

Shovelling the spades

A day that was all about playing in 4S – or not!

by RAKESH KUMAR



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

In the Trumps Summer teams, QUITTNER (*Liz Quittner - Helen Lowry - Julianne Rocks - Margaret Foster*) had a clear win, never losing a match and (on the new decimalised scale) finishing nearly 9 VPs ahead of the teams that almost tied for second and third place. This was a day in which 4S contracts featured prominently. Not that you always wanted to be in 4S...

This first exhibit, from round 2, was one of those where it was a better idea to be playing 3NT than 4S. At our table, partner opened 1NT (14-17 in our methods, may include a 5-card major) and I very nearly just bid 3NT. However, since partner could have a 5-card major, and in that case there was a real chance that one of the minor suits might be wide open, I bid 2C inquiry and when partner showed a maximum with 5 spades, there we were.

South led a club. When declarer set about drawing trumps and discovered the bad news, things got awkward, and partner eventually went one down.

Across the field, 3 declarers went off in 4S, while 7 made, usually on a heart lead. That's an interesting story in itself. If South leads ♥6 and dummy plays ♥8, should you cover as North? If East had opened 1NT then the answer is clearly no, at least if you think about it. You can see the five and four, so the 6 can't be South's lowest card from an honour, because then East would have to hold exactly ♥32, in which case South would have a doubleton. If you don't cover, East is in the same kind of difficulty as if on a club lead – the switch to clubs will of course happen in due course, and there is once again no obvious source of a tenth trick, with all sorts of problems in the trump suit.

Board 18

Dealer E | Vul N-S

♠ 4
♥ J754
♦ 653
♣ KQT62

♠ QJ952
♥ AK2
♦ K92
♣ A3

♠ 8763
♥ 63
♦ AQT4
♣ 985

♠ AKT
♥ QT98
♦ J87
♣ J74



6
11 17
6

W	N	E	S
		1NT	P
2C	P	3S!	P
4S			

Opposite a 1NT opening, 4333 hands shouldn't go looking for a major suit contract

Maximum with 5 spades

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	1	–	–	–	–
S	1	–	–	–	–
E	–	2	3	4	4
W	–	2	3	4	4

In contrast, the 4 declarers in 3NT quickly demonstrated that it's glacially cold, thus proving Ron Klinger's point that opposite a 1NT opening, 4333 hands shouldn't go looking for a major suit contract.

Not playing in 4S was again the best idea on the next hand, one of several very swingy boards in the last round. Five declarers were indeed in 3NT, with all but one making. How does one bid to that contract? At our teammates' table, East started with a multi-2D bid and Wayne Smith, sitting South, doubled. After two passes, East corrected to 2H and now South bid 2S. North raised to 3S and South bid 3NT to offer a choice of games, which North was happy to pass.

Board 20

Dealer W | Vul All

<p>♠ K643 ♥ T4 ♦ AJ94 ♣ J54</p>	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>+</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W	+	E		S		<p>♠ 987 ♥ Q2 ♦ KT86 ♣ 8762</p> <p>♠ 5 ♥ J98765 ♦ 753 ♣ AQ9</p>
	N										
W	+	E									
	S										
<p>♠ AQJT2 ♥ AK3 ♦ Q2 ♣ KT3</p>											

W	N	E	S
p	p	2D!	X
P	P	2H	2S
P	3S	P	3NT
P	P	P	

	5	
9	□	7
	19	

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

While 4S was usually unsuccessful, beating it actually requires West to duck the ♦Q and then take the next diamond with the ace, otherwise a desperate South can finesse the ♦10 and dispose of a loser on the ♦K. I wasn't smart enough to duck that ♦Q... so it was just another flat board.

Making 4S is easy enough on this next board from the last round, but the bidding is problematical, because it's easy to go overboard. What do you do with the South hand? It's a solid 6-loser hand in spades, but may be worth more in hearts if that happens to be partner's suit. So 1S and 4S are reasonable alternatives, while 3S is rather wimpy, perhaps justified only because North-South are vulnerable. However, if South opens 1S, it's very likely that NS will end up in slam: 5 pairs did, and oddly enough one of them somehow made 6S. Along the way there's every chance that East will bid 5C, which may halt NS in their tracks. That must have been a common occurrence, because 9 of the 11 who stopped in time played in 5S.

Board 23

Dealer S | Vul All

<p>♠ AK542 ♥ 632 ♦ AQJ ♣ A7</p>	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>+</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W	+	E		S		<p>♠ 8 ♥ 7 ♦ KT7 ♣ KQJT9863</p>
	N										
W	+	E									
	S										
<p>♠ KJT954 ♥ 9853 ♣ 542</p>											
<p>♠ QJT9763 ♥ AQ8 ♦ 642 ♣</p>											

W	N	E	S
			?

what will you bid with this hand?

	18	
4	□	9
	9	

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	1	-	5	4
S	-	1	-	5	4
E	3	-	-	-	-
W	3	-	-	-	-

4S contracts played a prominent part in the Trumps Summer Teams.



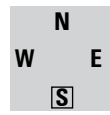
Also relatively straightforward is this 4S hand, again from the last round. It is basically a simple cross-ruff hand, with 6 trump tricks and 4 outside top tricks. However, many didn't find it that simple: 6 of 16 made fewer than 10 tricks.

Board 27

Dealer S | Vul None

♠ A976
♥ KT3
♦ J8643
♣ 9

♠ T832
♥ Q985
♦ 9
♣ Q764



♠ 4
♥ J64
♦ AKQT72
♣ JT8

♠ KQJ5
♥ A72
♦ 5
♣ AK532

8
4 11
17

W	N	E	S
			1C
P	1S	P	4S

A straightforward 4S hand, however 6 of 16 pairs made fewer than 10 tricks.

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	3	1	2	5	2
S	3	1	2	5	2
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

One of the declarers who did succeed in making 10 tricks had unfortunately bid to 6S. This was against the QUITTNER team, who were the beneficiaries of two such swings (4S making/6S going down) in their favour during the final round, but also had a large swing against them on board 23 shown above (when they reached the failing 6S and opponents stopped in 5S). The shovels turned over lots of IMPs in that last match! 📈