-South, while one down undoubled was worth 3 IMPs to East-West.

Here's another board that created a swing at our table:

Board 13

Dealer N | Vul All

<p>♠ 87 ♥ AJT63 ♦ A743 ♣ Q2</p>		<p>♠ KQT943 ♥ 42 ♦ 5 ♣ T764</p>	<p>♠ A5 ♥ K975 ♦ KQT86 ♣ J3</p>
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♠ J62
♥ Q8
♦ J92
♣ AK985

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

Across the field, only one North – my opponent! – chose to open 3♠ vulnerable. I couldn't stretch to a takeout double over that, but if North opens 2♠ or a multi-2♦, East has an easy double and 4♥ should be reached. Despite this, several North-South pairs played in 3♠ after starting with a 2-level opening.

Jenna Gibbons duly played in 4♥ for a gain of 6 IMPs. Meanwhile Maurits van der Vlugt opened a weak 2♠ and when East at their table did not double, Dagmar Neumann chose to make a strong inquiry with 2NT. Maurits showed diamond shortage, which encouraged Dagmar, who went on to game. Of course 4♠ is a risky overbid and the contract should not make. However, East led ♣J and continued clubs when in with ♠A, so that earned them a huge 13 IMP swing.

This is the board related to the second problem.

Board 21

Dealer N | Vul N-S

<p>♠ KQ743 ♥ AJ ♦ AT9 ♣ J32</p>		<p>♠ 62 ♥ 63 ♦ K ♣ AKQ97654</p>	<p>♠ JT8 ♥ Q85 ♦ Q87532 ♣ 8</p>
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♠ A95
♥ KT9742
♦ J64
♣ T

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

Many ended up in 4♥ or 5♣, neither of which has any hope. After the auction above, why not bid 3♠, asking for a stopper? That leads to the unbeatable 3NT. Only 4 pairs found this: two via a 3♣ rebid and one via a 2♠ stopper ask when East did not raise the overcall. The fourth was Maurits and Dagmar: they had no problem getting there because Maurits opened a gambling 3NT! Making that was worth 11 IMPs for North-South.

Finally, a board that illustrates the benefits of always pre-empting to the maximum level possible:

Board 33
Dealer N | Vul None

<p>♠ 943 ♥ AQ654 ♦ AJT9 ♣ 8</p>	<p>♠ ♥ KJT73 ♦ Q84 ♣ KQJ94</p>	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></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>♠ AKQJT86 ♥ 7652 ♦ 75 ♣ 752 ♥ 982 ♦ K3 ♣ AT632</p>
N												
W		E										
	S											

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

After a 1♥ opening by North, many in the East seat chose to bid 1♠. A few bid 3♠, but given the playing strength, it's hard to see why East would bid anything less than game, especially with 7-4 shape. In fact 4♠ is cold for 11 tricks. When East does leap to 4♠, North needs to think twice about the merits of bidding again, just because s/he has a void in the opponents' suit. At Julian Foster – Jenna Gibbons' table, North backed in with 5♣, South corrected to 5♥ (why?) and West doubled (why not?) so disaster followed. East-West came away with +1100 and a swing of 12 IMPs: clearly there are times when one side takes the risk and the other gets the reward! 🍀