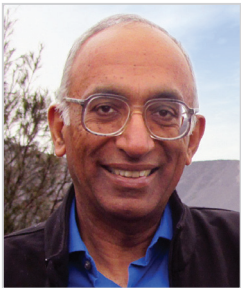


# Slams from first to last

We had plenty of excitement at the Strathfield Congress, most of that coming from slams.

by RAKESH KUMAR



*Rakesh Kumar describes himself as an enthusiastic non-expert who makes enough errors to have plenty of material for bridge columns.*

The Strathfield Congress at the end of May was held at the recently-renovated Canada Bay Club. Having led after the first match and then been displaced, ASSAEE (*Bijan Assaee - Linda Aubusson, Don Plumb - Jan Plumb*) came back in the last round to win the event from WEI (*Vicky Wei - Qin Wen, Lesley Guo - Shu Liang Yang*) and HUMPHRIES (*Susan Humphries - Johnno Newman, Colin Baker - Ann Baker*) who had both been in contention all day.

Our team (*Gary Lane - David Smee, Steven Bock - Rakesh Kumar*) got off to a shocking start (ranked 28 of 32 teams after 2 matches!) so we were happy to finish fourth. We had plenty of excitement along the way, most of that coming from slams, of which there were plenty. They started with the first board in Match 1 and continued through to the last board in Match 6. Here's the first slam:

## Board 1

Dealer N | Vul None

<p>♠ J732 ♥ JT74 ♦ 4 ♣ Q874</p>	<p>♠ AKQT95 ♥ 6 ♦ J8 ♣ AJ92</p>	<p>♠ 84 ♥ Q93 ♦ K7632 ♣ T53</p>	<p>♠ 6 ♥ AK852 ♦ AQT95 ♣ K6</p>
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15  
4  5  
16

W	N	E	S
	1S	P	2H
P	2S	P	3D
P	3NT	P	?

*At 18 of the 32 tables, N-S stopped in game. How would you have bid?*

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

It's not all that easy to bid to slam if playing natural methods. At 18 of the 32 tables, North-South stopped in game. Of those who reached slam, 6 were in 6♠ making, while 8 were in 6NT, but 3 of those failed. How would you have bid it?

Even more difficult was this board from the second match:

## Board 16

Dealer W | Vul E-W

<p>♠ QT52 ♥ AKT82 ♦ ♣ AK42</p>	<p>♠ 983 ♥ J4 ♦ KQ72 ♣ T965</p>	<p>♠ AK64 ♥ Q976 ♦ 654 ♣ J3</p>	<p>♠ J7 ♥ 53 ♦ AJT983 ♣ Q87</p>
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6  
16  10  
8

W	N	E	S
1H	P	3H/3D!	P
?			

*A 4C cuebid will help to explore for slam*      *A limit raise in Hearts*

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	3	-	7	7	1
W	3	-	7	7	1

Only 11 pairs reached slam, which to some extent reflects the problem that natural methods have with bidding strong hands when holding 5/4 in the majors. After West opens 1♥, East may choose to bid 1♠ first, but is more likely to make whatever systemic bid shows 10-12 hcp or 8 losers with 4+ heart support. Now with a 4-loser opposite a fitting 8-loser hand, West needs to explore for slam (24-[8+4]=12 tricks possible) which is best achieved by a 4♣ cue bid. East cannot cue in diamonds so may settle for bidding 4♥. However, this ought to be viewed by West as very good news, because it suggests no wasted values in diamonds in the East hand. West might now cue 5♦ or go via Roman Keycard Blackwood, but in either case slam should be reached.

The fun continued in Match 3, with a relatively straightforward slam which was reached by 19 of 32, although 3 went down. Then in Match 4 there was a glacial grand slam with 37 hcp between the North-South hands, yet only 14 pairs bid it, which was a bit disappointing. Perhaps of more interest from that match was this board:

**Board 1**

Dealer N | Vul None

17  
8  11  
4

♠ AK3  
♥  
♦ 942  
♣ AKQJ653

♠ 4  
♥ AKT97632  
♦ J3  
♣ 84

♠ QJ52  
♥ J84  
♦ AKT86  
♣ T

♠ T9876  
♥ Q5  
♦ Q75  
♣ 972

W	N	E	S
	1C	?	

Double? Or 1D overcall?

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	3	-	-	1	-
S	3	-	-	1	-
E	-	2	5	-	-
W	-	3	5	-	-

After North opens 1♣, what will you do as East? Those who argue in favour of a double when holding at least 4-3 in the majors would have no doubt, while those who would like their values to be in the suit(s) they bid or show would simply overcall 1♦. Either way, anything less than 4♥ by West in response could only be described as timid. North, of course, bids 5♣ without a qualm – it's either going to make or will turn out to be good save. Now if you've doubled you may not be sure what do, but if you overcalled 1♦ then with this kind of support you bid 5♥ with some confidence. I did, and partner got doubled, but the contract is absolutely safe.

The scores on the board ranged from NS 550 (5♣ doubled, somehow making) to EW 750 (5♥ doubled, making with an overtrick) and almost anything you can think of in between!

Match 5 seemed less exciting, although it featured 3 boards that were cold for slams, but these were apparently unbidable and were reached by no one. Then to cap it all off came the last board of the day. Before I show it to you, what would you do with this hand as East, nil vulnerable, after South passes, partner opens 1♥ and North overcalls 1♠?

**East**

Dealer S | Vul None

♠  
♥ T854  
♦ AJT432  
♣ QJ6

I chose to jump straight to 4♥ and South now bid 4♠. Partner went on to 5♥ and this was passed back to South. So now, what would you do as South with this hand?

**South**

Dealer S | Vul None

♠ K9862  
♥ K  
♦ 76  
♣ T9842

It turned out that this was not the time to bid one more for the road. When South bid 5♠ and partner could not double, suggesting no wasted values in spades, I bid 6♥, which partner played carefully to produce the Deep Finesse outcome of 13 tricks.

**Board 27**

Dealer S | Vul None

♠ AQJT7

♥ J2

♦ KQ85

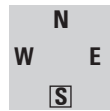
♣ 73

♠ 543

♥ AQ9763

♦ 9

♣ AK5



♠

♥ T854

♦ AJT432

♣ QJ6

♠ K9862

♥ K

♦ 76

♣ T9842

13  8  
6

W	N	E	S
			P
1H	1S	4H	4S
5H	P	P	5S
P	P	6H	

Partner could not double South's 5S, suggesting no wasted values in spades.

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	2	-
S	-	-	-	2	-
E	1	5	7	-	2
W	1	5	7	-	2

We shared this result with Carola Hoogervorst - Andre Korenhof, but were outdone by Susan Crompton - Murray Green, who were doubled and also made all the tricks! 🍀