

NSWBA SOT Swiss Pairs

A focus on defence

by RAKESH KUMAR



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

In last month's column about the Jacaranda Teams, which doubles as the State Teams Metropolitan Final, I noted that the MORRISON team was one of those that had qualified to the State Final. All of their members had been winners of the State Teams in times past, although never all in the same team. So I wondered: "A good portent for this time around? We shall have to wait and see."

Well, we saw. On the weekend of 11-12 December, the augmented MORRISON team (Kim Morrison, David Weston, Bruce Neill, Mike Hughes, Julian Foster) started the Saturday round robin poorly with 3 consecutive losses, but then clawed their way into first place, with the LAZER team (Warren Lazer, Pauline Gumby, Nico Ranson, Matt Smith, Jamie Thompson) in second spot. These two teams therefore played the 48-board State Open Teams final on the Sunday. In a nail-biting finish, MORRISON was victorious by a margin of just 2 IMPs!!

The Country Teams final, run in parallel, was won by the OUTER METROPOLITAN 1 team (Sharon Mayo, Greg Mayo, Paul McGrath, Michael Simes). Also in parallel was a Swiss Pairs event, with 26 pairs from far and near competing on RealBridge. This was convincingly won by Wei Zhang and Catherine Zhang, who were in first place after 3 of the 6 rounds and never let go, averaging 14 VPs per 8-board match.

Here are a few boards of interest from the Swiss Pairs event, with a couple of them as problems for you – this time focusing on defence. Firstly, with the opponents vulnerable and your side not vulnerable, LHO deals and opens 1NT. Partner overcalls 2NT showing the minors and the opponents reach 4♥. Sitting South, you are (virtually) clutching your customary collection of riches and see this East dummy:

N		♠ KJT
W	—	♥ AK63
E		♦ 974
S		♣ 943
♠ 96532		
♥ 542		
♦ T63		
♣ 85		

Partner leads the ♣A, ♣K and ♣Q, as you signal a doubleton. What are you going to play on the third club? Does it really matter?

Secondly, again with the opponents vulnerable and your side not vulnerable, you pass in first seat, as do LHO and partner. RHO opens 1♠ and is raised to 2♠ by LHO. RHO now jumps to game. Sitting North, you quite reasonably lead a diamond and see this East dummy:

♠ 72
♥ A73
♦ T753
♣ K543

N	♠ 864
W — E	♥ KT84
S	♦ J8
	♣ QJ92

Partner takes ♦ A, declarer playing the queen, and returns ♠ 9 which declarer wins with the ace. Declarer cashes ♠ K as you play ♠ 7 and partner plays ♠ J. Next comes ♥ Q, which you capture with ♥ A. What now?

Wei Zhang and Catherine Zhang put their stamp on the event on this board from round 2. North usually pre-empted with 3♥, after most of the field played in 3NT, making overtricks. A couple of Norths bravely opened 4♥ and were allowed to play there, which was greatly to their advantage. At Wei and Catherine's table, the auction was very different: 3♥ - P - P - 3NT - P - 4♦ - 5♣ - 6♣! They were the only pair to reach slam, which was worth +13.6 cross-IMPs.

Board 9

Dealer N | Vul E-W

♠ 94
♥ AQJ9874
♦ Q32
♣ 6

N	♠ QJ65
W — E	♥ 2
S	♦ KJ9865
	♣ KJ

♠ A87
♥ KT5
♦ AT
♣ AQT43

♠ KT32
♥ 63
♦ 74
♣ 98752

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

Here's the board relating to the first defensive problem. I found it quite amusing because exactly this theme was just recently discussed by Liam Milne, in the December issue of the North Shore Bridge Club newsletter. To save partner from a possible endplay situation and/or from committing a grave error, all you have to do is ruff ♣ Q and play a diamond through. Of course, the contract will always go down if partner exits with a trump – but if partner leads a diamond away from ♦ KJ declarer will make! Two did.

Board 16

Dealer W | Vul E-W

♠ Q84
♥ 7
♦ KJ82
♣ AKQ62

N	♠ KJT
W — E	♥ AK63
S	♦ 974
	♣ 943

♠ A7
♥ QJT98
♦ AQ5
♣ JT7

♠ 96532
♥ 542
♦ T63
♣ 85

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

This exciting board turned up in the next match:

Board 22

Dealer E | Vul E-W

<p>♠ 2 ♥ 2 ♦ 962 ♣ AJT98762</p>	<p>♠ J864 ♥ Q43 ♦ J8754 ♣ 4</p>	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W — E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W — E	S	<p>♠ AKQ75 ♥ T876 ♦ AT3 ♣ 5</p> <p>♠ T93 ♥ AKJ95 ♦ KQ ♣ KQ3</p>
N						
W — E						
S						

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

Partner opened 1 ♠ and South overcalled 2 ♥. Vulnerable against not, I had a problem – 3 ♣ would show genuine strength, 4 ♣ would be a splinter in support of spades and I didn't have the courage to bid 5 ♣ with such a feeble-looking hand. So I thought I would pass for the moment and wait for my LHO to bid or for partner to make a re-opening double – then I would be able to introduce my clubs.

I'm still waiting. In the past I've quoted David Beauchamp as saying "What's an 8-card suit? Trumps!!" On that theory I should just have had a go and bid 5 ♣. It makes! However, only one West did this. Another, playing negative free bids and hearing a double on his right, was able to bid 2 ♣, then 3 ♣ and then get doubled in 4 ♣. We ended up defending 2 ♥ – accurately enough, taking it one down, but losing 3 IMPs instead of gaining 11 IMPs.

Here's the board related to the second defensive problem. After the first 4 tricks, what do you know as North? Firstly, partner doesn't have ♦K. Declarer played ♦Q on the first trick, but while this might be some ploy to gain an entry to dummy with the jack, it seems likely that declarer has a doubleton ♦KQ. Secondly, declarer has 6 spades as two rounds of trumps sufficed. That being so, declarer's remaining cards may be 3-2 or 2-3 in the round suits – there's not much to think about if s/he is 4-1 either way. If declarer has ♥QJ, either doubleton or with a third heart, then if partner has ♣A it is necessary to grab 2 club tricks now, else a loser or losers will be discarded on the heart suit. So you have to play a small club to partner immediately!

Board 41

Dealer N | Vul E-W

<p>♠ AKQT53 ♥ QJ6 ♦ KQ ♣ 76</p>	<p>♠ 72 ♥ A73 ♦ T753 ♣ K543</p>	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W — E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W — E	S	<p>♠ 864 ♥ KT84 ♦ J8 ♣ QJ92</p> <p>♠ J9 ♥ 952 ♦ A9642 ♣ AT8</p>
N						
W — E						
S						

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

Clearly quite a few sitting North didn't work this out, because at 7 of 13 tables, 10 tricks were made in spades ... as usual, defence is hard work. ♠