

NSBC Australia Day Weekend Swiss Pairs 2023

More deals of doom ...

by RAKESH KUMAR



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

North Shore Bridge Club's Australia Day Weekend online Swiss Pairs was held on 29 January and had a strong turnout, with 48 pairs in the Open section as well as 24 pairs in the Restricted section. After 7 x 8-board rounds (what a nice change from what has lately been the usual format of 6 x 9-board rounds!) the winners, by a fairly substantial margin, were Fraser Rew - Julian Foster.

Before I show you some interesting deals from the day, here are 3 bidding problems for you. Firstly, you hold:

♠ 7
♥ AKQT8
♦ AQ643
♣ K4

With both sides vulnerable, partner opens 1♠ in second seat, RHO passes and you bid 2♥, forcing to game and promising 5+ cards. Partner rebids 2♠. What will you bid now? If you choose 3♦, partner rebids 3NT. What then?

Secondly, you are vulnerable and your opponents are not. As dealer, your RHO opens 3♣. This is your hand:

♠ T8732
♥ A8
♦ AK
♣ A865

What are you going to do? Would you do anything different if RHO had opened 4♣?

And thirdly, you hold another quite strong hand with both red suits:

♠ Q
♥ AQJ98
♦ AKJT85
♣ 3

Not vulnerable against opponents who are vulnerable, you decide to open your major suit first rather than attempting to reverse and rebid the hearts. LHO passes and partner responds 3NT, promising 3-card support and a balanced (usually 4333) hand with 13-15 hcp. Your next action?

There's some luck involved in Swiss Pairs because there is a significant directional element, but when you are fortunate enough to hold the cards it's mostly about hyper-aggressive bidding and careful play, otherwise it's all about tight defence. However, there are days hyper-aggressive bidding doesn't pay off. Back in 2021, I wrote about the IBA Swiss Pairs, in the course of which the card gods offered up several "deals of doom" where the declaring side was always going to get into trouble – the only question being just how bad. There was no shortage of doomed contracts in this NSBC event! Most of them turned up in the afternoon and caused much movement up and down in the rankings.

Here's the deal associated with the first problem:

Board 39

Dealer S | Vul All

♠ J
♥ 954
♦ K9852
♣ QJ87

♠ KQ9652
♥
♦ JT7
♣ AT96

	N		E
W			
	S		

♠ 7
♥ AKQT8
♦ AQ643
♣ K4

♠ AT843
♥ J7632
♦
♣ 532

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

It's tempting for East to go slam-hunting and 7 pairs did indeed end up in either 6♦ or 6NT, but these contracts do not fare well ... interestingly, Fraser Rew - Julian Foster stayed well out of trouble after 1♠-2♥-2♠-3♦-3NT-4NT-all pass. This contract just made.

The second problem deal was a genuine "deal of doom" because after a pre-emptive opening by West, any contract by North-South goes down, while 3♣ is also unsuccessful. However, many Norths looked at their incredibly strong (not) spade suit and just couldn't resist bidding 3♠, while some others doubled. The resultant game contracts all failed.

Board 44

Dealer W | Vul N-S

♠ T8732
♥ A8
♦ AK
♣ A865

♠ K
♥ 7
♦ T543
♣ KQJ9432

	N		E
W			
	S		

♠ AJ64
♥ QJ963
♦ 9872
♣

♠ Q95
♥ KT542
♦ QJ6
♣ T7

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

Things were even more awkward when West started proceedings with 4♣. If North now got into the action with a double, the result was thoroughly disappointing. Life was simplest for North-South when West opened 5♣, because now a penalty double was the standout action – this happened 3 times.

Once again, Julian Foster - Fraser Rew were among the few who showed restraint: in the North seat, Fraser passed 3 ♣ and they turned a small profit.

The third problem deal was cruel to the North-South pairs who got to a reasonable-looking slam in hearts:

Board 51

Dealer S | Vul E-W

♠ AK2
♥ 543
♦ 762
♣ AQ97

♠ 9865
♥ K7
♦
♣ KJT8652

	N	
W	—	E
	S	

♠ JT743
♥ T62
♦ Q943
♣ 4

♠ Q
♥ AQJ98
♦ AKJT85
♣ 3

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

Unfortunately the typical result was that declarer lost a trick in each of the red suits and went one down. Just to be annoying, Bridge Solver demonstrates that it is possible to make 6 ♥ even after a club opening lead takes out one of dummy's two entries. The successful line involves playing ace and another heart, winning the spade return in dummy, taking a diamond finesse and cashing two more top diamonds, then ruffing out the ♦ Q with dummy's last remaining trump. Not in the real world ... 🚩