

## Summertown Bridge Bulletin 21 March 2022

Hello, this is Steven again. Unfortunately I couldn't play last night (Steph was going down with a heavy cold). I missed some interesting hands, as you'll see. Congratulations to three robots and Mary-Ann Sheehy, who between them occupied the first two places.

The first of the four hands I've chosen to look at this week is a bidding challenge – can you get to at least six hearts? Only four pairs did. Rather surprisingly, two pairs opened just one heart with the South hand. Nearly everyone else opened two clubs (I think usually Acol not Benji), and with only three losers, the hand is definitely worth that. To my mind, if South has a game-going hand in hearts, then North has enough to look for a slam (three useful trumps, an ace and a singleton), but few Norths did. If North tries Roman Key Card Blackwood (which no one did) he or she can find out that partner has three Aces, the King and Queen of trumps and the King of spades. (4NT gets the response 5♣, showing four key cards, then 5♦ asks about the trump Queen and 5♠ shows it plus the ♠K – a useful gadget.)

Dir: East  
Vul: All

♠ Q 2  
♥ J 10 9  
♦ A J 10 9 6 5 3  
♣ 9

Optimum  
NS 7H:  
+2210

♠ 5 3  
♥ 8 7  
♦ Q 8 7  
♣ K Q 10 8 6 2

WEST NORTH EAST  
10  
SOUTH T

♠ J 10 8 7 6  
♥ 5 2  
♦ K 4  
♣ J 7 5 3

8 5  
7 20

♠ A K 9 4  
♥ A K Q 6 4 3  
♦ 2  
♣ A 4

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	1	5	7	3	5
S	1	5	7	3	5
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

There are two good ways to make 13 tricks: either ruff a club and a spade in the North hand (as Amr did), or set up North's diamonds (as Roger did). However, simply reeling off trumps, hoping that spades will be discarded, usually worked too.

Dir: West  
Vul: N/S

♠ 8 6 3 2  
♥ A 9 6 4 3  
♦ A 10 4  
♣ 8

Optimum  
E 3C+1:  
-130

♠ J  
♥ J 8 5 2  
♦ J 6 5 3  
♣ A K Q 9

WEST NORTH EAST  
12  
SOUTH T

♠ A 10 9 4  
♥ K  
♦ K 9 8  
♣ 10 6 4 3 2

8 10  
12 10

♠ K Q 7 5  
♥ Q 10 7  
♦ Q 7 2  
♣ J 7 5

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

I was a bit surprised that no one passed out Board 12, as West has a very marginal opening bid (weak 4-4-4-1 hands don't usually play well). EW would have scored well by passing the hand out. In practice we had a wide choice of EW contracts, mostly going off. Almost every West opened 1♣, causing a rebid problem when partner bid spades – that explains why some pairs got too high. (These hands are awkward: the textbooks usually suggest opening the middle of three touching suits.) The most likely and sensible contract is 3♣, which can make, but rarely did. One pair got an outright top by making 3NT+1, when NS kept the wrong cards as all the clubs were played.

The computer thinks that the optimum contract on Board 13 is 6♣ by NS, although no one actually made 5♣ (one pair made 11 tricks, but they weren't playing in game). Every North opened 1♦, most Easts bid 1♠, and most Souths bid 2♥ (you might double instead). Where North rebid in clubs, NS generally finished in 5♣; otherwise 3NT was, as always, a popular contract, usually played by South. On the lead of the ♠3, 3NT shouldn't make: two pairs made it anyway, while three went off.

Dir: North  
Vul: All

♠ A  
♥ 7  
♦ K J 5 4 3 2  
♣ K J 7 4 3

Optimum  
NS 6C:  
+1370

♠ K 10 3  
♥ Q 10 6 4 3  
♦ 10 9 8  
♣ 9 5

W	NORTH	E
E	13	S
S		T
T	SOUTH	T

♠ Q 9 8 7 5  
♥ K 8  
♦ A Q 7 6  
♣ 8 2

	12	
5		11
	12	

♠ J 6 4 2  
♥ A J 9 5 2  
♦ - -  
♣ A Q 10 6

♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	6	3	1	1
S	6	3	1	1
E	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-

Four pairs played in 5♣, and usually got a trump lead. (This is normally the best lead when opponents bid two suits and then play in a third suit, as it cuts down on ruffs.) On a non-trump lead NS can make 11 tricks without much difficulty on a cross-ruff. On the normal trump lead, declarer has to win in the North hand, ruff a diamond, Ace of spades, ruff a diamond, spade ruff, ruff a diamond, come back to hand with another spade ruff, draw the last trump (with a sigh of relief when they break 2-2) and give up a diamond – not at all easy, but it makes 12 tricks.

Dir: West  
Vul: E/W

♠ A 5 2  
♥ Q 9 8 5 4  
♦ K Q  
♣ Q 9 7

Optimum  
NS 6S:  
+980

♠ 9  
♥ K J 6 2  
♦ 7 6 2  
♣ K 8 6 4 3

W	NORTH	E
E	16	S
S		T
T	SOUTH	T

♠ 6 3  
♥ 7 3  
♦ 10 8 5 3  
♣ A J 10 5 2

	13	
7		5
	15	

♠ K Q J 10 8 7 4  
♥ A 10  
♦ A J 9 4  
♣ - -

♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	-	3	4	6
S	-	3	4	6
E	1	-	-	-
W	1	-	-	-

I'll finish with another slam hand – can you get to 6♠? (Five pairs did, six didn't.) If playing Acol, do you open the North hand 1♥ or 1NT? It's a question of style: here 1NT was more helpful to partner. Rather surprisingly, only one of the five pairs in slam used Blackwood, and no one used cue bids: they just leapt to 6♠. The pairs in game didn't investigate a slam at all.

The EBU publish some good books in their 'Really Easy' series and there's one on slam bidding. They suggest that, after a 1NT opening, South (with a hand like this) should jump to 3♠, showing a good long

suit and slam interest. North can now cue bid 4♦ (likes spades, holds Ace or King of diamonds, but no Ace or King of clubs), which is just what South wants to hear: you might even investigate a grand slam, but you can bid 6♠ with confidence.

If North opens 1♥ and rebids 2♥ over partner's 1♠ reply, South can continue with 3♦ (a new suit at the 3 level is always forcing) and then if North replies 3♠, South can happily cue bid the club void. If North chooses 3NT, it's a bit harder, but at least now when South goes back to 4♠, North should have got the message that partner has a good hand with possible slam interest.

There are no problems in the play. It's normal to make an attacking lead against six of a suit, but here a heart lead by West gives away a thirteenth trick.

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