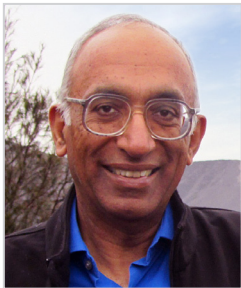


# Hunters Hill Teams

Management of a fragile trump suit came up more than once in the event.

by RAKESH KUMAR



*Rakesh Kumar describes himself as an enthusiastic non-expert who makes enough errors to have plenty of material for bridge columns.*

The Hunters Hill Teams had 38 entries in the Open event, with a further 12 in the Restricted section. The Open was won by *Ranjit Limaye - Michael Draper - Bijan Assaee - Alexis Ngan*, who led all the way from Round 1 to Round 7, which was quite an achievement. In second place were *Rakesh Kumar - Kevin Davies - Wayne Smith - Julian Abel*, who finished just ahead of *Berri Folkard - Ross Folkard - Kinga Moses - Neville Moses*. Perhaps someone should have tested whatever was in that flask Kinga and Neville were drinking from – the margin by which they won the pair datums was staggering!

1	Kinga Moses / Neville Moses	139.9	→ Impressive!
2	Rakesh Kumar / Kevin Davies	91.4	
3	Patricia Lacey / Carmel Bourke	89.3	
4	Bijan Assaee / Alexis Ngan	80.4	
5	Matt Smith / Johnno Newman	74.1	

There were some instructive hands throughout the day. In Round 1, a potential slam hand required a safety play in trumps for success:

## Board 8

Dealer W | Vul None

	♠ 6		
	♥ J854		
	♦ QT943		
	♣ 742		
♠ AK952		♠ J83	
♥ K		♥ A63	
♦ J6		♦ AK82	
♣ KJ963		♣ A85	
	♠ QT74		
	♥ QT972		
	♦ 75		
	♣ QT		

	3	
15	□	16
	6	

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	–	–	–	–	–
S	–	–	–	–	–
E	7	4	2	7	7
W	7	4	2	7	7

Seventeen pairs did indeed bid to 6S, but 9 declarers went down. There are a few things to think about. Firstly, there are at least 2 potential losers, one each in spades and clubs, plus there's a real danger that if spades break 4-1, there might be 2 trump losers. That possibility can be handled by cashing the ♠A and leading a small spade towards the jack, which caters for a 4-1 break in either direction. However, it's not OK to take the safety play unless the club finesse succeeds. Moreover, if it fails, there will be no way to recover if after ♣A and a club to the jack, North wins ♣Q and returns a third club for South to ruff. One solution to this is that after the likely opening heart lead, West should enter dummy in diamonds to take a first-round club finesse. The sight of the ♣10 may cause some concern about a possible 4-1 break in that suit, but if the finesse succeeds, declarer can then play trumps for safety. If the club finesse fails, though, one has to bang down ♠AK and hope to drop the queen. Of course this line will come to grief if clubs are indeed 4-1 and North gives South a ruff, which will be immensely frustrating if the ♠Q was doubleton anyway, but it does cater for all 3-2 breaks, including the position on this hand.

Management of a fragile trump suit came up again later in the event, in Round 6:

**Board 22**

Dealer E | Vul E-W

♠ J62  
♥ 765  
♦ AKJ86  
♣ J5

♠ T74  
♥ K3  
♦ T92  
♣ KQ743

♠ KQ  
♥ J9842  
♦ 75  
♣ T962

♠ A9853  
♥ AQT  
♦ Q43  
♣ A8

10  
8  6  
16

	N		E	
W	—	—	—	S

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	—	5	—	5	2
S	—	5	1	5	2
E	2	—	—	—	—
W	2	—	—	—	—

Most North-South pairs bid to 4S on this hand, but 7 of 30 went down. If West chooses to make an attacking lead of ♣K things look a bit awkward, but when South lays down the ♠A dropping the ♠Q, it gets interesting. Declarer can work out that either East has doubleton ♠KQ or West has ♠KT74. To limit the damage to 2 trump losers in the latter case, declarer can lead the ♠9 and run it if it is not covered; on the actual layout, only one trump trick will be lost irrespective of whether or not West plays the ♠10.

Sometimes, results at the bridge table can seem utterly unfair. In round 2 we faced the outstanding pair of Michael Wilkinson and Griff Ware – by the time this column appears, they will be representing Australia in the Bermuda Bowl. On this hand from Round 2, Michael opened 1D, reversed into spades, but after exploring the possibility of slam in either minor, stopped in 5D, which appeared to be an excellent spot. However, as East had shown a club suit and West had indicated potential support, partner led one. I ruffed, returned a spade, received another ruff, returned another spade as partner obviously had no more, and so the contract went 2 down. Our teammates bid 3NT, as did 16 others, so we gained 13 IMPs even though looking for a minor suit slam really was the right thing to be doing on this hand. And in fact our defence was nothing to be proud of. As Michael pointed out, if partner cashes the spade ace before leading a club, he can get another ruff. Three North-South pairs obviously did just that, twice taking a 6D contract 4 off!

**Board 16**

Dealer W | Vul E-W

♠ A  
♥ Q875  
♦ 65  
♣ T97654

♠ KQ54  
♥ A  
♦ AKT983  
♣ Q2

♠ 863  
♥ JT4  
♦ J2  
♣ AKJ83

♠ JT972  
♥ K9632  
♦ Q74  
♣

6  
18  10  
6

	N		E	
W	—	—	—	S

	W	N	E	S
1D		P	2C	P
2S		P	3H!	P
?				

To look for a 4th suit forcing minor suit slam or to stop in 3NT? & a stopper ask in hearts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	—	—	2	—	—
S	—	—	2	—	—
E	4	2	—	3	5
W	4	2	—	3	5



A different version of the conundrum of showing strength in minor suits versus bidding 3NT was highlighted by another hand, from Round 5:

**Board 14**

Dealer E | Vul None

♠ AT975  
♥ AK87  
♦ K7  
♣ T4

♠ QJ86  
♥ JT6  
♦ J8  
♣ K932

♠ 4  
♥ 95432  
♦ T9632  
♣ 75

♠ K32  
♥ Q  
♦ AQ54  
♣ AQJ86

	N	
W		E
	S	

14  
18  8  
0

W	N	E	S
		P	P
1C	X	1NT	P
2D	X	3C	

Time to apply Hamman's Law?

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	3	-	-
S	-	-	3	-	-
E	2	1	-	2	2
W	2	1	-	3	2

After a 1C opening by West, North will double. East may bid 1S or, as at our table, 1NT. Now what? I passed, West reversed into 2D and partner doubled again. East corrected to 3C, which was the final contract. Although West's bid is technically correct, an alternative is to simply follow Robert Hamman's dictum that "if you have a choice of reasonable bids and one of them is 3NT, then bid it". In theory, this contract should go one down, but in practice, 12 of 16 declarers in 3NT were successful.

It frequently seems not to be about perfection but about what you can get away with ... 🍀



Open Teams winners – Michael Drapper, Bijan Assaee, Alexis Ngan and Ranjit Limaye.



Restricted Teams winners – Guy Dillon, Holly Dillon, Robbie Carmichael and Craig Taberner.