

Jacaranda Teams

8-5-0-0 around the table

by RAKESH KUMAR



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

This congress event has since 2019 incorporated the State Teams Metropolitan Final. In 2020 it was run as a RealBridge event, but not as a Metropolitan Final because of the enforced cancellation of the State Teams championship. However, in 2021 it returned in full flower (!) as the final event of the Sydney Spring Nationals. There were 28 teams competing, once again on RealBridge.

The winning team was HUMPHRIES (Susan Humphries – Jessica Brake, Liam Milne – James Coutts) who climbed into first place after 4 of the 6 matches and then did not let go of the top spot. Here is a board that contributed to their win in the second match of the day:

Board 16

Dealer W | Vul E-W

<p>♠ AJ83 ♥ A73 ♦ KT4 ♣ QJ4</p>		<p>♠ T6 ♥ 964 ♦ 653 ♣ 98652</p> <p>♠ Q97 ♥ KJ85 ♦ AQJ972 ♣</p>
---	--	--

♠ K542
♥ QT2
♦ 8
♣ AKT73

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	1	-	-	-	-
S	1	-	-	-	-
E	-	7	6	5	5
W	-	7	6	5	5

Thirteen East-West pairs bid to 6♦, but having got there, you then have to make it! Only 6 declarers were successful. Two had some help from the defence, but 4 found the sure line that did not depend on North holding a doubleton ♠10. After ruffing the opening lead of a top club, drawing trumps and taking a successful spade finesse, they conceded a heart, then cashed the thirteenth heart and played the last trump to squeeze South in this position:

<p>♠ A8 ♥ ♦ ♣ Q</p>		<p>♠ T ♥ ♦ ♣ 98</p> <p>♠ Q9 ♥ J ♦ ♣</p> <p>♠ K5 ♥ ♦ ♣ K</p>
---------------------------------	--	---

Easily the most exciting deal of the day was this, which turned up in the first match after lunch:

Board 30

Dealer E | Vul None

	♠ 743		
	♥ KT632		
	♦		
	♣ KT965		
♠ AKQ8	N	♠ JT9652	
♥	W	E	♥ 754
♦ QJT86543	S	♠	♦
♣ Q			♣ A843
	♠		
	♥ AQJ98		
	♦ AK972		
	♣ J72		

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	4	-	6	-	-
S	4	-	6	-	-
E	-	3	-	5	-
W	-	3	-	4	-

If East does not open, West might pre-empt vigorously in diamonds over South's 1♥ bid, in which case North-South will play in 5♥. However, things are different when East starts with a weak 2♠ or an aggressive 3♠, which West will raise to 4♠. Now when North bids 5♥, West will usually back in again. A few East-West pairs were doubled in 5♠, but this is unbeatable when played by East. If North continues on to 6♥, East can choose to defend after making a Lightner double, but as it turns out this won't help – with diamonds 8-5-0-0 around the table, declarer can prevail as long as s/he ruffs the opening diamond lead with ♥10 or ♥K!

Of course East-West have a good save in 6♠. In practice this is not necessarily just a save, because on the lead of ♦A or ♦K, it makes!! Declarer concedes one diamond trick and then ruffs the suit good. Thus even though neither side was vulnerable, the scores on the deal ranged from +1210 to -1210 for North-South ...

This board from the following match was a challenge for many declarers:

Board 36

Dealer W | Vul All

	♠ QJ4		
	♥ 8642		
	♦ T73		
	♣ AJ3		
♠ 9765	N	♠ A32	
♥ KQJ	W	E	♥ AT75
♦ K6	S	♠	♦ A985
♣ T762			♣ KQ
	♠ KT8		
	♥ 93		
	♦ QJ42		
	♣ 9854		

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

Almost everyone was in 3NT by East. While 13 made it, 12 didn't. From a holding of ♦QJxx, the technically correct lead is a small diamond. However, some chose to lead ♦Q – after this declarer can easily take 9 tricks with 3 diamonds, a spade, a club and 4 hearts. Life is rather more awkward on the lead of a low diamond. The contract can still be made, but now declarer needs to play ♣KQ and then ♣7, hoping that the jack pops up to establish a second club trick. As it turns out, that line is successful.

Coming into the final match, HUMPHRIES was leading by a margin of over 15 VPs and my team was in second place, so we played them. This round featured another exciting board:

Board 45

Dealer N | Vul All

<p>♠ K6</p> <p>♥ 9842</p> <p>♦ Q72</p> <p>♣ T764</p>		<p>♠ AJ75</p> <p>♥ QT</p> <p>♦ KJ94</p> <p>♣ J95</p>	<p>♠ T832</p> <p>♥ AKJ765</p> <p>♦ 6</p> <p>♣ A2</p>
<p>♠ Q94</p> <p>♥ 3</p> <p>♦ AT853</p> <p>♣ KQ83</p>			

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

At our table, partner opened 1♦ and East overcalled 1♥. In a contested auction, we play a jump to 3♦ as showing 10-12 hcp and 5-card support, so that is what I bid. West bid 3♥, partner passed and East, after some thought, continued to 4♥. I took the bait and bid 5♦, which was doubled. In fact 4♥ cannot make, but partner played the 5♦ contract in exemplary fashion and duly made 11 tricks.

At the other table, North-South played in a part-score, so this deal swung the match for us. However, when all the scores came in, we were leapfrogged by both the MORRISON and MULLAMPHY teams, who finished with maximum 20-0 wins!

Because of eligibility requirements, the qualifiers to the State Teams Final from this event were MORRISON (Kim Morrison – Bruce Neill, David Weston – Julian Foster) and ELDRIDGE (Vivien Eldridge – Alan Davies, Robin Devries – Peter Bendelstein). All four members of the MORRISON team have been winners of the State Teams in times past (2013-2016) although never all in the same team. A good portent for this time around? We shall have to wait and see. 📌