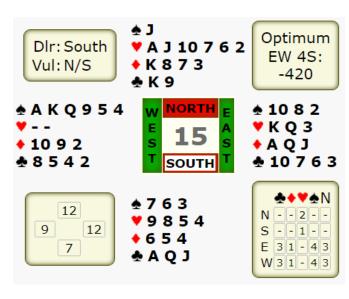
## Summertown Bridge Bulletin, 5 July 2021

Hello everyone, this is Steven again. There were a lot of interesting hands last night. I've chosen three hands from the end of the evening which are all about coping with pre-empts. People like pre-empting because it's hard for opponents to judge, and often this works very well; but sometimes it's hard for your partner to judge too. Hence there's quite a lot of luck involved, as you'll see.



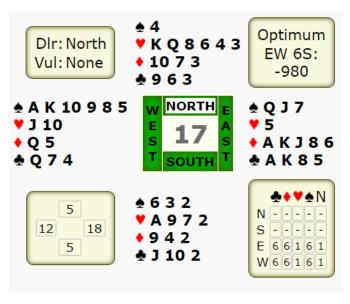
The normal opening on Board 15 (5 out of 9 pairs) was 2♠ by West, and North normally came in with 3♥. East usually bid just 3♠, and West went on to 4♠ whether or not South supported the hearts. 4♠ usually made with an overtrick.

One pair let the bidding die in 3♥, and another pair opened a multi 2♦ instead of 2♠ and let opponents play in 3♥ (only one off for a poor EW score). One pair opened 3♠, passed out. My table was less timid! I also opened 3♠, North bid 4♥, East 4♠ and South 5♥: I should have passed this but went on to 5♠

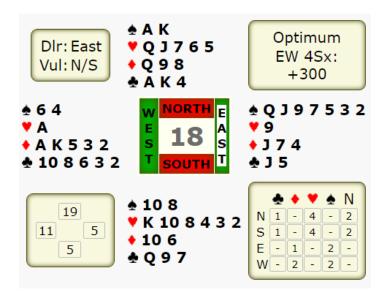
(with solid spades and at most one trick in defence). Luckily 5♠ made after the ♥A was led, as I could discard two losing clubs on hearts, although 5♥ doubled (at least 3 off) would have scored better. It's hard to judge in these situations.

Hand 17 shows the destructive power of pre-empts. 6♠ is laydown for EW, but only one pair bid it. That was Linda & Dave, who won the whole event: here they were helped by the fact that North didn't bid.

Every other North opened 2♥ (or a multi) – clearly minimal, but worth it non-vulnerable at pairs. East has an awkward bid now: most bid diamonds or an 'unusual 2NT' (not recommended against weak two bids), though I'd prefer to risk a double despite having only three spades. South usually bid 3♥ or 4♥ (4♥ is an overbid when the hand is so flat, and might be expensive if doubled, but it succeeded in keeping EW out of slam).



Every West now bid 4♠ and was left there: East couldn't picture that partner's spades were so good, and West couldn't picture that partner's hand was so strong. The pre-empt triumphs again!



Board 18 was another hand where it paid to pre-empt to the hilt.

One East passed, and NS bid smoothly to 4♥. Another East opened just 2♠ (which I would if vulnerable) and again opponents got to 4♥. One East opened a multi 2♠, after which NS had a mix-up and played in 3♠ - not a success.

Every other East opened 3. At two tables this was passed round to North, who bid 3NT and was (rather surprisingly) left there: this would go off on a diamond lead, but made plus one on both occasions after a spade lead. Most other Wests raised 3 to 4, as I did, thinking that this couldn't be too expensive, might even make, and would make things difficult for North (who must have a strong hand). North can only double now, for a moderate score when 4 goes 2 off. South at two tables went on to 5, which has no chance (although one EW pair still went on to 5 ...)

Are there any general lessons to be learnt? Well, it pays to pre-empt aggressively when not vulnerable, and to support partner to the hilt immediately: after that, everyone is guessing to some extent!

Steven Bliss