

Commentary 19 Novemeber

Well done again to the Nine High pairs who played in the main OBA event – a tough event. Next week we hope to run this on RealBridge and we are having a drive to get more players.

Today's commentary has been written by Robert Procter, one of the County's top players.

Kathy Talbot

Board 1

Dir: North
Vul: None

Optimum
NS 5Dx

♠ J 2
♥ J 8 5 4 3
♦ Q 5
♣ A K 10 3

♠ A K
♥ 9
♦ K J 7 4 3
♣ Q J 9 6 5

WEST
NORTH
1
SOUTH
EAST

♠ Q 10 8 7 6 5 3
♥ K Q 6
♦ A
♣ 7 4

14
11 11
4

♠ 9 4
♥ A 10 7 2
♦ 10 9 8 6 2
♣ 8 2

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

North will open 1D and East has to choose the level at which to bid spades. The problem with either of the pre-empts is that they risk understating the hand, so the one level bid is preferable. Now South can jump to 3D pre-emptively as a sound raise could have been indicated by bidding 2S. West has no reason to know that partner's hand is single-suited and has sufficient values to wish to compete, so a take-out double looks right. East's hand now looks a whole lot better with partner showing values and holdings in hearts and clubs, so 4S looks a good shot whether or not North raises the ante in diamonds. Back to North for the final decision. Do you think 4S is making? If not, pass. If so, bid 5D. One North found this good sacrifice against the making 4S.

Board 2

Dir: East
Vul: N/S

Optimum
EW 2S,EW 3D

♠ Q J 8 7 6
♥ J 6
♦ A 10 6
♣ J 10 7

♠ 3 2
♥ A 10 9 8 2
♦ 5 3
♣ 9 4 3 2

WEST
NORTH
2
SOUTH
EAST

♠ A 4
♥ 5 4
♦ K J 9 8 7 2
♣ K Q 5

4
9 13
14

♠ K 10 9 5
♥ K Q 7 3
♦ Q 4
♣ A 8 6

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

East will probably open 1D, although getting NT on the table early is always a good idea when a hand has no shortage and is within range. (If East opens 1NT West will transfer to spades and East will likely play in 2S). After 1D South can double, West will bid 1S and North has to choose whether or not to make a free bid of 2H, free in the sense that Pass was an option. A free bid usually promises more in the way of high card points but ATxxx is a good suit so I would probably make the bid. Neither East nor South should feel they have more to say at this point so it will be up to West to protect. A double at this point should be competitive asking if partner can support spades, e.g. with three, pass e.g. with four hearts, or make a natural rebid in clubs or diamonds according to shape. In this case 3D would be the choice. South will be tempted to take the push to 3H but on sound defence will not be happy with the result.

Board 3

Dir: South
Vul: E/W

♠ 7 6 4
♥ 7 5
♦ 8 6 3
♣ K Q 9 7 2

Optimum
EW 1H+2

♠ A 8 3
♥ A 10 4 3 2
♦ Q 9
♣ J 6 4

NORTH
3
SOUTH

♠ K Q 9 5
♥ K 6
♦ 10 7 5 4
♣ A 8 3

5
11 12
12

♠ J 10 2
♥ Q J 9 8
♦ A K J 2
♣ 10 5

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

At four out of five tables South's weak NT opener was passed out and went off. East is risking missing a vulnerable game here as West can often have to pass with an even better hand than here at unfavourable vulnerability. My partner and I play a double of a weak NT in fourth seat as showing 12+. Of course while this eliminates one risk it may create others! On this occasion it would have given us a top as West has just the right strength to leave it in and lead a heart rather than worrying that game might be being missed. In the defence, holding up the ace of clubs for one round looks right to cut declarer off from the club suit and declarer will probably then take a losing diamond finesse to end further in the mire.

