

# NSBC Australia Day Weekend Swiss Pairs

## Tradition vs. current trends

by RAKESH KUMAR



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

This IMPs event, played on RealBridge on Sunday 30 January, had a strong field of entrants. After 6 rounds of 8 boards, the very convincing winners were Peter Gill – Jane Dawson, who were the leaders from round 4 onwards and never lost a match all day. Not too far behind were Neil Ewart – Chris Quail, then barely half a VP separated third and fourth, who were respectively Tony Burke – Phil Gue and Nick Chilov – Lynleigh Evans.

Of the many interesting deals that turned up during the day, here are a couple for you to puzzle over as problems. Firstly, you hold:

♠ KJT864  
♥ A  
♦ A  
♣ AJT98

With neither side vulnerable, you open 1S as dealer and LHO overcalls 2♦. Partner raises to 2♠, RHO passes and of course you bid 4♠. However, LHO now bids 5♦ and partner doubles. What will you do?

Secondly, you are vulnerable, the opponents are not and RHO as dealer opens 1♦. You pass, LHO bids 1♠ and partner overcalls 2♣. RHO raises to 2♠, you bid 3♣ and LHO jumps to 4♠, which is passed out. Partner leads ♣ K and you see the dummy below. Partner now switches to ♥ 4, declarer plays low from the dummy, takes your jack with the ace and plays a spade to the king. How will you defend?

(dummy)  
♠ KT62  
♥ KT5  
♦ KQ953  
♣ 9

(you)  
♠ A854  
♥ J87  
♦ 86  
♣ AJ42

And thirdly, you hold:

♠ K43  
♥  
♦ AKQ84  
♣ JT974

Once again, neither side is vulnerable. RHO passes as dealer, you open 1♦ and LHO jumps to 4♥. When this comes back to you, what will you do?

IMP Swiss Pairs is of course all about bidding to and making thin games. In a pre-game conversation with a couple of friends, I heard one say that many of the games that people routinely bid to nowadays would have been considered desperate overbids in times past. That's probably true. Here is an example of desperation rewarded in the first match of the day:

**Board 7**

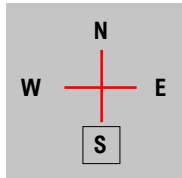
Dealer S | Vul All

♠ T2  
♥ 974  
♦ AK72  
♣ 9875

♠ A9853  
♥ AQ65  
♦ J3  
♣ 42

♠ QJ4  
♥ KT8  
♦ QT965  
♣ A6

♠ K76  
♥ J32  
♦ 84  
♣ KQJT3



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

Across the 30 tables, 17 East-West pairs bid to 4♠ on very slender values, but they will have every incentive to do it again next time because everything lay perfectly: ♠K was on side and a doubleton ♠10 was squashed off side, so with hearts 3-3, declarer lost just 2 diamonds and a club. East-West thus collected 6 IMPs against the datum.

One board later, the deal featured in the first problem turned up. The 5♦ bid by East was another example of desperation in action:

**Board 8**

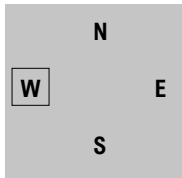
Dealer W | Vul None

♠ KJT864  
♥ A  
♦ A  
♣ AJT98

♠ 97  
♥ J982  
♦ 74  
♣ K6432

♠ A2  
♥ KQT3  
♦ KT96532  
♣

♠ Q53  
♥ 7654  
♦ QJ8  
♣ Q75



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

Did you bid 5 ♠? As you can see from the full deal, you should – and there is a fair argument in favour of doing so, if you apply the losing trick count. You have 4 losers, a typical hand for a 2 ♠ raise has 9 losers, so  $(24 - (4+9)) = 11$  tricks quite possible. In fact 13 pairs made 12 tricks in spades and another 10 made 11 tricks. These included 5 who took the push to 5 ♠. However, the 7 East-West pairs who were allowed to play in 5 ♦ X gained a few IMPs against the datum, because it was a cheap sacrifice.

These days, transfer responses to 1 ♣ are all the rage. I'm old fashioned and still don't play them. Here is a deal on which only adherents to current trends went down in 4 ♠:

**Board 10**

Dealer E | Vul All

<p>♠ QJT4 ♥ AKQ3 ♦ A7 ♣ Q97</p>		<p>♠ 952 ♥ T82 ♦ Q6542 ♣ AK</p> <p>♠ A873 ♥ 4 ♦ J83 ♣ JT652</p>
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	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	1	1	-	-
S	-	1	1	-	-
E	4	-	-	3	1
W	3	-	-	3	-

When West plays the contract, North cashes ♣AK and receives a ruff after South wins ♠K. However, when East plays the contract, the lead is likely to be a heart, or perhaps a diamond. In both cases declarer quickly cashes hearts to discard diamond losers, then takes the spade finesse – which loses, but it's all over.

Here's the deal related to the second problem, now in its correct orientation:

**Board 12**

Dealer W | Vul N-S

<p>♠ KT62 ♥ KT5 ♦ KQ953 ♣ 9</p>		<p>♠ A854 ♥ J87 ♦ 86 ♣ AJ42</p> <p>♠ QJ93 ♥ AQ9 ♦ J742 ♣ 73</p>
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	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	3	-	1	-	2
S	3	-	1	-	2
E	-	3	-	3	-
W	-	3	-	3	-

The auction featured the overbidding that is normal for IMP Pairs. Did you take your ♠A on the first or second round of trumps? Not a good idea – you have to duck twice so that declarer is in danger of losing trump control and is forced to play on diamonds, making you ruff but conceding one down. A number of those sitting North did not find this defence, because 8 declarers made 10 tricks in spades and 6 of them were in game. Thirteen were held to 9 or fewer tricks.

The board related to the third problem featured crime without punishment:

**Board 40**

Dealer W | Vul None

<p>♠ A96</p> <p>♥ 86</p> <p>♦ J53</p> <p>♣ K8652</p>		<div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">N</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">W</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">E</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">S</div> </div>		<p>♠ K43</p> <p>♥</p> <p>♦ AKQ84</p> <p>♣ JT974</p>	<p>♠ 85</p> <p>♥ AKQT74</p> <p>♦ T62</p> <p>♣ AQ</p>
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<p>♠ QJT72</p> <p>♥ J9532</p> <p>♦ 97</p> <p>♣ 3</p>	
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	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	1	3	-	3	-
S	1	3	-	3	-
E	-	-	1	-	-
W	-	-	1	-	-

Traditional teaching is that it's not a good idea to make a re-opening double with a void in the opponent's suit. Thus at the 3 tables where North was put in this situation, there was a a 5♣ rebid on two occasions and a 4NT rebid on the third, in each case converted to 5♦ by South. This contract has to go 2 off when declarer is repeatedly forced in hearts. However, a re-opening double would have been by far the best option. Maybe it isn't always right to be old fashioned ... 🚩