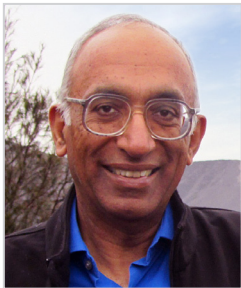


The Central Coast Teams

Slam decisions are crucial in short matches.

by RAKESH KUMAR



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

This was the final event of the Central Coast Super Congress, with 36 teams in the Open and another 10 in the Restricted section. In the Open, the final result was a tie for first place between GREWCOCK (*Les Grewcock - Steven Bock - Warren Dobes - Witold Chylewski*) and CLARKE (*Janet Clarke - Di Coats - Sharon Mayo - Greg Mayo*), with GUMBY (*Pauline Gumby - Warren Lazer - Julian Foster - David Weston*) in third place.

As is often the case in short matches, slam decisions were crucial. On this day, most of these decisions rested with North-South, who were dealt 7 hands with slam prospects. One of these was a glacially cold grand slam with 39 high card points between the two hands – yet only 19 of the 36 pairs successfully bid it!

Before I tell you about some interesting slam hands, here's a problem for you:

West - East

♠ AT		♠ QJ72
♥ KQT6		♥ 9752
♦ QJ7		♦ K6
♣ KJ65		♣ AT7

South deals and passes. As West, you open 1NT and shortly thereafter find yourself in 4H on the lead of the ♣3. How are you going to play this? There are potentially 5 losers, but one has been taken care of by the club lead. However, there are still things to think about viz. (1) Could the lead be a singleton, or could it be a low card from an honour? (2) How are you going to tackle the trumps? If by leading towards the KQ, how are you going to reach dummy? And will you finesse?

The slam decisions began in the very first round. Here is a slam that most didn't get to – there were only 5 pairs in 6C and another 2 in 6NT. The usual contract was 3NT making 12 tricks. What would you do? The first question is whether you would open the South hand. If you do, a possible auction is 1D-(1H overcall)-2C-3C followed by whatever keycard ask you would use at that point. If you don't, life could get awkward should West dare (even vulnerable against not) to bid a weak 2H showing hearts and another. Otherwise it might go 1C-1D-3C etc, or if North can open to show an 8 playing trick hand in clubs then that might be even better.

Board 6

Dealer E | Vul E-W

♠ AQ9		♠ T853
♥ AJ3		♥ 62
♦ 7		♦ J43
♣ AQJT87		♣ 9653
♠ K642		♠ J7
♥ KQ985		♥ T74
♦ QT65		♦ AK982
♣		♣ K42

18
10 1
11

W	N	E	S
		P	?

South's decision about whether or not to open may lead to quite different outcomes

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	6	4	3	2	6
S	6	4	3	2	6
E	–	–	–	–	–
W	–	–	–	–	–

Another not-quite-so-difficult slam hand came along in round 6. This time one third of the field got there: 11 played in 6H and 1 in 6NT.

Board 17

Dealer N | Vul None

♠ AK9
♥ 9865
♦ AQJ3
♣ AK

♠ JT86432
♥ T
♦ 7642
♣ 3

♠ Q5
♥ AK432
♦ T5
♣ J864

♠ 7
♥ QJ7
♦ K98
♣ QT9752



21
8 1
10

W	N	E	S
	2NT	P	3D
P	?		

It makes sense to jump rebid 4H

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	3	5	6	3	6
S	3	5	6	3	6
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

North will usually open or rebid 2NT and South will transfer to hearts. What should North do now? Unless you have other specific agreements, it makes sense to jump rebid 4H, because game in hearts is likely to succeed even opposite a zero-point hand with 5 hearts. It should then be quite straightforward for South to move towards slam.

Among those who finished at the top, Dobes - Chylewski sitting North-South bid both of these slams, as did Gumby - Lazer.

There was an interesting potential slam hand in round 5, which turned out to be one of those "5 or 7" hands that depended on the lead.

Board 15

Dealer S | Vul N-S

♠ AQJ8752
♥ A83
♦ 9
♣ J6

♠ T64
♥ JT42
♦ 65
♣ K943

♠ K3
♥ Q
♦ AKQJT74
♣ QT8

♠ 9
♥ K9765
♦ 832
♣ A752



12
7 4
17

W	N	E	S
	1S	P	2D
P	2S	P	...

11 pairs bid to 6S, of whom 8 made the slam, 3 went down on a killing lead

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

In fact there were 11 North-South pairs who bid to 6S, of whom 8 made the slam. However, 3 went down, two on a bold club lead and one on a devilish ♦6 lead, which destroyed declarer's communications. Almost everyone else played in 4S making overtricks, although there was one lone South in 5D, making all 13 tricks on a non-club lead.

Back to the problem 4H hand. When I was put to the test, I failed, along with about half the field.

Board 23

Dealer S | Vul All

♠ K953
♥ 84
♦ T9843
♣ 32

♠ QJ72
♥ 9752
♦ K6
♣ AT7

♠ 864
♥ AJ3
♦ A52
♣ Q984

♠ AT
♥ KQT6
♦ QJ7
♣ KJ65



3
16 10
11

W	N	E	S
			P
1NT	P	2C	P
2H	P	4H	

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

I played low on the club lead, which went to the 9 and jack, then led a low diamond, hoping to find the ace on my left. However, the ♦K was captured by South, who returned another club, which I took in dummy. South then hopped up with the ♥A on the first round of trumps and gave his partner a club ruff. In due course I lost a spade and went down.

Obviously I would have been better off if I had taken the lead on table with the ♣A and played on trumps straight away, but I didn't. Would you have done that?

Finally, just for some amusement, let me tell you about the swingiest board of the entire event. It's not usually a good idea to be playing the same contract North-South at one table and East-West at the other, but this board from round 4 produced exactly that outcome in our match.

Board 3

Dealer S | Vul E-W

<p>♠ Q2 ♥ KJ8654 ♦ K54 ♣ 95</p>	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W — E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W — E	S	<p>♠ AJ964 ♥ QT9732 ♦ A3 ♣</p> <p>♠ 87 ♥ ♦ QT862 ♣ AKJ864</p> <p>♠ KT53 ♥ A ♦ J97 ♣ QT732</p>
N					
W — E					
S					

11
9 10
10

W	N	E	S
			P
2D!	?		

What should North do after a multi-2D opening?

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

Across the field, the spectrum of results was quite remarkable. Most often East-West played in 2H after a weak 2 or multi-2D opening. If West opens a multi-2D, what should North do? There's a risk that East might pass with long diamonds and no fit – that would have been a good move on this occasion, but it never happened. However, if North bids, this could spell trouble with a capital T. A much better idea is to pass and let East bid 2H correctable, then either defend or back in when the situation has been clarified.

When West played in 2H, the result was not pretty, with scores mostly from -200 to -400. Even worse was when East tried to rescue the situation and ended up in a doubled contract in clubs, with results from -800 to -1100! When North-South won the auction, the usual contract was 4S, made by 7 of 15 pairs. However, one North was doubled in 2H and made it for an even better score! 🍀