

## Summertown Bridge Bulletin, 22 March 2021

Hello, this is Steven again. I'm going to look at the last three boards from last night, where there are interesting points on defence and bidding.

Dlr: West Vul: E/W	♠ K Q 2 ♥ A 9 8 ♦ A 8 6 3 ♣ 10 3 2	Optimum NS 2H+1: +140																																
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On Board 16, everyone played in 4 hearts, nearly always by North after a weak NT and transfer. From East's point of view a club lead is too risky, and a trump rather pointless. Other things being equal you tend to lead a major rather than minor suit when people open 1NT, so most Easts led a spade (the 7 is the normal card, denying any useful honour) to partner's Ace. Now West had to think. Whenever declarer has bid no trumps you can count the points accurately. North has 12-14, South has 12, and West has 9, so East can only have 5-7 points. There's no point in leading a diamond because you won't get a ruff. Any Ace East has won't go away. Your only chance to get three more tricks is in clubs. Three players (including my opponents) found the club

switch to defeat the contract. The other Wests fatally switched to a diamond or trump – now declarer could draw trumps and discard all South's clubs, making 12 tricks.

On a trump or diamond lead declarer should just make 4 hearts, discarding a club on the fourth diamond (one player went off after a heart lead, but might have made it).

There was a very wide range of results on Board 17. At my table East opened a strong NT, and West bid Stayman, hoping to find a major suit fit. This could have backfired, but here it worked, and 2 hearts went just one off for a good score. Three pairs played in 3 hearts (after a 1 heart opening) when West took an optimistic view of their hand and/or NS competed in spades, and this usually went two off for a fairly good score.

At every other table NS bought the contract, in a variety of ways. At three tables East opened 1 club (not exactly wrong, but the style the EBU teach is to open the major with hands like this). One South made a rather unusual overcall of 1 diamond, was left there and made 9 tricks, and the other two NS pairs who had this opening from East played in NT, making 8 or 9 tricks. At the remaining two tables it was the more normal 1 heart opening: one South made a thin double (not ideal with only three spades, but they are good) after which North played in 2 spades plus 1, and at the other table North bid a protective 1NT and also made 9 tricks. If I look at the hand and try to predict the outcome, I would expect it to go 1H-pass-pass-1NT-all pass (or perhaps 2NT from South, also passed out) at many tables, but Summertown isn't like that!

Dlr: North Vul: None	♠ J 6 5 2 ♥ A K 7 ♦ Q J 6 ♣ 8 7 4	Optimum NS 2S+1: +140																																
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Dlr: East Vul: N/S	♠ Q 10 8 5 ♥ 10 5 ♦ A K 9 ♣ Q 7 6 3	Optimum EW 3H: -140
♠ K J 7 3 ♥ A J 9 6 ♦ J 10 ♣ J 8 5	W NORTH E S 18 A T SOUTH T	♠ 2 ♥ Q 8 4 3 2 ♦ Q 8 7 3 2 ♣ K 4
11 11 7 11	♠ A 9 6 4 ♥ K 7 ♦ 6 5 4 ♣ A 10 9 2	♣♦♥♠N N 2 - - 2 - S 2 - - 2 2 E - 3 3 - - W - 3 3 - -

When I played the last hand of the evening I didn't expect to write about it, as we passed it out. No one really has a respectable opening bid, but someone opened the bidding at every other table, and (as often happens after a light opening bid) the bidding got quite high when others joined in.

At one table there were three passes and then North opened 1NT with a fairish 11 points. This should have gone one off after a heart lead, but the defence led a diamond and North somehow scraped home. Two more Norths opened 1NT, and their partners tried Stayman, found the spade fit and bid 3 spades, going 1 off for an average score or 2 off for a bottom. I suppose it's tempting to open 1NT as North, as partner must have something, but at this vulnerability I wouldn't – there's too much risk of getting too high. Also one advantage of the weak NT is that it makes it harder for opponents to bid (allegedly), but that hardly applies after three passes.

At two tables West opened 1 heart. Although in theory this bid passes the rule of 19 (11 points plus two 4-card suits), the two Jacks in the minor suits aren't pulling their weight. However, third in hand and not vulnerable, it's an acceptable opening bid, and it's better to open 1 heart rather than 1 spade to give a chance of finding a fit in either major (passing as soon as you reasonably can). One of the Easts took an optimistic view and leapt to 4 hearts (the losing trick count suggests only 7 losers and a possible game, but 3 hearts looks enough to me), going three off; the other East bid only 2 hearts, made with an overtrick.

Two Wests decided to open a light 1NT with the West hand (an uninspiring 11 count). I wouldn't advise this, even at this vulnerability, as there's too much risk North will have a good hand and double you; also, if you are going to open 1NT on hands like this at all often, you should announce it as 11-14. Here however they were in luck, as their partner was able to transfer to 2 hearts, making eight or nine tricks.

Finally, one East took a very optimistic view of their hand, opening 1 heart and raising partner's 3 hearts to 4! All in all, an amazing set of results on a board where no one quite has enough to open....

Steven Bliss