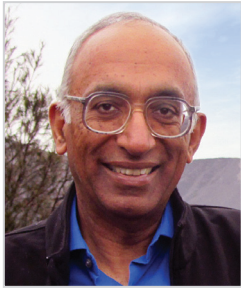


Hunters Hill Teams 2016

All about upgrades

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 was won by GIDLEY-BAIRD (*Margaret Gidley-Baird – Charles Klassen – Margaret Klassen – Titus Ling*) who finished 3 VPs ahead of the CHEN and LIMAYE teams tied in second place.

Some of the hands in this event were instructive in terms of when (and when not) to upgrade your hand and perhaps go hunting for a slam.

The first example was the very first board of the day, which illustrated the value of upgrading when you have plenty of aces and a good 5-card suit. The South hand certainly met those criteria and in our match, Sue Crompton decided she liked it enough to treat it as a 21-22 hcp 2NT opening. This quickly led to the cold 6♥, bid by only 3/36 in the Open event. In fact the hand is even cold for 7♦, but no one played a contract in that denomination.

Board 1

Dealer N | Vul None

♠ 8652 ♥ KQJ94 ♦ K86 ♣ 5	♠ QT ♥ 2 ♦ T975 ♣ Q98743	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		E	W					S			♠ KJ974 ♥ T753 ♦ 4 ♣ KJ6
	N		E												
W															
	S														
♠ A3 ♥ A86 ♦ AQJ32 ♣ AT2															

9
4 8
19

W	N	E	S
	P	P	2NT
P	3D!	P	4NT
P	5C	P	5NT
P	6D	P	6H

An upgrade to 2NT led to the cold 6H slam

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	–	7	6	2	6
S	–	7	6	2	6
E	1	–	–	–	–
W	1	–	–	–	–

If aces and a good suit are what count, you should certainly upgrade this next East hand. However, reaching slam sensibly is very difficult. After a 1♦ opening, South might double (in which case West will bid 1♥) or possibly overcall 1♥ (in which case West will bid 1NT). After North's pass, East can perhaps jump to 2♠ to show 16+ hcp. What next? Assuming West now raises to 3♦, East would surely want to look for slam, but asking for keycards would not help – what if West has the ♣A and no top honour in diamonds? Perhaps a case can be made for an Exclusion Keycard inquiry via a jump to 5♣.

Board 5

Dealer N | Vul N-S

♠ T7 ♥ 7 ♦ K753 ♣ QJT62	♠ 93 ♥ KJ643 ♦ AT8 ♣ 984	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		E	W					S			♠ AKQ85 ♥ A5 ♦ QJ9642 ♣
	N		E												
W															
	S														
♠ J642 ♥ QT982 ♦ ♣ AK53															

6
8 16
10

W	N	E	S
	P	1D	X
1H	P	2S	P
3D	P	5C	

Exclusion Keycard Inquiry to look for a Diamond slam

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	4	–	–	–	–
S	4	–	–	–	–
E	–	6	3	3	1
W	–	6	3	3	1

Across the field, 7 played in 5♦ and 3 in 6♦, all of which of course made. Four Easts somehow made 4♠, despite being tapped at trick 1 with a club lead. Another 9 were in successful partscores, while 10 did not succeed in making their contracts.

For an upgrade to pay off, you need to find a fit. So while you might start out full of plans to upgrade this South hand and head for slam if at all possible, the bidding quickly reveals a misfit. The question now becomes how to get to a makeable contract. The usual answer tends to be 3NT as the fallback of last resort, perhaps via 1♦-2♣-2♠-3♣-3NT, although if South bids past that to show extra shape and strength then things may not work out well.

Board 13

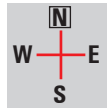
Dealer N | Vul All

♠ A
♥ T963
♦ 3
♣ AJT9643

♠ K32
♥ 54
♦ QT97
♣ Q752

♠ 9754
♥ QJ872
♦ J2
♣ K8

♠ QJT86
♥ AK
♦ AK8654
♣



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

For an upgrade to pay off, you need to find a fit.

9	
7	7
17	

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

A review of the scorecard revealed a remarkable assortment of results on the board, with 14 making 3NT, one making 5♣ and 15 going down in various contracts from 4♠ to 6NT.

