Summertown Bridge Bulletin 27 September 2021

Hello, this is Steven again, with three boards from last night's rather sparsely attended session.

Board 2

Dlr: East
Vul: N/S

North: ♠109432 ♥AJ1086 ♦-- ♣1097

West: ♠A86 ♥7 ♦A763 ♣86432

East: ♠J5 ♥Q953 ♦QJ54 ♣AQJ

South: ♠KQ7 ♥K42 ♦K10982 ♣K5

Optimum NS 3S,NS 3H; +140

HCP: N 5, E 8, S 14, W 13

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

One of the ongoing debates in bidding is whether to play a weak or strong no trump. The argument for the weak no trump is that it makes it harder for opponents to compete, and board 2 is an example. At four tables East opened 1NT. Twice this was passed out, South led a diamond, and 1NT made with an overtrick. At one table South overcalled 2♦ (impossible if you play this as conventional), North bid hearts and played in 3♥, making + 1. At another table North made an aggressive Landy bid of 2♣ to show both majors (perfect shape but poor suits) and South then played in 3♠ +1. Finally, the two pairs playing strong no trump and 5-card majors opened 1♦, raised to 2. The Robot playing East then bid 3♣, I'm not sure why, which went quietly two off. The other East was left in 2♦. This wouldn't have played too badly on some sort of cross-ruff, but declarer tried to draw trumps, lost control of the hand and went four off.

I wouldn't draw any general conclusions from one hand. Here the weak NT worked well, and aggressive action over it also worked well – partly because EW have the minors and NS the majors, but also because of the horrible diamond split.

My next two hands are mainly about everyone's favourite contract, 3NT. (The great American player Bob Hamman once said that 'If you have a choice of contracts, and one of them is 3NT, bid 3NT'.) On board 16 everyone opened 3♣ as West. Rather surprisingly (to me anyway) five out of six Norths then bid 3♠. The textbooks usually say 'Don't pre-empt over a pre-empt' – we pre-empt to make life hard for opponents, so there's not much point bidding 3♠ now unless you hope to make it. However, North only has 6 high card points and West can't have many more, so the

Board 16

Dlr: West
Vul: E/W

North: ♠AQ108643 ♥9864 ♦86 ♣--

West: ♠92 ♥7 ♦A52 ♣AJ109653

East: ♠KJ5 ♥AQJ2 ♦KJ10 ♣K87

South: ♠7 ♥K1053 ♦Q9743 ♣Q42

Optimum E 6N: -1440

HCP: N 6, E 18, S 7, W 9

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	5	1	-	-	6
W	5	3	1	-	5

other two hands will have at least 24 points between them, and if these are split evenly you may make 3 or even 4 spades – but not on this hand! Almost every East now bid 3NT, and really that's where it should have ended. 3NT is an excellent contract: there are 10 top tricks, and any lead but a club gives you another one. (The computer thinks you should make 12 tricks, but of course it knows where the spade and diamond honours are.) Three Norths went on with 4♠, which I think was unwise, and predictably two of them were doubled, expensively, while one East bid 5♣ which was safe but didn't score well. Finally one East bid 5♣ over the 3♠ overcall, and North went on to 5♠, which was doubled for -1400. I was expecting everyone to be in 3NT, but Summertown isn't like that!

Board 18

	North	
Dlr: East	♠ Q 9 4	Optimum
Vul: N/S	♥ A 10 3	NS 6N:
	♦ A Q J	+1440
	♣ A K 8 6	

West		East
♠ 7 5		♠ K 10 6 3
♥ Q J	**18**	♥ 9 7 4 2
♦ K 5 3 2		♦ 10 9 7 4
♣ Q 9 7 4 2		♣ 10

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

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	5	4	6	6	6
S	5	4	6	6	6
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

Finally, here on board 18 everyone played in 3NT by North. Essentially, nearly everyone opened 2NT as North and South tried Stayman. Because of varying bidding methods most Norths had to open 2 clubs or 2 diamonds first, and many Souths were using 5-card Puppet Stayman, so the bidding was more complicated, but it got to the same place. At my table North opened a strong club, and I tried to get in the way, but it led to the same contract.

What should East lead? Almost everyone led the ♠3, and certainly this *could* turn out very well, but it looks risky to me – you are leading into strength, and dummy may have four spades. Here the lead gave declarer a cheap trick and the chance to make all four spade tricks. I think a passive diamond lead is safer.

The cards lie very kindly for declarer in 3NT. The diamond finesse is right, giving three tricks. The ♥Q and ♥J drop, giving three more tricks. You can make all your spades. Finally you can make three club tricks (small to the 10, J and Q, then finesse the 8 later) – Krys did this, and was the only declarer to make the 12 tricks that the computer analysis says you can take, even though his tally included three spade tricks rather than four. So it all depended on how many tricks declarer made, and the three pairs who made only 10 tricks ended up with a poor score at pairs.

Steven Bliss