Board 4

Dir: West
Vul: All

♠ J 8 7 2
♥ A J 2
♦ J 4
♣ A 10 4 3

Optimum
NS 1C+2

♠ 5 4 3
♥ Q 8 6
♦ A K 10 7 6
♣ 7 2

NORTH
4
SOUTH

♠ A K Q 10
♥ 10 9 5 3
♦ 5 3
♣ J 8 6

11
9 10
10

♠ 9 6
♥ K 7 4
♦ Q 9 8 2
♣ K Q 9 5

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

Pass

Board 5

Dir: North
Vul: N/S

♠ A Q 10 7 4 2
♥ K 3 2
♦ 5
♣ A Q 4

Optimum
EW 6Dx

♠ K
♥ A 6 5
♦ K 10 9 8 7 6 3
♣ J 6

NORTH
5
SOUTH

♠ 8
♥ Q J 9 7
♦ A Q 4 2
♣ 9 8 5 2

15
11 9
5

♠ J 9 6 5 3
♥ 10 8 4
♦ J
♣ K 10 7 3

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

5S should be made with the third heart disappearing on the club ten and 5D should be two off with two clubs a spade and a heart the inescapable losers - but things don't always happen like that. North clearly has a 1S opener and whilst East has the right shape for a double it seems to be a bit early to be thinking of a sacrifice so I would pass. South has a solid 2S bid or a pre-emptive 3S bid if that is how you play 3S, particularly if you know partner's 1S has at least five. West can come in with diamonds at the three or four level as necessary - I know the four-level bid may look risky but this is Pairs and the occasional big penalty can be accepted more readily than at Teams scoring.

Now East is well-placed to see the potential for sacrificing in 5D over North's 4S so the original failure to double has not cost. The spade shortage, trump support and heart honours may be all partner needs to make game when partner's hand is say 3361 shape.

Board 6

Dir: East
Vul: E/W

Optimum
NS 2C+1

♠ A 10
♥ 10 9 4 2
♦ K 10 9 6
♣ A 10 9

♠ J 7 6 3
♥ Q J 6
♦ A 8 7
♣ Q 7 4

NORTH
6
SOUTH

♠ K 9 8 2
♥ A K 7 3
♦ J 5 2
♣ 8 5

♠ Q 5 4
♥ 8 5
♦ Q 4 3
♣ K J 6 3 2

11 10 11 8

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

Another one that could have been passed out everywhere but three North's couldn't bear to do so a second time in one session and opened 1D. Two of them saw opponents step in to make major suit contracts. This is the reason for what is known as the "rule of fifteen". Add your high card points to the number of spades in your hand and only open in fourth seat if they total 15 or more. The computer says that these major suit contracts by E/W should not be making so maybe you need to factor in your defensive capabilities when taking the fourth seat pass-out decision!

Board 7

Dir: South
Vul: All

Optimum
NS 5S

♠ K Q 9 8 7
♥ 5 4
♦ - -
♣ K 9 7 6 5 3

♠ 6 3
♥ 9 8 7
♦ A 10 7 5 4 3
♣ 10 2

NORTH
7
SOUTH

♠ A 2
♥ Q J 2
♦ K Q J 9 2
♣ A 8 4

♠ J 10 5 4
♥ A K 10 6 3
♦ 8 6
♣ Q J

8 4 17 11

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

Where South decided this was a 1H opener (questionable as QJ doubleton is a weak holding in clubs) the bidding to 4S was easy - N 1S, S 2S, N 4S. If South and West pass what should North do? Some opened 1C. The problem with this is that it has no pre-emptive value and that you are not strong enough to bid spades twice later in the auction. You may think this is bent, but if you don't wish to pass, I prefer a weak 2S opener even though you only have a 5-card suit. Does it say on your card that weak 2's can sometimes be on a 5-card suit I wonder? If instead there are three passes to East's 1D, South can overcall 1H, West will jump to 3D and this will probably end the auction, although 3NT by East will succeed on the likely heart lead from South.