Of course if you do upgrade your hand and bid slam, you had better play the cards well enough to justify having done so. Sitting West, 10 players found their way to 6♠ on this board, but only 6 made it. Success requires playing a club to the jack, after which only one heart ruff in dummy is needed, with the ♣K taking care of the other losing heart. Trying to ruff two hearts in dummy leads to disaster as North ruffs with 10♠. No doubt the 21 who played in 4♠ making 11 tricks thought they had done well to stop, but it didn't work out that way for us, because our opponents went past a sign-off, bid the slam and then made it!

Board 4

Dealer W | Vul All

♠ T4
♥ T54
♦ JT943
♣ QT3

♠ AQ732
♥ AJ76
♦ AQ8
♣ 6

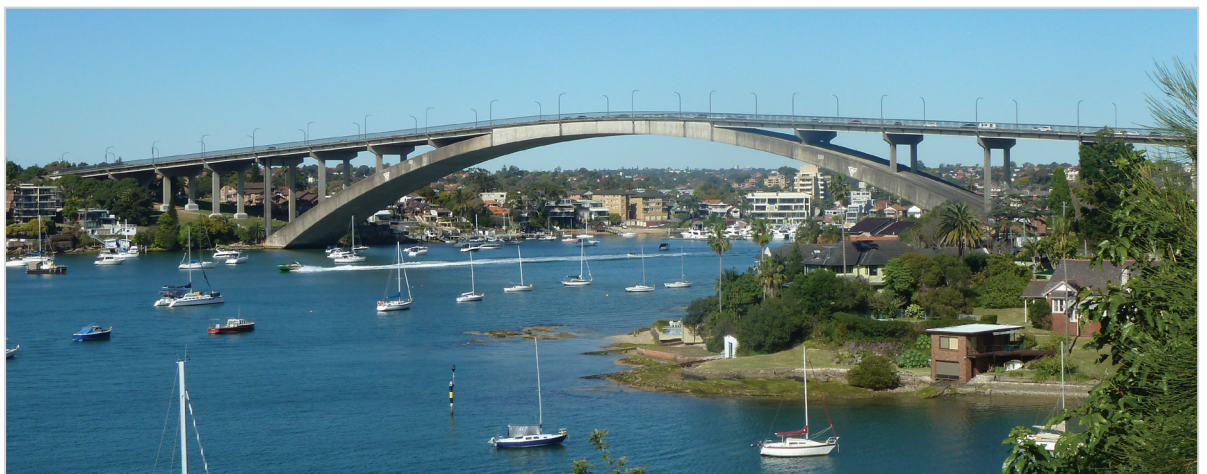
♠ K95
♥ K8
♦ K75
♣ KJ874

♠ J86
♥ Q932
♦ 62
♣ A952



	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	4	4	5	6	6
W	4	4	5	6	6

3	
17	13
7	



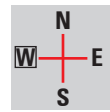
Finally, it can be a good idea to upgrade when you discover a good fit and believe that a worthwhile sacrifice might be available. Sometimes you even get to make your sacrificial contract! Witness this:

Board 20

Dealer W | Vul All

♠ AKQ95
♥ 65
♦ KQ62
♣ 32

♠ J8432
♥ T87
♦ 74
♣ AKJ



♠ 6
♥ AKJ9432
♦ J93
♣ 94

♠ T7
♥ Q
♦ AT85
♣ QT8765

14
9 9
8

W	N	E	S
P	1S	2H	P
3H	P	4H	P
P	P		

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

North opened 1♠ and partner chose to overcall 2♥ rather than a pre-emptive 3♥. This is consistent with Neil Kimelman's suggestion in *The Thin Fine Line* that sometimes the non-jump overcall, which suggests possible strength, can act as more of a deterrent to the opponents than a jump overcall, which only goads them to act. Kimelman calls this a reverse pre-empt. Anyway, I offered a simple raise to 3♥, weaker than a cue raise via 2♠. Partner now decided to bid 4♥ before North-South got any bright ideas – and it turned out to be cold! Only 9/36 Easts reached this contract. 🍀