

NSWBA Summer Online Swiss Pairs

Not a flying start

by RAKESH KUMAR



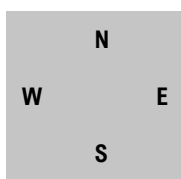
Rakesh Kumar describes himself as an enthusiast who makes enough errors to have plenty of material for bridge columns.

The first NSWBA Congress event for 2021 was once again held on RealBridge. COVID continues to make face-to-face bridge difficult, but this wonderful alternative is soon going to be used as the platform for major NSWBA tournaments, such as the Open Interstate Teams Selection events.

The [Summer Swiss Pairs](#) was an IMPs event that had a strong field of 24 pairs. It was won – by a very large margin – by George Fleischer and Mathew Vadas. They averaged a remarkable 15.65 VPs per match! In second place were Jan Clarke and Chris Williams, who were fairly well clear of the cluster of pairs in third to fifth place.

Here are some problems for you to think about before I show you a few deals. For the first one, you are declarer in 4 ♠:

♠ A84
♥ 72
♦ QJ64
♣ AK42



♠ KQJ72
♥ KQJ5
♦ 73
♣ QT

LHO begins with ♦ AK and a third diamond. RHO ruffs with ♠ 10 and you over-ruff. What will you play at trick 4?

Next a defence problem:

(dummy)

♠ K
♥ AK7
♦ AJ76
♣ K8652

(you)

♠ 7652
♥ Q64
♦ Q9
♣ AQ74

At favourable vulnerability, partner opens a weak 2 ♠ showing 5 spades and a 4+ minor suit. RHO doubles, you raise to 3 ♠ and LHO passes. RHO backs in with another double and now LHO bids 4 ♥, which is passed out. Partner leads ♠ Q to dummy's king. Declarer plays a low club from the table and you rise ♣ Q. This holds, declarer playing the 3 and partner the 9 (you play reverse count). What will you do at trick 3?

And finally a bidding problem:

- ♠ 52
- ♥ AT9
- ♦ 42
- ♣ AKQJT9

The opponents are vulnerable, you are not. After two passes, RHO opens 3♥. What will you bid?

The play problem arose on the very first deal of the day. Here is the board, now in its correct orientation. I did *not* get us off to a flying start, because at trick 4 I played a small spade to dummy's ace and West showed out! Of course I now went down.

Board 1

Dealer N | Vul None

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♠ T ♥ AT643 ♦ 82 ♣ J9875 	<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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♠ KQJ72 ♥ KQJ5 ♦ 73 ♣ QT
N					
W E					
S					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♠ A84 ♥ 72 ♦ QJ64 ♣ AK42 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♠ 9653 ♥ 98 ♦ AKT95 ♣ 63 				

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

Not that it's much of an excuse, but I wasn't alone – of 12 declarers in game, 6 received the identical defence and misplayed by leading to ♠A. Four did better by playing ♠K at trick 4, thus learning about the 4-1 break and being able to finesse ♠8 to bring the contract home. Two were not put to the test ...

The defence problem arose much later in the day. Again, the board is now presented in its correct orientation. Everything hinges on what West does at trick 3.

In fact West has a great deal of information about the hand – declarer obviously has ♠Axx, clubs are clearly 2-2 as partner would have led a singleton, so West is surely going to win 3 tricks via ♣AQ and ♥Q. Where is a fourth trick going to come from?

Board 40

Dealer W | Vul None

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♠ 7652 ♥ Q64 ♦ Q9 ♣ AQ74 	<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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♠ A43 ♥ J9852 ♦ T54 ♣ J3
N					
W E					
S					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♠ K ♥ AK7 ♦ AJ76 ♣ K8652 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♠ QJT98 ♥ T3 ♦ K832 ♣ T9 				

	W	N	E	S
P	P	P	2S	X
3S		P	P	X
P		4H	//	

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

That will need to be from diamonds, which must be partner's minor suit. It's hard to imagine that partner had a weak 2-bid without ♦K – and in any case if declarer holds this card 4♥ is probably cold – so a diamond return is required and it must be right now. At our table, when West returned a spade, Pauline Gumbly unerringly ruffed in dummy, drew 2 rounds of trumps and pitched diamonds on ♣K8 to make the contract.

At two other tables, the auction commenced P-P-2S-x-3S but this was then passed out. One other declarer made 10 tricks, but was in 5♥ after South bid 4NT as takeout after P-P-2♠-x-4♠! Meanwhile quite a few declarers lost their way and went down.

The last round of the event had several boards that led to fairly large swings – once again that mischievous devil in the dealing computer seemed to be having fun. This deal was a test of courage:

Board 47

Dealer S | Vul N-S

♠ QJ
♥ QJ87542
♦ A987
♣

♠ AT43
♥ K6
♦ QJ3
♣ 8653

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 52
♥ AT9
♦ 42
♣ AKQJT9

♠ K9876
♥ 3
♦ KT65
♣ 742

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

When North opens 3♥ after 2 passes, there are basically 2 choices: be bold and bid 3NT or be "sensible" and bid 4♣. In fact 4♣ turned out not to be so sensible, because West automatically raised to 5♣, which duly went down at 2 tables. At another 3 tables, North decided to open 1♥ rather than 3♥ and at 2 of those tables, East-West subsided in 3♣. However, George Fleischer chose to bid 1NT over 1♥ (!) which Mathew Vadas promptly raised to 3NT.

Meanwhile, at 2 tables South opened 2♠ with a collection of genuine rubbish at adverse vulnerability, which I would definitely not regard as sensible. Still, this gamble succeeded at one table when East-West played in 3♣, although at the other West converted 3♣ to 3NT anyway.

One other truly exciting hand from the last round was this one:

Board 42

Dealer E | Vul Both

♠ QT9873
♥ 7
♦ K542
♣ K3

♠ 64
♥ KT853
♦ AJ9
♣ 876

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ AKJ
♥ AQJ2
♦ 7
♣ AJ942

♠ 52
♥ 964
♦ QT863
♣ QT5

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	1	-	-	-
S	-	1	-	-	-
E	5	-	6	1	4
W	5	-	6	1	4

Most East-West pairs played in 4♥, making 11 tricks without effort. However, 4 were in 6♥, but only 2 declarers were successful. If the contract is played by East and a trump is led, what will you do?

The obvious line is to draw trumps finishing in dummy, then run ♣6, hoping for North to hold a top honour plus the ten and a small one. However, this doesn't work. Now what? Well, there's really only one option left: in dummy with the diamond ace, you have to lead a spade and finesse ♠J. When this holds, you can discard a club from dummy, establish the clubs with a ruff and return to hand by ruffing a diamond, to claim 12 tricks ... ♠