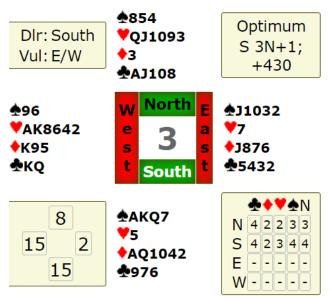
Summertown Bridge Bulletin, 6 September 2021

Hello everyone,

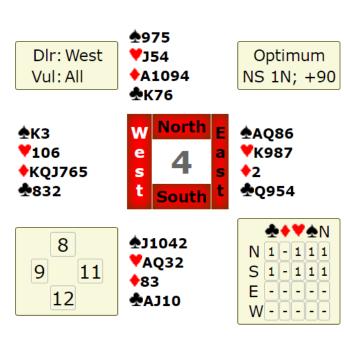
This is Steven Bliss again. I couldn't play last night, but I've chosen three hands which have interesting points on bidding and how it has changed over the years.



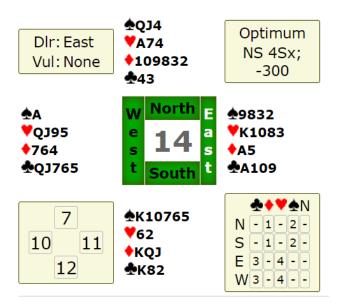
The first two hands are mainly about doubles. On Board 3, South opens 1. West will overcall 2♥ if playing intermediate jump overcalls, otherwise 1♥. Everyone has their own style here. A jump overcall used to be a really strong bid. Nowadays most people play it as a weak bid when not vulnerable, but some (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 sixcard 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) 'Acol 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).



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.



And lastly, here is Board 14. For most of my lifetime South's hand was a typical Acol 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