Board 8

Dir: West
Vul: None

Optimum
EW
2Sx,EW
3Cx

♠ K Q 4
♥ J 7 5 3 2
♦ K 10 7
♣ J 6

♠ 10 8 6
♥ K 10 9 4
♦ 5 2
♣ K Q 8 7

NORTH
8
SOUTH

♠ A J 9 2
♥ 6
♦ Q J 8 6
♣ 10 9 3 2

♠ 7 5 3
♥ A Q 8
♦ A 9 4 3
♣ A 5 4

10 8 8 14

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

I would have expected this to be three passes to South's weak NT or to South's 1D, North's 1H and South's 1NT but what do I know? Over the weak NT opener North would normally transfer partner to hearts and allow South to play there or go to game if South breaks transfer to show by agreement at least a non-minimum with good hearts. After 1NT - 2D - 2H passed round to East, East has a good hand to try a competitive double, but the danger of making this sort of competitive double with only 8 points is that partner will be tempted to leave it in on the sort of hand West has. Important that West should know if their partner is this aggressive in these situations and bid 3C!

Board 9

Dir: North
Vul: E/W

Optimum
NS 6Dx

♠ AK 10 7 5
♥ K 2
♦ AQ J 9 4
♣ 10

♠ J 8 3 2
♥ 10 7 4
♦ 10 3
♣ K Q 8 5

NORTH
9
SOUTH

♠ Q 9
♥ AQ J 6 5
♦ --
♣ AJ 9 6 3 2

♠ 6 4
♥ 9 8 3
♦ K 8 7 6 5 2
♣ 7 4

17 6 14 3

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

Do you play Michaels, Ghestem or neither? I could argue the case for any of these, but as the majority of you were playing Michaels I will stick with that and the 2S overcall showing hearts and a minor. This leaves West with a dilemma. If partner's minor is clubs, West wants to be in game but maybe not if the second suit is diamonds. So perhaps you might all have tried a 2NT bid asking which is partner's minor and when East shows clubs choose the heart game in preference to the club game as ten tricks will be easier to make than eleven as well as scoring better if it makes. The one pair that made a natural overcall chose 2C rather than 2H, but who can argue with success as they got themselves doubled in 5C for the top.

Board 10

Dir: East
Vul: All

Optimum
EW 4H

♠ Q 6 5 4 2
♥ 9 8
♦ Q 5 3
♣ Q 8 7

♠ J 10 9
♥ K J 7 6 5
♦ J 6
♣ 9 5 3

NORTH
10
SOUTH

♠ K 8
♥ AQ 3 2
♦ AK 10 4 2
♣ J 2

♠ A 7 3
♥ 10 4
♦ 9 8 7
♣ AK 10 6 4

6 6 17 11

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

East opens 1D and most South's overcall 2C. With only a 6-count West is short of values and a spade for a take-out double and is best to await developments. Where it goes Pass to a 2H bid by East, better than a double holding only two spades, I think West has sufficient to go to 4H which will depend upon getting the spades right - as indeed you are likely to do with South being the stronger hand and more likely to hold the ace. The 3C raise by North silenced the opposition, but at what cost? Two off vulnerable when not everyone was reaching the heart game, but it certainly stopped their opponents from getting there so it may have been the right thing to do - we will never know.

Board 11

Dir: South
Vul: None

Optimum
EW 3N

♠ J 6 3
♥ Q J 9 8 5
♦ A 9 6
♣ K 6

♠ K Q 8
♥ K 3
♦ 10 7 4 2
♣ A 8 7 3

NORTH
11
SOUTH

♠ A 10 7
♥ A 7
♦ K J 5 3
♣ Q 10 9 2

♠ 9 5 4 2
♥ 10 6 4 2
♦ Q 8
♣ J 5 4

11 12 14 3

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

3NT was reached at all five tables and only made where the defence unfortunately blocked the heart suit when cashing winners at the end. But, as the computer tells us, the contract can be made on any defence. Can you see how? You have five major suit tricks so you have to make four minor suit tricks without losing the lead more than once. The possibilities for doing this include finding a singleton king of clubs with South enabling four club tricks or ace queen and a small diamond with North enabling three diamonds and a club. Initially the latter looks more likely - you can always fall back on the former if it doesn't work - so you lead a diamond towards the East hand at trick two. In practice North would do best to rise with the diamond ace and clear the hearts. Then when you play the second round of diamonds you are most likely to finesse the jack and go off, whereas declarer needed to drop the diamond queen doubleton offside.

