

Summertown Bridge Bulletin 30th May 2022

Congratulations to Alison and Robert, last night's winners, and to runners-up Sue and Humaira.

The winning score, unusually, was under 60%, and was only 17.5% higher than the lowest score. As you might guess from this relatively narrow range, the bidding was mostly unremarkable and, in fact, no fewer than 6 hands were played in the same contract at every table. As a teams event, this could have been quite boring: but at a pairs session, of course, what you need to do as declarer is to look for every possible way of making extra tricks – whereas as defenders, you have to try to give away as few tricks as humanly possible.

Dlr: South
 Vul: E/W

♠ 8 4
 ♥ 9 8 7 2
 ♦ 7 6 2
 ♣ 10 4 3 2

Optimum
 EW 7N:
 -2220

♠ A 7 6 3 2
 ♥ A 10
 ♦ K J 9 4
 ♣ A 6

W NORTH E
 S 3 A
 T SOUTH T

♠ K J
 ♥ Q J 6 5 4
 ♦ A
 ♣ Q J 9 7 5

0
 16 14
 10

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

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	7	4	7	5	7
W	7	4	7	5	7

On Board 3, everyone played in 3NT. At four tables, East was declarer and South led a diamond (usually the 5). A low one was played from table and when North didn't contribute an honour, declarer could see that South held both the missing honours, making the diamonds safe from further attack. This meant there would be no problem in making the contract by setting up one of the other suits – but which one should you try first?

It seems natural to go for the hearts, since you hold four out of the five top cards with only the King missing. If you think it through, though, you'll see there's a potential communications

problem, since the ♠K is now your only guaranteed entry to dummy and once you've dealt with the hearts, you would like to be able to set up some clubs as well.

Betty spotted this and after taking the first two hearts with the 10 and Ace, she tried to create an extra entry with a small spade to the Jack. Although this lost, it promptly created an extra winner when South played another diamond, bringing in a total of 12 tricks for a joint top (to be fair, it's difficult for South to see that the safest return is a high spade). Robert also saw the problem and, after extracting the ♥K, he immediately played a small club from hand. However, this time South was able to take the ♣K and exit with a club, holding declarer to 11 tricks.

So how can declarer make all 13 tricks, as Deep Finesse says can be done on any lead? The answer is to play the clubs first. Double dummy, you can see that what you need to do is to lead the Queen and, if it's covered, take the Ace and then finesse against North's ♣10. If it's not covered, let it run, then turn your attention to the hearts. In either case, you won't be able to make more than three club tricks; but you'll find that as you play out the hearts, South will be squeezed in spades and diamonds, giving you an extra trick in whichever suit is discarded.

The hand was twice played by West, receiving a low club lead. This makes it much easier, as once South's ♣K appears, it's virtually certain that West has led from four to the 10 – so you can take the ♣A and immediately finesse the 9 with confidence. You then play on hearts, crossing back to dummy with a diamond after pulling out the ♥K. South can spare two diamonds and a spade on the run of the hearts, but the ♣Q will now operate the squeeze.

So why didn't Sandra make 13 tricks when she played this hand as West? Simple – she mislicked at trick 7, playing the ♠J instead of the neighbouring ♥J! Happens to us all, doesn't it?

Dlr: East
 Vul: E/W

♠ 10 7 6 2
 ♥ 8 5
 ♦ A Q 9
 ♣ A Q 5 3

Optimum
 NS 3D:
 +110

♠ 9 4
 ♥ K Q 9 7
 ♦ J 7 4 2
 ♣ K J 4

WEST NORTH EAST
 SOUTH
 6

♠ A K J 8 5 3
 ♥ J 10 6
 ♦ 6
 ♣ 10 9 2

♠ Q
 ♥ A 4 3 2
 ♦ K 10 8 5 3
 ♣ 8 7 6

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

12
 10 9
 9

On board 6, everyone played in 2♠ by East.

At almost all tables the opening lead was either a club or a diamond and despite the unlucky club layout, declarer could more or less count 8 tricks – enough for the contract. Could another one be found for a better score? Deep Finesse says best defence can always hold the contract to 8 tricks, so how did some declarers make 9?

You always have to lose a heart, a diamond, and two clubs, so it seems that the trumps are the key to this hand. If the Queen is held by North, then you can easily make all six tricks in the suit, provided they break 3-2. However, if that is the case, then you'll only need to finesse once, so it can't hurt to start by cashing the Ace, just in case South has a singleton honour – and lo and behold, the Queen drops!

You're not out of the woods yet, though, because now you need an entry to dummy in order to finesse against the ♠10 and, depending what's happened earlier, you may not have one until you can force out the ♥A. This is where the defence has a chance to shine, because if South holds up the Ace until the second round, then partner will be able to ruff the third round. It won't break the contract, but holding declarer to 8 tricks will produce a very decent score for the defenders.

If South takes the ♥A at the first opportunity, declarer can get to dummy with another heart and lead the ♠9. North does best to duck this but, in most cases, it will now be safe to ruff a diamond back to hand and then draw the last two trumps, making that all-important overtrick.

However, the risk is that before you can do this, the defenders will have forced you twice in diamonds, in which case you won't have enough trumps left. So if you still have the ♣K in dummy, it's actually better to give up on the hearts and use that as your entry, breathing a sigh of relief when both defenders follow.

As you may have realised by now, this is actually quite a complicated hand for both declarer and defenders and on the night, no one got it exactly right, either way. So the good scores went to the pairs who made fewer mistakes ... and that's another thing that happens to us all!