

Summertown Bridge Bulletin 2 August 2021

Unusually, there were no slams bid and made last night, and even Deep Finesse could find only two that were potentially makeable. However, as usual there were plenty of hands that called for competitive bidding, with an excellent example on the very first hand.

Dir: North Vul: None	♠ Q 10 3 ♥ A 9 6 ♦ 9 8 ♣ A Q 9 7 2	Optimum EW 3H: -140
♠ A J 9 ♥ Q 8 ♦ A 7 5 ♣ K J 10 8 4	W NORTH E S 1 A T SOUTH T	♠ 7 6 2 ♥ K J 7 5 3 2 ♦ Q 10 6 3 ♣ - -
12 15 6 7	♠ K 8 5 4 ♥ 10 4 ♦ K J 4 2 ♣ 6 5 3	♣♦♥♠N N 2 - - 1 - S 2 - - 1 - E - 1 3 - - W - 2 3 - 1

North dealt and nearly everyone opened with a weak NT (the exception being the evening's lonely robot, which did not distinguish itself on this occasion, as we'll see).

East has only 6 points but with a good 6-card suit, and a void, most players with this hand came in with 2♥. Now the spotlight was on West, who had the best hand at the table, and a couple of trumps that partner should be pleased to see. Nevertheless, an

immediate raise to game is optimistic, given that your holdings in the black suits are underneath the 1NT bidder. 3♥, invitational, is enough and East should now pass, for a good score – although 4♥ did make once, so clearly it was worth going on when half the defence team was relying on its programming!

Board 14 also featured an opportunity to compete against an opening weak NT, although the only pair to find it were the evening's winners, Alison and Robert. After East opened 1NT and South passed, West bid 2♦ to transfer into hearts, East completed the transfer, and South could still only pass. However, when West also passes, North should realise that partner must have some values and at this vulnerability, it's fairly safe to come in with 2♠. When Robert did this, E/W correctly competed to 3♥, but Alison went on to 3♣ and this was only one down for a near-top.

Dir: East Vul: None	♠ A 9 7 6 4 ♥ 9 7 ♦ 9 8 ♣ Q 10 7 4	Optimum EW 4N: -430
♠ K 3 ♥ A Q 10 8 2 ♦ 5 3 2 ♣ 5 3 2	W NORTH E S 14 A T SOUTH T	♠ J 10 ♥ 6 5 3 ♦ Q J 10 4 ♣ A K J 9
6 9 12 13	♠ Q 8 5 2 ♥ K J 4 ♦ A K 7 6 ♣ 8 6	♣♦♥♠N N - - 2 - S - - 2 - E 3 3 3 - 4 W 3 3 3 - 4

Our robotic friend, playing a strong NT, opened the East hand with 1♦, which allowed N/S to enter the bidding rather more easily. 4♣ went two down for -100 but, playing matchpointed pairs, this was still better than letting E/W score 110 for making 2♥.

Dlr: East
 Vul: N/S

♠ 8 6
 ♥ Q 9 6 2
 ♦ K Q 9 8 2
 ♣ A 7

Optimum
 E 6Cx:
 +300

♠ - -
 ♥ K J 8 3
 ♦ J 10 7 5
 ♣ J 9 8 6 4

W NORTH E
 S 18 A
 T SOUTH T

♠ Q J 4
 ♥ 10
 ♦ A 6 4 3
 ♣ K Q 5 3 2

♠ A K 10 9 7 5 3 2
 ♥ A 7 5 4
 ♦ - -
 ♣ 10

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

11
 6 12
 11

Finally, here's the last hand of the evening. East dealt and, with a singleton, generally opened 1♣ (the exception again being the robot, which chose to pass). Most Souths looked at their 8-card suit and jumped straight to 4♣, making either 10 or 11 tricks if left to play there.

But look at West's hand – only 6 points, but a fantastic fit for partner's suit, a void in the opponent's suit, and an 8-loser hand. The Losing Trick Count can often be very helpful when you're thinking about bidding in competition. Here, if you assume that partner opened with a normal 7-loser hand, then you should be able to make 9 tricks in clubs, and you're at favourable vulnerability: so if you bid 5♣, and you get doubled, you'll still lose only 300 points – a lot better than 620 or 650 for a vulnerable game in spades.

In fact, as it turns out, partner has a 6-loser hand and can make 10 tricks: so even if it doesn't quite earn you a gold medal, competing here is definitely the right thing to do!

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