You originally needed the North hand to have the ace of diamonds or else your only chance was the singleton club king, so if North ducks, why risk South having the queen? Rise with the diamond king and when this works take the 75% chance of one of the club honours being with South, leading the queen which goes round to the queen and later finessing South, twice if necessary for the jack. It wasn't a great contract, was it? But understandable that everyone was in it.

Board 12

Dlr: West
Vul: N/S

Optimum
E 3Sx

♠ 10 6
♥ K J 10 9 4
♦ K 5
♣ Q 9 6 5

♠ A 5 2
♥ A 5 2
♦ A J 8
♣ 10 8 7 4

WEST 12 EAST

♠ K J 8 7
♥ 6 3
♦ Q 9 6 3 2
♣ K 2

♠ Q 9 4 3
♥ Q 8 7
♦ 10 7 4
♣ A J 3

9 9 13 9

N	2	3	-	-
S	2	3	-	-
E	-	2	2	-
W	-	2	1	-

This was a hand for the weak no trumpers as West's 1NT should buy the contract - North really doesn't have enough to come in at red at the two level - but where West is playing strong NT and opens 1C North can compete with 1H and be supported by South.

Board 13

Dlr: North
Vul: All

Optimum
W 3N+2

♠ K 10 2
♥ 7
♦ A 10 8
♣ J 10 9 6 3 2

♠ 8 7
♥ A J 2
♦ K 6 4
♣ A K Q 5 4

WEST 13 EAST

♠ A Q J 6 5
♥ K 6 4
♦ 9 7 5 2
♣ 8

♠ 9 4 3
♥ Q 10 9 8 5 3
♦ Q J 3
♣ 7

8 17 5 10

N	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-
E	1	3	1	4
W	3	3	2	5

After two passes South has a weak 2H and West not able to double with only two spades can bid 2NT. East might mention the spades now but West will still prefer NT and 3NT by West will be a popular contract. With the spade finesse working, the spades splitting and the queen of hearts onside there are 11 tricks for the taking. Woe betide anyone who tries for the twelfth by leading a diamond towards the king and losing what they already have.

Board 14

Dlr: East
Vul: None

Optimum
E 3Dx

♠ 10 9 8 7 4
♥ 6 4 3 2
♦ 2
♣ J 10 9

♠ K 5 3
♥ Q 10 9
♦ Q J 7
♣ 8 6 5 4

WEST 14 EAST

♠ A Q 2
♥ J 7 5
♦ A 10 8 6 5
♣ Q 7

♠ J 6
♥ A K 8
♦ K 9 4 3
♣ A K 3 2

1 8 13 18

N	1	-	2	2
S	1	-	2	2
E	-	2	-	-
W	-	1	-	-

And here is one where the weak NT loses as the bidding will go 1NT X P 2S all pass giving N/S a good score against those who bid the E/W cards to 3D and only went one off whether or not doubled. The strong no trumpers open East 1D and are able to compete to 3D. Always good when you can blame your poor score on having a different system which will gain on other occasions!

