

Swiss Pairs at North Shore

How the East (Lindfield) was won...

by RAKESH KUMAR



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

No, this is not the directionally challenged recycled plot of a 1962 movie, this is the story of the March Swiss Pairs Congress at the North Shore Bridge Club's second venue in East Lindfield. The field was strong, with 60 pairs contending. Warren Dobes – Witold Chylewski stormed home in the last 3 rounds, to win the event from Ervin Otvosi – Ashley Bach, with Tony Burke – Nigel Rosendorff in third place.

Three boards, one from each of those last rounds, caused me quite a few headaches and cost our partnership many IMPs. So I thought it would be interesting to see what the top pairs and their opponents did on these boards and whether this shed any light on how to do better at Swiss Pairs ...

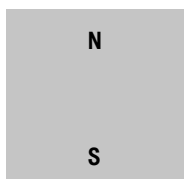
I'll offer them to you as problems. Firstly, after 3 passes, partner opens 1♦. Although not proud of your suit, you respond 1♥. Partner rebids 1♠, showing either 5+4 in diamonds/spades or exactly 4-1-4-4 shape. What do you bid?

- ♠ A543
- ♥ 6432
- ♦ KQ7
- ♣ J4

W	N	E	S
1D	P	1H	P
1S	P	?	

Secondly, with the opposition silent, you've arrived in 6NT by North and East leads the ♣J. How do you plan to play this?

- ♠ AQ6
- ♥ QJ98
- ♦ AK
- ♣ 9742



- ♠ K53
- ♥ A3
- ♦ QJ76
- ♣ AK85

And thirdly, RHO deals and bids 1♦. With a strong hand, you double and when next hand passes, partner predictably bids 1♠. Now what?

♠
♥ K54
♦ AK2
♣ KQJ6532

W	N	E	S
	1D	X	P
1S	P	?	

Here's the first of those boards, from round 5. The East hand has improved quite a lot after partner's 1♠ bid, but it has only 9 obviously working points. Still, there's a double fit – did you bid 2♠ or 3♠? I was a wimp and didn't upgrade the hand to invite game. Partner had a maximum and proceeded to make 10 tricks, being completely unfazed by the 4-1 trump break.

Board 9

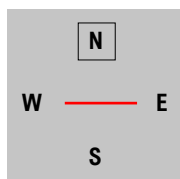
Dealer N | Vul E-W

♠ T
♥ AKT9
♦ T98
♣ QT872

♠ KQJ6
♥ J8
♦ AJ642
♣ K5

♠ A543
♥ 6432
♦ KQ7
♣ J4

♠ 9872
♥ Q75
♦ 53
♣ A963



W	N	E	S
	P	P	P
1D	P	1H	P
1S	P	?	

Shape showing

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

The moral of the story seems to be that if an 8-loser hand can make a limit raise of an opening of 1-of-a-major then regardless of point count, an 8-loser hand with 4-card support should also make a limit raise when partner rebids 1-of-a-major. Obviously many others thought this was entirely normal: 17 pairs out of 30 reached game and gained 7 IMPs for doing so.

Otvosi-Bach and Burke-Rosendorff were sitting East-West this round and both pairs reached 4♠. Dobes-Chylewski were North-South and gained 5 IMPs when the game wasn't bid against them.

The second hand, from round 6, has 10 top tricks but no long suit as an obvious source of another one or two. The ♣J lead is worrying as it could mean that the suit isn't breaking 3-2. One option is to take a heart finesse and play for 3-2 clubs anyway, another is to play ace and a small heart hoping that RHO rises with the ♥K. I assumed clubs weren't breaking, but it was possible LHO had led the top card from a 4-card suit and if so, the singleton ♣Q would drop under the ace and the ♠10 would then be finessable.

However, no ♣Q came down, so I had to make a decision at trick 2. I chose to play ace and small heart, but East won the king and the ♥10 didn't drop in 3 rounds, which meant I was one down. Very frustrating as clubs were in fact breaking and the heart finesse was on ...

Board 20

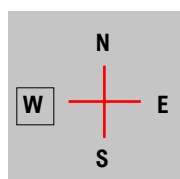
Dealer W | Vul All

♠ AQ6
♥ QJ98
♦ AK
♣ 9742

♠ JT97
♥ 654
♦ 853
♣ Q63

♠ 842
♥ KT72
♦ T942
♣ JT

♠ K53
♥ A3
♦ QJ76
♣ AK85



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

Indeed this may well have been the most problematical board of the day: 13 North-South pairs made 6NT while 8 went down. Another 9 pairs somehow stayed out of slam, although 6 of those declarers made 12 tricks anyway.

What happened to the top pairs? Well, Burke-Rosendorff (NS) played Otvosi-Bach (EW) in this second last match and went down in 6NT. As a result, they lost 14 IMPs and their match finished a dead draw. Meanwhile, Dobes-Chylewski received a heart lead and didn't have much choice but to get it right! That was worth 12 big IMPs to the eventual winners.

And so to the strong hand with the long club suit. If partner has anything much this might be good for 3NT or even 5♣, but it really needs 3NT to be bid from partner's side of the table. After North's better minor 1♦ opening, it doesn't seem likely that partner will find a no-trump rebid when you hold ♦AK, unless you can somehow push him into it.

The normal approach of rebidding 2♣ after the takeout double, promising 5+ clubs and 16+ high card points, just isn't going to achieve that outcome. Indeed, when I rebid 2♣, I was left to play there and eventually made 10 tricks. A rebid of 3♣ might have been more effective – this isn't a rebid situation that arises very often, but the jump ought to promise both strength and extra length i.e. a source of tricks. Or maybe I should just have bid 3NT myself ...

Board 29

Dealer N | Vul All

<p>♠ AQ65 ♥ JT7 ♦ 8753 ♣ 98</p>		<p>♠ K743 ♥ A983 ♦ Q64 ♣ AT</p> <p>♠ K54 ♥ AK2 ♣ KQJ6532</p> <p>♠ JT982 ♥ Q62 ♦ JT9 ♣ 74</p>
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W	N	E	S
	1D	X	P
1S	P	?	

What would you bid to show a strong hand?

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

In fact only 3 pairs out of 30 reached 3NT – one of those was Dobes-Chylewski, who played it from the East seat and gained 10 IMPs, to help them win the last match and the event. Otvosi-Bach and Burke-Rosendorff were also sitting East-West for this final round, but different things happened at their tables. Otvosi-Bach reached 5♣, which went down for 7 IMPs away. However, Burke-Rosendorff saw North open his hand 1♣, promising 2+ cards. This contract was passed out and they gained 6 IMPs as it went 4 down!

Did all of that teach me anything about how to do better at Swiss Pairs? Unsurprisingly, there are big rewards for bidding 'em up and the cost of failing to do so is high. But the "luck of the draw" may well be a key factor, as a lot seems to depend on what your opponents do ... 🍀