

NSBC Festive Swiss Teams Congress

Not giving gifts at Christmas time ...

by RAKESH KUMAR



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

The North Shore Bridge Club ran a Festive Season Online Congress on the weekend of 16-17 December 2023. In the Open Swiss Pairs on the Saturday (28 pairs) Julian Foster – Jenna Gibbons were the winners, well clear of Peter Gill – Jane Dawson in second place. On the Sunday, the Swiss Teams (14 tables) was won by the New Zealand team of Graeme Stout - Malcolm Mayer - Jeff Miller - Pam Livingston, with Mathew Vadas - Peter Gill - Martin Bloom - George Fleischer coming second.

In the Teams, many of the deals in which there were significant swings involved finding the right lead or correct defensive switch, to avoid giving any Christmas gifts at the table. Here are 3 problems for you. Firstly, with neither side vulnerable, RHO passes as dealer and you open 1♥:

♠ 76
♥ AJ865
♦ J642
♣ AJ

LHO passes and partner bids 3♣, a weak jump shift denying 3-card heart support and showing a 6+ suit with some 6-9 hcp. RHO passes, as do you. Now LHO re-opens with a double and RHO bids 3♠, which is passed out. What will you lead?

Secondly, again with neither side vulnerable, LHO as dealer opens 1♥. Partner passes and RHO bids 1♠. LHO rebids hearts and RHO jumps to 3NT. You lead a low diamond and this is what you see:

| | |
|----------|--|
| ♠ KJ | |
| ♥ 976543 | |
| ♦ AK93 | |
| ♣ 5 | |
| ♠ Q74 | |
| ♥ AKJ | |
| ♦ QT82 | |
| ♣ T63 | |

| | |
|-----|-------|
| | Dummy |
| You | |

Declarer wins this trick in dummy, cashes ♠ K and runs the spade jack to your queen. Now what? And thirdly, the opponents are vulnerable and you are not. RHO is the dealer and the auction is 1♠ by RHO-3♥ (Bergen, 3-card invitational raise) by LHO-4♠. You hold:

♠ JT85
♥ J3
♦ JT975
♣ K3

What are you going to lead this time?

The first problem arose on the very first board of the day, shown below in its correct orientation. Although basically just a part-score deal in which West can make 3♣, it featured swings from -800 to +300 for East-West when one or the other side dared to bid too many hearts.

Board 1
Dealer N | Vul Nil

♠ AQ32
♥ T942
♦ T75
♣ K4

♠ JT5
♥
♦ K93
♣ Q987652

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| | N | | | |
| W | | | E | |
| | | S | | |

♠ 76
♥ AJ865
♦ J642
♣ AJ

♠ K984
♥ KQ73
♦ AQ8
♣ T3

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

In the setting of the problem, despite all the advice against leading unsupported aces, to defeat 3♠ East needs to lead ♥A in the hope that partner might have a shortage and be able to ruff the heart continuation. When partner shows out, a suit-preference low heart for a ruff, a club return and another heart ruff has the contract eventually going 2 down. However, if East starts with ♣A it is always possible (although not necessarily easy) for declarer to get home.

Before we continue with the defence problems, what would you bid with this hand, nil vulnerable in second seat after RHO passes as dealer?

♠ AT
♥ JT8
♦ 7
♣ KQT8754

Here's the deal associated with the second problem:

Board 17
Dealer N | Vul Nil

♠ KJ
♥ 976543
♦ AK93
♣ 5

♠ Q74
♥ AKJ
♦ QT82
♣ T63

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| | N | | | |
| W | | | E | |
| | | S | | |

♠ 983
♥ QT82
♦ J4
♣ J874

♠ AT652
♥
♦ 765
♣ AKQ92

| | ♣ | ♦ | ♥ | ♠ | NT |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| N | 5 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 2 |
| S | 5 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 2 |
| E | - | - | - | - | - |
| W | - | - | - | - | - |

After winning ♠Q West must play a top heart, at which point all is revealed and the contract can be defeated. However, this defence wasn't always found. Again, there were plenty of swings on the board. Oddly enough, all the genuinely making game contracts involved 7-card fits – indeed 3 of 14 did play in 4♠.

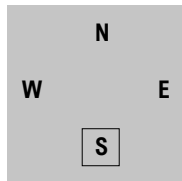
This is the deal associated with the bidding/hand evaluation question above:

Board 27

Dealer S | Vul Nil

♠ Q642
♥ A75
♦ 542
♣ J92

♠ AT
♥ JT8
♦ 7
♣ KQT8754



♠ KJ85
♥ KQ9
♦ AQJ6
♣ A3

♠ 973
♥ 6432
♦ KT983
♣ 6

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

At every table where West opened 1♣, slam was reached, usually 6NT. However, at every table where West decided to bid 3♣, the partnership languished in 3NT. And then there was the imaginative West who opened 5♣ ... reaching 6♣ to lose 2 IMPs when 6NT was bid at the other table!

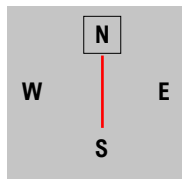
And so to the third defence problem:

Board 53

Dealer N | Vul NS

♠ AK932
♥ 42
♦ K2
♣ A964

♠ 7
♥ KQT8
♦ Q84
♣ QJ875



♠ JT85
♥ J3
♦ JT975
♣ K3

♠ Q64
♥ A9765
♦ A63
♣ T2

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

Much has been said in praise of doubleton leads and this certainly turned out to be a good time to lead a heart. A trump lead, followed by another trump when in with ♣K, also defeats the contract. However, the "obvious" ♦J achieves little ... 🙄