

Summertown Bridge Bulletin, 14 February 2022

Hello, this is Steven again. It's a bit sad when you play bridge on Valentine's Day, but most of the regular players did. Congratulations to Robert & Robot who won, and Christopher & Erica who came second. There were some interesting hands. I'll start with board 1, a challenge in competitive bidding.

Dir: North
Vul: None

♠ J 9 8 7 3
♥ 9 4
♦ 9 2
♣ J 10 8 3

Optimum
NS 4Sx:
-300

♠ K 10 5 2
♥ A K Q J 7 3
♦ 3
♣ 6 4

W	NORTH	E
E	1	S
S	SOUTH	T

♠ A
♥ 10 8 5 2
♦ 10 7 6 5
♣ Q 7 5 2

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

The first question is what to open with the South hand. Three of the nine pairs opened it with a Benji 2♣ (or reverse Benji 2♦). My own view is that Benji works well when you have eight playing tricks in a major, less well with a minor suit, so I prefer a simple 1♦ opening bid. I thought for some time about whether to open an offbeat 2NT, which would actually have worked well (only two off if it's passed out, and you can retreat to 3♦ if doubled). Whatever you do, though, EW will find their heart fit, and most of the EW pairs bid on to 4♥, which makes comfortably as losing spades can be ruffed in dummy. One robot got a bottom by doubling 4♥. Three NS pairs played in 4♣ or 5♦, and

none of them were doubled, so they got good scores. It is quite hard for EW to double, as they clearly aren't going to make many heart tricks in defence.

On board 12, everyone was in 3NT after a weak (very weak) NT opening from East – 4-3-3-3 distributions don't normally play well, but first in hand non-vulnerable the hand is just about worth 1NT. After that you are never going to stay out of 3NT – two Wests bid it immediately and the others tried Stayman first.

When I saw dummy I thought I would be lucky to make the contract, but with both red suits 3-3 it scraped home. Three pairs made an overtrick when the defence attacked diamonds. Two pairs went off, when the defence set up enough club and spade tricks, or declarer guessed diamonds wrong.

Dir: West
Vul: N/S

♠ K J 10
♥ 7 5 3
♦ 8 6 4
♣ K 9 6 2

Optimum
EW 3N:
-400

♠ 8 5 3
♥ J 8 4
♦ A K 9 7
♣ A 10 4

W	NORTH	E
E	12	S
S	SOUTH	T

♠ A 6 4
♥ A K 9 6
♦ 10 5 3
♣ Q 8 3

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

North has an awkward lead against 3NT, but the only really disastrous lead is a middling diamond, which helps declarer in a suit where he/she happens to need an extra trick.

Dlr: West
 Vul: E/W

♠ A Q 8 7 3
 ♥ 4
 ♦ A Q 10 5
 ♣ 10 9 3

Optimum
 NS 1N+1:
 +120

♠ 9
 ♥ Q 10 2
 ♦ K 8 6 3 2
 ♣ J 8 7 4

NORTH
 WEST EAST
 16
 SOUTH

♠ J 10 6 5 4 2
 ♥ A K 8 5
 ♦ J
 ♣ A 5

12
 6 13
 9

♠ K
 ♥ J 9 7 6 3
 ♦ 9 7 4
 ♣ K Q 6 2

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

I'll finish with the most spectacular board of the night, in terms of the variety of results. Unusually, even for Summertown, there were NT and spade contracts by both NS and EW!

NS have the balance of the points, and are the only side who can make anything, so I'll start with them. At two tables the bidding went 1♠-1NT-2♦-2♥-all pass – not a success, going two off for a shared bottom. (I think you need a better heart suit to prefer 2♥ to 2♦, although both contracts are horrible.) At one table it went 1♠-2♥ (marginal)-2♣, which should probably go one off but actually made. At two tables the bidding went 1♠-2♥-3♦ (an overbid in my view)-3NT – this should go one off, but one pair made it. Finally (for NS), at my table NS were playing 5-card majors and strong NT, and the bidding got to the best contract: 1♠-2♥-2NT (showing max 14 points and only 5 spades) - pass. 2NT was quite easy to play, and made overtricks when we didn't attack hearts in time.

EW found three different ways to get bad scores. They all started by East doubling the 1♠ opening (an odd double when you can only play in hearts or spades). One West then made an optimistic jump to 3♦, going three off. Another West bid just 2♦ and East tried 2NT – also three off. Finally an intrepid East, who shall be nameless, first doubled the opening 1♠ and then bid spades themselves twice – 3♠*-3 cost 800. People don't normally make a psychic opening of 1♠ second in hand, so if East takes the opening as genuine, it's better to go quietly.

Steven Bliss, February 2022