Board 15

Dir: South
Vul: N/S

♠ Q 7 6 4
♥ A Q 10 7
♦ K 9 8 2
♣ Q

Optimum
EW 4C

♠ --
♥ 9 8 5 4
♦ A J 5
♣ A 10 8 6 3 2

NORTH
WEST 15 EAST

♠ K J 3 2
♥ 6 2
♦ 4 3
♣ K J 9 7 4

13 9 8 10

♠ A 10 9 8 5
♥ K J 3
♦ Q 10 7 6
♣ 5

♠	2	2	3	-
♥	-	3	2	3
♦	4	-	-	1
♣	4	-	-	1

4S was played three times and made once whereas 5C was played twice, understandably, both times going off. In 4S with two aces and a likely trump loser you are going to have to find the jack of diamonds. But putting that off until later how should you play the trumps and hence what should you do at trick two when West finds a heart switch. Depending upon the bidding, winning in dummy and playing East for at least one spade honour by leading the seven looks favourite. Where there has been no opposition bidding East might be the one to show out and you will still be able to pick up the suit for only one loser (although a club continuation will cause a problem). When this works all you are left with is the problem of finding the diamond jack and I think depends upon your luck on the day.

Board 16

Dir: West
Vul: E/W

♠ --
♥ A K J 7 5
♦ 9 2
♣ K Q 10 7 6 4

Optimum
NS 2H+1

♠ A 7 5 4 3
♥ 8 6
♦ Q 10 6 5 3
♣ A

NORTH
WEST 16 EAST

♠ K 9 6
♥ Q 9 3 2
♦ A 4
♣ 9 8 3 2

13 10 8 9

♠ Q J 10 8 2
♥ 10 4
♦ K J 8 7
♣ J 5

♠	4	-	3	-	2
♥	4	-	3	-	2
♦	-	1	-	1	-
♣	-	1	-	1	-

Everyone got too high here and no-one used Michaels on the North hand when West opened 1S. If West passes, why not 1C - 1S - 2C - End? And if West opens 1S and North take the Michaels route with 2S showing hearts and a minor South can enquire which minor by bidding 2NT, North shows clubs and South chooses 3H. I see no need to get more excited than that on either auction.

Board 17

Dir: North
Vul: None

♠ A 7 3
♥ A 5 3
♦ K Q 10 8
♣ Q 6 5

Optimum
NS
3Nx, NS
4Dx

♠ J 10 5 2
♥ J 10 9 8 6 4 2
♦ 7 5
♣ --

NORTH
WEST 17 EAST

♠ Q 8 6 4
♥ Q 7
♦ A 4
♣ A K 8 3 2

15 2 15 8

♠ K 9
♥ K
♦ J 9 6 3 2
♣ J 10 9 7 4

♠	2	3	-	-	2
♥	2	3	-	-	2
♦	-	-	3	2	-
♣	-	-	3	2	-

It must have been the end of the evening as everyone was putting on their bidding boots to go home. Again a few pairs got too high here. There were three different bids found by East over North's 1D. These were 1NT, double and 2C. The problem with 2C is that it makes it more difficult to locate a spade fit, whilst the problem with double is that you are quite likely to hear too many hearts from partner, so I prefer the 1NT bid made by two East's. Then it is a question of luck or good judgement whether West's seven hearts will find enough support opposite for game to be on. A 3D bid from South forces you to take an immediate decision and I think I would gamble on 4 being on even at Pairs. Partner is not only minimum but also has seven wasted points in clubs so you can count yourself a little unlucky until the opposition, not unreasonably, sacrifice in diamonds.

Board 18

Dlr: East
Vul: N/S

♠ J 10 7 3
♥ A 6 2
♦ K Q 7 5
♣ 9 4

NORTH

18

SOUTH

♠ K Q 9
♥ K 4
♦ J 10 8 6
♣ K Q 6 5

♠ A 6 2
♥ Q 10 7 3
♦ A 9 4 3
♣ A 10

10

14

2

♠ 8 5 4
♥ J 9 8 5
♦ 2
♣ J 8 7 3 2

♣♦♥♠N

N	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-
E	3	5	3	4 5
W	3	5	3	4 4

And finally - everyone reached the solid 3NT, two pairs making the optimum two overtricks. Well done them!