

Summertown Bridge Bulletin, 6 September 2021

Hello everyone,

This is Steven Bliss again. I couldn't play last night, but I've chosen three hands which have interesting points on bidding and how it has changed over the years.

Dlr: South
Vul: E/W

♠854
♥QJ1093
♦3
♣AJ108

Optimum
S 3N+1;
+430

♠96
♥AK8642
♦K95
♣KQ

W	North	E
e	3	a
s		s
t	South	t

♠J1032
♥7
♦J876
♣5432

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

♠AKQ7
♥5
♦AQ1042
♣976

	8	
15		2
	15	

The first two hands are mainly about doubles. On Board 3, South opens 1♦. West will overcall 2♥ if playing intermediate jump overcalls, otherwise 1♥. Everyone has their own style here. A jump overcall used to be a really strong bid. Nowadays most people play it as a weak bid when not vulnerable, but some (including me) play it as intermediate when vulnerable. We tend to mean different things by 'intermediate', but I suppose you can sum it up as a respectable opening bid with a good six-card suit, and the West hand certainly qualifies. 2♥ by West was the most common contract.

North would love to make a penalty double but (nowadays) can't – a double in this position would normally promise 4 spades and be looking to buy the contract, not punish opponents. North might choose to bid 1NT after a 1♥ overcall, but isn't worth 2NT over 2♥ - North would have to pass. Now *South* has to double – looking mainly to play in 2 spades or 3 of a minor, but also giving North the chance to pass for penalties. 2♥*-3 cost 800 for an outright top. North-South actually got a good score even if they didn't double 2♥, as the makeable 3NT isn't really biddable.

On board 4 the computer, very reasonably, thinks that the optimum contract is 1NT by South – North-South can't make any more than this, and East-West can't make anything at all. Only one South played in 1NT, and three Wests played in 2♦. The reason for this, I think, is that the style of bidding which the EBU now teaches is (broadly) 'Acot with three weak twos' – if this is your system you will open 2♦ as West. (If this isn't your system you will pass hands like this when vulnerable, and perhaps open them 3♦ when not).

Dlr: West
Vul: All

♠975
♥J54
♦A1094
♣K76

Optimum
NS 1N; +90

♠K3
♥106
♦KQJ765
♣832

W	North	E
e	4	a
s		s
t	South	t

♠AQ86
♥K987
♦2
♣Q954

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

	8	
9		11
	12	

♠J1042
♥AQ32
♦83
♣AJ10

All pre-emptive bids like this are a gamble. Here it doesn't come off – even one off would be minus 100, which is more than North South score in 1NT. What is worse is that you might be doubled – if South makes a light protective double, as happened at one table, North passes with glee. A spade lead generally allowed West to discard one heart loser, but 2♦ was still expensive.

Dir: East Vul: None	♠QJ4 ♥A74 ♦109832 ♣43	Optimum NS 4Sx; -300																																										
♠A ♥QJ95 ♦764 ♣QJ765	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">North</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">E</td> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">e</td> <td style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em;">14</td> <td style="text-align: center;">a</td> <td style="text-align: center;">s</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">s</td> <td style="text-align: center;">South</td> <td style="text-align: center;">t</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	W	North	E		e	14	a	s	s	South	t		♠9832 ♥K1083 ♦A5 ♣A109																														
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And lastly, here is Board 14. For most of my lifetime South's hand was a typical Acoll light opener of 1♠. Recently that has changed (partly because so many people have been influenced by Andrew Robson!). 1NT is now a possible opener for many people, and almost mandatory for some of them. I tend to 'take a view' depending partly on the quality of the long suit, and partly on the general shape of the hand and where the points are. This hand looks like a 7-loser hand in spades (with no stopper in hearts) so I'd prefer to open 1♠, but you can never be sure till dummy goes down! Here North should raise 1♠ to 2♠. The only pair to play in spades made it easily, and the two pairs in 1NT went off. East-West can actually make 4♥ as the cards lie, but it's hard for them to enter the bidding: two EW pairs played in club or heart part-scores.

Steven Bliss