

Essex Contract Bridge Association

The Warboys Trophy 2019 Season

Report on Session (Boards 15,16 &18) held 8th May 2019

Three deals that say as much about players' optimism or pessimism as about their bidding methods.

Board 15

Bd: 15	♠ 942		
Vul: N/S	♥ AQ4		
Dir: South	♦ 109864		
	♣ 42		
♠ AK7	N	♠ 85	
♥ J982	W 15 E	♥ 1053	
♦ A3	S	♦ KQ72	
♣ AQ53		♣ J1098	
6	♠ QJ1063	♣♦♥♠N	
18HCP6	♥ K76	N - - - -	
10	♦ J5	S - - - -	
	♣ K76	E 4 2 3 1 3	
		W 4 2 3 1 3	

Playing a weak no-trump West has the choice of 1C or 1H opening. Some pairs, with four cards in each of a minor and a major always open the minor, others always the major and some vary it according to what they feel like. Our agreement was to open the major, hence partner opened 1H. With two small Spades and three Hearts I favoured a response of 2H rather than 1Nt. This demonstrates what is, in my opinion, a significant disadvantage of Acol. On this sequence West cannot be sure East has four Hearts and East does not know if West has only four Hearts. I don't like systems where we don't know how many trumps we have. After a trial bid of 3C I denied interest and so we languished in 3H, missing 3Nt. It's only 50% on a combined 24hcp but that's good enough to try for game at IMP scoring. After 1H-2H even a rebid of 2Nt may not get us to game as the East hand is at the minimum end of its range. West just has to bid 3Nt at some point even though this usually shows 4333 distribution after a major suit raise. This is one of the vagaries of four-card major systems though many players live with it comfortably.

In the event, 5/7 pairs in the A section bid and made 3Nt as did 2/6 pairs in the B with one pair making 4H, a difficult contract to beat despite the defence holding AKQ trumps. North leads a Diamond. It doesn't matter where declarer wins this in but in practice it will be in hand. North wins the first trump and plays another Diamond; declarer necessarily now

takes two Club finesses and plays another trump. North wins with the Ace, gives his partner a Diamond ruff with King of trumps and collects a Club ruff for himself. Declarer can discard his losing Spade on the third Diamond but he loses four trump tricks.

Board 16

Bd: 16	♠ 642		
Vul: E/W	♥ 109		
Dlr: West	♦ J6		
	♣ KQ8753		
♠ K53	N	♠ AQJ	
♥ Q6543	W 16 E	♥ AJ2	
♦ AQ72	S	♦ K109543	
♣ 9		♣ 4	
6	♠ 10987	♣♦♥♠ N	
11HCP15	♥ K87	N 2 - - - -	
8	♦ 8	S 2 - - - -	
	♣ AJ1062	E - 5 4 2 1	
		W - 5 4 2 1	

Excessive pessimism of Board 15 was followed by excessive optimism on 16. Partner opened 1H and the auction proceeded: 1H-2D-3D-3S-4D-4Nt-5D-6D. I asked for key cards to confirm I was not missing two Aces though I was fairly sure partner had no more one as he had not cue bid Clubs. Indeed, 5D showed only one key card but being sure of a 6-4 fit I hoped for partner to have good Hearts. It was not to be; the defence swiftly cashed their Ace of Clubs then waited patiently for their off-side King of Hearts. A bit unlucky for us; if dummy had just the King of Hearts instead of the King of Spades the contract would have been very slightly better than 50%. Even possession of the King of Clubs instead of the King of Spades would have given an extra chance.

-10imp for us, little comfort in that one pair in the A had failed in 6H and another had come unstuck in 4Nt. The rest of the A, all in 4H; the B all played in 4H or 5D.

The West hand, whilst a bit weaker than a classical minimum, will be opened more often than not; perhaps the only sure way of staying out of slam is for West to pass as dealer; unlikely in the modern era. Computer says EW can be held to 10 tricks in Hearts. This won't be an issue unless they reach 5H voluntarily or having been pushed there by NS getting busy in Clubs. The defence to defeat 5H by West is unlikely; North leads a Diamond from J6, when South wins the King of Hearts he underleads the Ace of Clubs to put North in for a second Diamond which South ruffs. All somewhat improbable.

Board 18

Bd: 18	♠ J74		
Vul: N/S	♥ 5		
Dir: East	♦ J74		
	♣ AKJ754		
♠ AQ102	N	♠ K653	
♥ 10962	W 18 E	♥ AKQ874	
♦ AK	S	♦ 53	
♣ 1062		♣ 3	
10	♠ 98	♣♦♥♠N	
13HCP12	♥ J3	N 2 1 - - -	
5	♦ Q109862	S 2 1 - - -	
	♣ Q98	E - - 6 6 1	
		W - - 6 6 1	

East has a very comfortable 1H opening; pairs playing Jacoby-style 2Nt response have a perfect opportunity to wheel it out. My preference is to play Jacoby as game forcing, rather than "10 plus hcp", regardless of whether I am playing a 4 or 5 card major based system. In Acol this avoids having to make a pre-emptive response at the 3 level on a weak hand with "only" four trumps, thereby sometimes getting you too high when partner has a flat defensive hand with only four trumps himself. From East's point of view a slam is possible if West has all his points in the right places. Where East's rebid shows a shortage, in this case Clubs, West will appreciate that is hand is slam suitable, provided East has adequate trumps. After 1H-2Nt-3C a cue-bidding contest may well ensue; at some point East will drive to 6H. In my methods 1H-2Nt-3C asked for further definition; partner bid 3D showing 12-14hcp and no shortage. The pessimism demon struck and deciding that it was unlikely that partner would have perfect cards I settled for 4H. A poor decision; my hand was worth another try. A better approach would have been for me to rebid 3S which, in our methods, shows a second suit with a high card needing help. You can't get much more helpful than AQ so West would have been well placed to accept with a cue bid. This is the sort of slam that wins matches; working on your constructive methods when you have a big fit, pays dividends.

In the A section only one pair (the one we failed in 6D against on Board 16) reached a slam; also, only one pair in the B.