

Southern Highlands Online

Matchpoint Pairs

Aggressive bidding pays off

by RAKESH KUMAR



Rakesh Kumar describes himself as an enthusiast who makes enough errors to have plenty of material for bridge columns.

The [Southern Highlands Online Congress](#) was held over the weekend of 7-8 November, with a matchpoint pairs event on the Saturday and an IMPs pairs event on the Sunday. Entry to online Congresses in NSW had until recently been restricted to players whose home club was in NSW/ACT, but the ABF has now authorised players from across Australia to play in NSWBA events. The Southern Highlands Congress was one of the first tournaments to be opened up in this way.

The Saturday matchpoint event had a relatively small field: 16 pairs in the Open and 14 in the Restricted. The Open was won by Helen Lowry – Frances Lyons, who scored 56% in the morning session and 61% in the afternoon session (which they won). Finishing second were Nikolas Moore – Rachel Langdon from Brisbane, with 62% in the morning session (which they won) and 51% in the afternoon. The Restricted was won by Noleen Cregan - Suzanne Cole, who played well in both sessions.

In last month's column about the Illawarra Bridge Association Congress I mentioned that Helen Lowry is a vigorous exponent of "no fear" bidding – and she takes some pride in her reputation for that! Watch her at work against us, with her partner as co-conspirator:

Board 18

Dealer E | Vul N-S

♠ T75						
♥ QJ954						
♦ 43						
♣ A52						
♠ AJ2	♠ 4					
♥ 632	♥ T8					
♦ A2	♦ QT875					
♣ KQJ87	♣ T9643					
	<table style="border: 1px solid gray; width: 60px; height: 60px; 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		
N						
W E						
S						
♠ KQ9863						
♥ AK7						
♦ KJ96						
♣						

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

Not vulnerable against vulnerable, Frances Lyons opened 2NT for the minors, with a hand that had a striking lack of high card points. My partner overcalled 3♠ and Helen leapt to 6♣! This was doubled by partner, but as 4♠ was cold, the resultant -500 scored exactly 50% and didn't really cost Helen anything.

Nik Moore and Rachel Langdon also gained by taking a "no fear" approach. Although it's often suggested that at matchpoints, one shouldn't try for thin games, they happily ignored such advice. On this deal, Rachel as North responded to 1♣ with 1♦, showing hearts, and Nik rebid 2♥ showing a minimum with 4-card support. Now with a known 9-card fit, Rachel invited game and Nik accepted. The contract was unbeatable. However, only 3 pairs bid to 4♥, to earn 86% on the board.

Board 9
Dealer N | Vul E-W

♠ T87
♥ AT973
♦ Q8
♣ AT7

♠ AK6
♥ J42
♦ A952
♣ Q62

♠ 542
♥ 5
♦ KJT743
♣ 983

♠ QJ93
♥ KQ86
♦ 6
♣ KJ54

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

Before I show you one more example of effective "no fear" bidding, here's a little play problem for you. After the auction shown, North quite rightly refuses to start with a heart as this might concede the ninth trick. Instead the opening lead is a low club. You run this up to your jack. What should you play at trick 2?

♠ AK8
♥ K964
♦ AKJ4
♣ J6

♠ 9763
♥ 8
♦ 8652
♣ AKT5

W	N	E	S
1D	1H	X	P
3NT	//		

The tussle for the best matchpoint result often involves a courageous approach to re-opening, especially when both sides are not vulnerable. On the next deal, Kim Morrison demonstrated how that should be done, to our disadvantage:

Board 8
Dealer W | Vul None

♠ K2
♥ A764
♦ Q642
♣ JT6

♠ A93
♥ Q85
♦ A875
♣ K53

♠ T7
♥ KJ2
♦ KJT9
♣ Q974

♠ QJ8654
♥ T93
♦ 3
♣ A82

W	N	E	S
1D	P	3C	P
3D	P	P	3S
//			

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

The 3♣ response promised 10-12 hcp, 4+ diamonds and denied a 4-card major. We had thus bid our way to the only sound contract, but Kim was not going to let us play there: he backed in with 3♠ and stole our good score. Although 3♠ is down 2 in theory (which would still have been a pretty ordinary result for us) in practice he was only down one, because when he went to work on setting up the hearts, we opened up the clubs to solve his problems.

And so to a deal that required taking some precautions in the play. Many reached 3NT and North invariably led a low club. When you let that run to your jack, you now have 8 sure tricks. The diamond finesse might yield the ninth, but it does no harm to cash a top diamond honour anyway ... and there's your contract!

Board 16
Dealer W | Vul E-W

<p>♠ AK8 ♥ K964 ♦ AKJ4 ♣ J6</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <p style="margin: 0;">N</p> <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid red; width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/> <p style="margin: 0;">W E</p> <p style="margin: 0;">S</p> </div>	<p>♠ 42 ♥ AQJ53 ♦ Q ♣ Q9843</p>	<p>♠ 9763 ♥ 8 ♦ 8652 ♣ AKT5</p>
	<p>♠ QJT5 ♥ T72 ♦ T973 ♣ 72</p>		

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

However, only 2 declarers played this way to make. Another 4 went down in 3NT, some faring worse than others. Clearly, the winning formula is aggressive bidding *plus* careful play. ♠