

NSBC Falls Estate Teams

Off shape was on target

by RAKESH KUMAR



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

The 2022 North Shore Bridge Club Festival was a mixture of face-to-face and RealBridge events. The Saturday Teams on RealBridge, sponsored by The Falls Estate, was convincingly won by the BEEBY team (Nick Jacob - Jane Beeby, Michael Whibley - Mathew Vadas) with the HOFFMAN team (Christopher Quail - Julia Hoffman, Peter Grant - Pam Crichton) finishing in second place.

As usual for me, a full day of bridge yielded plenty of interesting tales and even more horror stories. Before I show you a few of the interesting deals, here they are as problems. Firstly, you hold:

♠ KT
♥ KQ
♦ KQ976
♣ KT64

In first seat, vulnerable against opponents who are not vulnerable, you decide to open an off-shape 1NT. Partner transfers to hearts and then bids 3♣, forcing to game. What will you bid now?

Secondly, again vulnerable against not, your RHO as dealer opens 2♠, promising 5 spades and a 4+ minor suit. You pass, LHO raises to 3♠ and partner doubles. RHO passes, of course. This is your hand:

♠ K3
♥ AK6
♦ J7642
♣ Q87

What will you do?

Thirdly, not vulnerable against opponents who are vulnerable, you pass as dealer, LHO opens 1♣ and partner overcalls 2NT showing the red suits. RHO now bids 3NT. When you try 4♥, LHO goes on to 5♣. Partner leads ♥6 and you see this dummy:

♠ AQ4
♥ QJ2
♦ QJT
♣ Q984

♠	987532
♥	A753
♦	86
♣	3

Declarer plays ♥ J from dummy and you win with the ace. What will you do at trick 2?

This was the board associated with the first problem:

Board 22

Dealer E | Vul E-W

♠ Q8 ♥ A9754 ♦ 83 ♣ QJ97	N W — E S	♠ A9754 ♥ T62 ♦ T54 ♣ A8 ♠ KT ♥ KQ ♦ KQ976 ♣ KT64
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♠ J632
 ♥ J83
 ♦ AJ2
 ♣ 532

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

With 5-4 in the minors but honours in both major suit doubletons and appropriate high card strength, an off-shape 1NT opening in first seat certainly appealed. However, as the auction developed, East had a problem: 3NT looked like a bad idea with only one likely spade stopper and 5 ♣ was surely a bridge too far with this aceless hand. The clever rebid was 4 ♥ – that proved to be the only making game and was of course what Michael Courtney bid against us! Yes, BridgeSolver points out that the contract can be beaten, but that requires a club lead which South was never going to find. Only 3 of 28 were in 4 ♥ and all were successful.

The off-shape 1NT opening reared its head again later in the event. At our table, on the deal below, West chose to start things off with 1NT and East simply raised to 3NT. That had 9 sure tricks without breathing hard, even on the optimal lead of ♥ 2 by North.

Board 36

Dealer W | Vul All

♠ AQ652 ♥ T5 ♦ AJ52 ♣ A7	N W + E S	♠ T ♥ J82 ♦ KQ8763 ♣ 985 ♠ KJ4 ♥ Q96 ♦ 94 ♣ KJT32
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♠ 9873
 ♥ AK743
 ♦ T
 ♣ Q64

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

Most of the field ended up in spades and while 9 made the game, 11 went down; another 4 somehow stopped in making part-score contracts. The 4 who played in 3NT didn't even break a sweat.

Next is the board that relates to the second problem. In keeping with the trend of the '20s to open lighter-than-air weak 2-level bids, at our table East chose to make a nuisance of himself with a 2♠ opening, which was raised by his partner. No sane person would overcall 3♥ with the North hand, so all that was left was a double.

Board 34
Dealer E | Vul N-S

<p>♠ AJ82 ♥ Q9 ♦ T953 ♣ A62</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <tr><td style="width: 25%;"></td><td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">N</td><td style="width: 25%;"></td><td style="width: 25%;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 25%;"></td><td style="width: 25%; border-left: 1px solid red; border-right: 1px solid red;"></td><td style="width: 25%;"></td><td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">W</td><td style="width: 25%;"></td><td style="width: 25%;"></td><td style="width: 25%;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 25%;"></td><td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">S</td><td style="width: 25%;"></td><td style="width: 25%;"></td></tr> </table> </div>		N						E	W					S			<p>♠ 97 ♥ J7542 ♦ AKQ ♣ K94</p> <p>♠ QT654 ♥ T83 ♦ 8 ♣ JT53</p>	
	N																		
			E																
W																			
	S																		
<p>♠ K3 ♥ AK6 ♦ J7642 ♣ Q87</p>																			

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

South pondered for a while and eventually bid 4♥, with obvious reluctance. But as it turned out, the not-so-deadly 2♠ weapon now shot the defending side in the foot, because West was persuaded to lead ♠A. After this start, the contract made because of the favourable position in trumps. However, as the cards lie the best game is in fact 3NT by South – which 5 pairs managed to make.

And finally, the board associated with the third problem, now in its correct orientation:

Board 41
Dealer N | Vul E-W

	<div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <tr><td style="width: 25%;"></td><td style="width: 25%;"></td><td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">N</td><td style="width: 25%;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 25%;"></td><td style="width: 25%; border-left: 1px solid red; border-right: 1px solid red;"></td><td style="width: 25%;"></td><td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">W</td><td style="width: 25%;"></td><td style="width: 25%;"></td><td style="width: 25%;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 25%;"></td><td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">S</td><td style="width: 25%;"></td><td style="width: 25%;"></td></tr> </table> </div>			N					E	W					S				
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			E																
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	S																		
<p>♠ AQ4 ♥ QJ2 ♦ QJT ♣ Q984</p>		<p>♠ 987532 ♥ A753 ♦ 86 ♣ 3</p> <p>♠ KJT6 ♥ 8 ♦ A9 ♣ AK7652</p>																	
		<p>♠ ♥ KT964 ♦ K75432 ♣ JT</p>																	

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

Partner obviously does not have ♦AK, so did you choose to return a spade? If you did, South ruffed and exited with a club, after which the contract had to go down. On any other return, it would have made.

Defeating 5♣ turned out not to be such a great result, however, because it was actually a good save against the unbeatable 4♥. Across the field, 5 pairs made 4♥ x for +590 to North-South, while 14 made 3NT for +660 or +690 to East-West and another 4 made 5♣ for +600. ♠