



# Being a bunny at Easter

By Rakesh Kumar – March 2014

As usual at Easter, there was plenty of bridge at Trumps. The Good Friday Pairs had 61 entries. Nicky Strasser and George Bilski, who just managed to qualify to the final, proceeded to win this comfortably. Terry Brown and Peter Buchen missed out on the final, but then came first in the plate by an embarrassingly large margin. On Easter Sunday, there were 21 tables in the Teams, which was won by Martin Bloom-Tony Nunn playing with Peter Livesey-Peter Gill.

I have no doubt the Bloom team must have played very well, but I can't speak from personal knowledge, as our team produced consistently uninspiring results and avoided playing almost all of those who finished in the top third! Still, even rueful rabbits have lots of fun in this game ...



For example, there's always much drama associated with high-level decisions. One of those turned up in the very first match. Partner, East, deals and opens 4H, vulnerable against not. South passes, so do you, and North bids 4S. As West, what will you do when this comes back to you?

♠KJ754  
♥86  
♦AQ2  
♣AQ4

♠86  
♥A3  
♦85  
♣KT86532 🧑

(1) If you do bid 5H, the focus now shifts to North. So assume you are in that seat; what would you do now?

(2) It's a fascinating deal. In fact if North passes 5H, the focus in turn shifts to South, who may well bid 5S on the grounds that partner did not double.

Board 6  
Dir: E  
Vul: E-W

♠KJ754  
♥86  
♦AQ2  
♣AQ4

♠86  
♥A3  
♦85  
♣KT86532 🧑

16  
7 11  
6

♠AT93  
♥5  
♦JT974  
♣J97

♠Q2  
♥KQJT9742  
♦K63  
♣

N: 1 ♣4♦4♠  
S: 1 ♣4♦3♠  
E: 3♥  
W: 3♥

The results on this board varied widely. I don't think there is a "right" answer, because if properly defended, 5Hx will go for -500, which is what happened at the 2 tables where it was in fact doubled. However, another 5 EW pairs got out for only -100 in an undoubled contract of 5H. At 8 tables, NS made 4S, and remarkably 2 EW pairs were allowed to play in 4H, which made on both occasions.

## Do you always check for stoppers before bidding notrumps?

Or do you just bid and hope, especially when it seems too difficult to find out?  
Here are a couple of hands from the "Who needs stoppers?" department.

Board 12 ♠T875  
Dir: W ♥JT  
Vul: N-S ♦KQJ83  
♣72

♠KJ96 ♥KQ9 ♦94 ♣AT43	7 13 12 8	♠A43 ♥A42 ♦T5 ♣KJ965
♠Q2 ♥87653 ♦A762 ♣Q8		N: 1♦ S: 1♦ E: 5♣3♥4♠2NT W: 5♣3♥4♠2NT

At our table, West opened 1♣, North passed and East made a limit raise in clubs, showing 5+ cards. West wondered whether 3♦ might be treated as asking for a stopper, worried about a diamond being led through partner's stopper if he bid 3NT himself, and subsided in 3♣, making 11 tricks when all the cards were favourable. However, 6 of 21 in the East seat just bid 3NT and they all made it, while the 6 who bid it from the West seat went off, which is hardly surprising. Only one EW pair reached the very optimistic contract but cold 5♣ contract.

Here's a second example of the "Who needs stoppers?" approach to bidding.

Board 14 ♠K84  
Dir: E ♥AKJ7  
Vul: Nil ♦J54  
♣T76

♠AT765 ♥T92 ♦972 ♣KQ	12 9 16 3	♠92 ♥Q6 ♦AKQT6 ♣AJ92
♠QJ3 ♥8543 ♦83 ♣8543		N: S: E: 4♣4♦3♠3NT W: 4♣4♦3♠3NT

At our table, East opened and it went

West	North	East	South
		1♦	P
1♠	X (?) <sup>1</sup>	3♣	P
3♥ <sup>2</sup>	P	3NT <sup>3</sup>	All pass

1. a questionable action
2. stopper ask
3. Q6, a 1/2 stopper or should go with whatever partner has, and in any case no one has overcalled hearts

NS cashed 4 heart tricks but that was that ... only 5 of 21 pairs bid this game.

As our team got together at lunchtime after a resounding loss to the Otvosi team, who finished second, an air of mild desperation had set in. This is sometimes an excellent incentive to do the right thing in subsequent matches. However, in the first match after lunch, the situation got worse, because I messed up by failing to sort my hand correctly and promptly donated 10 IMPs.

## Playing catch-up

Now I really was feeling desperate! So when the hand below turned up, I decided to play catch-up ...

Board 2    ♠Q8  
 Dir: E     ♥T862  
 Vul: N-S    ♦A865  
              ♣AK4

♠AJ654 ♥AQ9 ♦T7 ♣QT2		♠KT7 ♥K53 ♦QJ932 ♣J6
13    ♠932 13    ♥J74 10   ♦K4 4    ♣98753	N: S: E: 2♦1♥3♠3NT W: 2♦1♥3♠3NT	

West	North	East	South
		P	P
1♠	X	2♦	P
2NT	P	3♠ <sup>1</sup>	P
3NT <sup>2</sup>	P	P	P

1. Intended as signoff
2. a desperate bid, actually having stoppers for a change

This turned out to be cold and we were the only EW pair to bid it ... at least we got 6 IMPs back.

Finally, here's a **lead problem** for you.

You hold:

♠ AT875  
 ♥ J943  
 ♦ T543  
 ♣ -----

West	North	East	South
			P
2♣ <sup>1</sup>	P	2♥ <sup>2</sup>	P
3NT <sup>3</sup>	P	5♣	P
6♣	P	P	P

1. Strong and forcing
2. One control
3. 25-26 HCP

At the 4 tables where 6♣ was bid, North led the ace of spades, obviously concerned that the rats might get at it. Why? RHO has shown a very strong balanced hand, but it's hardly likely that the ace of spades will run away. As it turned out, this was the only lead that allowed the contract to make. Elsewhere, the usual result was 3NT making 12 tricks on the lead of a low spade.

Board 23    ♠AT875  
 Dir: S     ♥J943  
 Vul: All    ♦T543  
              ♣

♠K6 ♥AKT ♦AQ6 ♣AKQT8		♠942 ♥7 ♦K72 ♣J76532
5    ♠QJ3 25 4   ♥Q8652 6    ♦J98 ♣94	N: 1♥ S: 1♥ E: 5♣1♦2NT W: 5♣3♦1♠5NT	