

Summertown Bridge Bulletin, 17 May 2021

We had another excellent turnout at Summertown's online session last night – 11½ tables, supplemented by, as our director has it, a pair of aliens (who came second in the final result – a better score than they usually manage!)

The evening kicked off with an interesting part-score hand.

Dir: North Vul: None	♠ J 5 ♥ Q 7 6 ♦ Q J 8 2 ♣ K 8 5 4	Optimum EW 4Hx: +300																																	
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On most tables, South opened with a weak 1NT. N/S both have balanced hands, and have 23 points between them, so you might think this would be a dull hand. In the event, only four pairs were left to play in NT, most managing a comfortable 8 tricks, whilst Kati achieved a joint top by making 9, as the computer says is possible on best play. However, on almost all the other tables, West popped in a penalty double – not necessarily recommended with this kind of hand (15 points all in Aces and Kings, and a flat distribution), but here it had the potential to work out well after East correctly removed to 2♥.

This should make, as long as declarer can manage to take two club tricks: if the defence doesn't open up the clubs, you have to get to hand twice to take two finesses – this means you have to use diamond ruffs as entries. +110 was a very good score for E/W, and one lucky pair hit the jackpot when they found themselves in 2♥ doubled for +470.

Board 9 was universally played in hearts by N/S. North has a 4-loser hand and South has a fit with 6 losers, but between them they are missing two Aces, and only 4 pairs managed to find their way to the making slam.

If East leads a club only 12 tricks are available, but on some tables, against either 5♥ or 6♥, the lead was ♠A. Isabel was the only declarer to realise that, after ruffing this in hand, she could now make 13 tricks by setting up the spades in order to discard all four clubs from her hand. This clever play earned a very well-deserved 100% on the board.

Dir: North Vul: E/W	♠ - - ♥ A Q 10 7 6 4 ♦ K 6 2 ♣ K Q 7 2	Optimum NS 6H: +980																																	
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And finally we come to Board 14, where East has a very similar spade holding to South's on Board 9 – but the remaining cards in the suit are distributed rather differently

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The computer says that N/S can make 4♣ - but of course, no one played there!

At a couple of tables, East prudently passed and after South opened the bidding, E/W subsequently played quietly in 3♥, going one down when the trumps didn't behave. However, anyone who ended up declaring in spades – whether East, or South – ran into a staggeringly bad break, and did well to escape for two off. This wasn't much consolation if they were doubled, as happened to three pairs in each direction.

There's not a great deal to be learnt from this unusual hand, but it does serve to remind us what a fascinating – and sometimes frustrating - game we all play!

Sandra Nicholson & Krys Kazmierczak