

NSBC@East Lindfield Swiss Pairs

On bidding 4 (or more) spades

by RAKESH KUMAR



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

There was a strong turnout for the Swiss Pairs at East Lindfield in mid-March: the 58 enthusiastic pairs filled the room. Sally and Gary Clarke recovered from a minor hiccup against us early in the day, to win their other 6 matches and the event. The top 3 scores were very close indeed! In second place were Jessica Brake and Paul Dalley, with Liz Fanos and George Finikiotis finishing third.

From my perspective, much of the day seemed to be about auctions that involved direct jumps to 4♠. And as a sideline, they often involved overcalling or bidding clubs. Here's the first such hand:

Board 17

Dealer N | Vul None

♠ QJ876
♥ K43
♦ AKJ6
♣ 4

♠ 2
♥ QJT
♦ T754
♣ AKQ96



♠ A4
♥ A852
♦ Q3
♣ J8732

♠ KT953
♥ 976
♦ 982
♣ T5

14
12 □ 11
3

W	N	E	S
	1S	P	4S
//			

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	2	-
S	-	-	-	2	-
E	5	1	4	-	4
W	5	1	4	-	4

As dealer, North opens 1♠. Does East have a reasonable overcall? I certainly wouldn't have thought so – bidding 2♣ with that feeble rubbish is inviting a couple of passes, a reopening double, and death. But even with a woeful 5332 hand, a strategic South will now offer 4♠ as an "it will be a good save and it might even make" bid – and West is completely shut out. Of course the contract goes off, but it will not be doubled, so all the East-West pairs on the receiving end of such treatment recorded a significant loss against the datum.

On this next board, after two passes partner opened 1♥ as South. West overcalled 1♠ and I decided that this was no time for pussyfooting around, so I raised to 4♥. East, with only weak 4-card support but an outside trick and a ruffing value, promptly bid 4♠. Partner now had a problem, which he wisely resolved by bidding one more. Doubling 4♠ was only worth +300 compared to +650, so once again the swing against the datum was valuable.

Board 5

Dealer N | Vul N-S

♠ Q
♥ A753
♦ 42
♣ AJT987

♠ AJT75
♥ 864
♦ 3
♣ K653



♠ 8632
♥ 9
♦ KQT985
♣ Q4

♠ K94
♥ KQJT2
♦ AJ76
♣ 2

11
8 □ 7
14

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

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	4	1	5	-	2
S	4	1	5	-	2
E	-	-	-	2	-
W	-	-	-	2	-

Several years ago, Warren Lazer said to me that the strategy for Swiss Pairs was to "bid anything that moves". In the afternoon we played against a partnership who demonstrated this approach with another 4♠ bid on the next hand.

Board 15

Dealer S | Vul N-S

13
8 10
9

♠ A62
♥ T987
♦ QT54
♣ Q3

♠ Q543
♥ KJ
♦ AK983
♣ T2



♠ KJT97
♥ A64
♦ J6
♣ 876

♠ 8
♥ Q532
♦ 72
♣ AKJ954

W	N	E	S
			P
P	1D	2C	2S
P	4S	//	

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	1	-	4	-
S	-	1	-	4	-
E	2	-	2	-	1
W	2	-	2	-	1

After 2 passes, North opened 1♦, I overcalled 2♣ (with a suit that certainly was worth mentioning!) and South bid 2♠. Partner passed and North jumped straight to 4♠. It could be argued that a 6-loser hand with only 13 high-card points has no justification for doing anything of the sort, but the contract rolled home. Only 7 pairs found this game, much to our cost.

There were variations on the 4♠ theme in this last hand. It's a tricky one for East-West to bid, unless East can open 2NT to show the minors. That's what happened at our table, and West then has an automatic 5♣ bid. It's much harder if East and South pass, because West's 1♣ opening – of indeterminate length – will of course be followed by 4♠ and North will sometimes be left to play in this. If South opens a weak 2 in hearts or a multi-2♦, much depends on whether West regards the club suit as suitable for a vulnerable 3-level overcall – if yes then 5♣ is reached, but if no then North's 4♠ will probably terminate the auction.

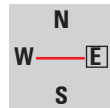
Board 22

Dealer E | Vul E-W

13
13 9
5

♠ 97
♥ A82
♦ KT8
♣ AQ864

♠ AKQJT632
♥ 964
♦ Q
♣ J



♠ 54
♥ KQT753
♦ 762
♣ T2

♠ 8
♥ J
♦ AJ9543
♣ K9753

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

What about if West or East bids 5♣? Should North now bid 5♠? And if so, should East-West double or carry on to 6♣? Frankly, that's a guess. Many North-South pairs did indeed play in 5♠ doubled, losing a few IMPs against the datum. However, 2 East-West pairs took the push, to score +1370 and a lot of IMPs their way ... 🍀