

IBA Chris Diment Memorial Congress

The computer has the last laugh

by RAKESH KUMAR



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

The Illawarra Bridge Association held a very successful congress over the Saturday and Sunday of the June long weekend. The new venue was the Port Kembla Golf Club, which proved to be excellent. Although attendance at face-to-face congresses has been markedly reduced in the aftermath of COVID, this event was very well supported both by local members and by bridge players up and down the coast, so the turnout was quite reasonable.

Saturday was a 2-session Matchpoint Pairs tournament, which was won by Judy Kingston - Grant Cowen (North-South) and Gary Kembrey - Andrew Grace (East-West). For those who love to go hunting for matchpoint tops, here are a couple of interesting deals from this event. Firstly, what will you bid with this hand after the auction proceeds P (by LHO)-P (by partner)-1♣ (by RHO)-1NT (by you)-P-2♦ (by partner, transfer to hearts)-P-2♥-P-2♠ (now showing 5 hearts, 4 spades and invitational values)?

♠ AT4
♥ 764
♦ AQ32
♣ AKT

Secondly, you overbid just a little bit and get to 4♠ by West with these cards:

♠ KQ5432	♠ 96
♥ Q	♥ A954
♦ A	♦ 97542
♣ AJ983	♣ QT

How do you plan to play the hand when North leads a heart?

Sunday was a Swiss Teams tournament (6 x 9-board matches) and this was won by the KUMAR team (Rakesh Kumar - Steven Bock, Kevin Davies - Elli Urbach) with the FOTHERINGHAM team from IBA (Bill Fotheringham - Martin Bunder, Stephen Hurley - Liz Hurley) in second place. Playing Teams, after partner opens 2NT (20-21 hcp) what would you bid with this hand?

♠ QT
♥ 42
♦ KQT8653
♣ 92

On the first deal, there is no doubt that Hamman's rule applies – if 3NT is a reasonable contract, then bid it! At matchpoint pairs, that's especially true if you think you might manage the same 10 tricks as in 4♥. In fact on a club lead from North, which you win and lead a heart to finesse ♥9, South has to switch to a diamond immediately to hold you to 9 tricks.

Board 5
Dealer N | Vul N-S

♠ 632
♥ 5
♦ J9765
♣ 8652

♠ AT4 ♥ 764 ♦ AQ32 ♣ AKT		♠ J987 ♥ AQT93 ♦ T ♣ J93
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♠ KQ5
♥ KJ82
♦ K84
♣ Q74

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	4	2	4	5	3
W	4	1	4	4	3

Otherwise you will easily make an overtrick, losing just another heart and a spade, for an excellent matchpoint score. Only 3 of 19 pairs played in 3NT and only one of those received the deadly diamond lead.

Bidding to 4♠ on the second deal perhaps amounts to a bit of over-reach, but now that you're there, greed is good at matchpoints, so what about looking for an overtrick?

When North leads a heart, you rise ♥A and play a small spade from dummy to the queen. This wins. If you really do believe that South holds ♠A, you need to get back to dummy to lead another spade towards your hand.

Board 8
Dealer W | Vul None

♠ T7
♥ J87
♦ KT83
♣ K752

♠ KQ5432 ♥ Q ♦ A ♣ AJ983		♠ 96 ♥ A954 ♦ 97542 ♣ QT
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♠ AJ8
♥ KT632
♦ QJ6
♣ 64

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

The simplest way to achieve that is to play a small club towards dummy at trick 3. It doesn't matter whether North or South wins this; when neither has a singleton club, you will be able to win any continuation and reach dummy to lead a second spade towards your remaining top honour. Now when trumps break 3-2 with the ace on side, you have 11 tricks in the bag – however, only one declarer managed to do this.

The third deal is a perfect example of how mindset can determine outcomes in a teams match. You can look at the West hand and say that it might work out well in 3NT if partner has ♦A but it might be pretty horrible if not, but at least that would be better than playing in 5♦ with the strong

hand on the table. Or you can say that the worst case scenario is you play in 5♦ making when 3NT makes overtricks – but that's only 2-3 IMPs – while you may have a play for 6♦, so why not bid 4♦. If you play that as minorwood, partner proves to have 4 keycards so you arrive in slam and make 13 tricks without even trying ...

As someone who preaches a "glass half full" approach to bidding games and slams at IMPs, it's embarrassing to have to admit that I joined the barnyard full of poultry that merely bid 3NT on this board. In fact only 2 of 16 reached 6♦:

Board 6

Dealer E | Vul E-W

♠ 7654
♥ KQ865
♦
♣ KJ86

♠ QT
♥ 42
♦ KQT8653
♣ 92

	N		
W	—	E	
	S		

♠ AKJ9
♥ A7
♦ AJ7
♣ A753

♠ 832
♥ JT93
♦ 942
♣ QT4

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	1	-	-
S	-	-	1	-	-
E	2	7	-	6	7
W	2	7	-	7	7

Finally, for some fun on the very last deal of the day, the computer played a practical joke on the field with this board:

Board 27

Dealer S | Vul None

♠ KJ64
♥ T97
♦
♣ KJ8752

♠ T532
♥
♦ KQT75
♣ QT93

	N		
W		E	
		S	

♠ 87
♥ AKQJ54
♦ A6
♣ A64

♠ AQ9
♥ 8632
♦ J98432
♣

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

Holding the East hand, wouldn't you like to be in 4♥? No you would not, as it happens, because North and South both have voids and it isn't that hard for them to find their cross-ruff. So 12 pairs went down in 3♥ or 4♥, frequently making only 6 tricks ... only one pair played in the magically unbeatable 3NT! 🏆