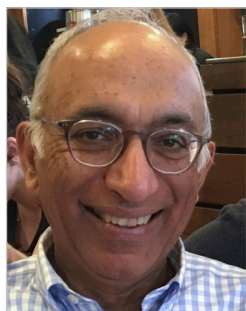


Wollstonecraft Swiss Pairs 2018

Not a good day for sacrifices!

by RAKESH KUMAR



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

This column will appear online in January, so I'll take the opportunity to wish all of you a very Happy New Year and hope that at least 50% of your finesses work in 2019!!

In 2018, the last congress I played in was the Wollstonecraft Swiss Pairs. This 20-table event was fully booked out as usual and attracted a strong field. At the end of the day, the winners were George Fleischer & Tony Ong, with David Fryda & Michael Cartmell in second place.

At Swiss Pairs, bidding style matters a lot: unlike Teams events, where sensible conservatism is often rewarded, aggressive bidding is the order of the day. Our opponents sometimes carried this to extremes e.g. in round 2 they bid a grand slam without even bothering to inquire for the missing trump queen, then played for trumps 2-2 and dropped it. We knew we were about to collect a pretty awful score when that happened ...

Aggressive bidding also means borderline sacrifices, hoping to gain 3-5 IMPs on the board. However, this was not the day for them. Not one of my saves was profitable!

Here are a couple of problem hands for you. Firstly, a lead problem: after LHO passes, partner opens 1♦ and RHO overcalls 1♠. Not really being strong enough to bid 2♥, you make a negative double; LHO raises to 2♠, partner bids 3♥ and RHO goes on to 4♠, passed out. Which card will you lead?

- ♠ 76
- ♥ JT754
- ♦ Q5
- ♣ AQ94

Secondly, a bidding problem: Partner deals and opens 1♦, then after your 1♥ response, rebids 2♦. What now?

- ♠ A65
- ♥ AKJT8
- ♦ Q932
- ♣ K

East's choice of lead determines the outcome on the first hand. While a heart lead might seem passive and unlikely to yield much, it holds declarer to 9 tricks, whereas the attacking lead of the ♦Q proves to be thoroughly unsuccessful. North draws trumps in 2 rounds, concedes the ♦K but is now able to pitch a loser on dummy's fourth-round diamond winner.

Board 3

Dealer S | Vul E-W

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♠ 53 ♥ KQ82 ♦ K842 ♣ KJ8 	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="text-align: center;">—</td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W	—	E		S		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♠ 76 ♥ JT754 ♦ Q5 ♣ AQ94
	N										
W	—	E									
	S										

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♠ AJT982 ♥ A9 ♦ A76 ♣ 52 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♠ KQ4 ♥ 63 ♦ JT93 ♣ T763
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W	N	E	S
			P
1D	1S	X	2S
3H	4S	//	

What are you going to lead?

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

More than half of those in a spade contract made 10 tricks. Naturally, our opponents were in game and I led the $\heartsuit Q$...

The second hand is relatively easy to bid if one uses "minorwood", where minor suit agreement at the 4-level is treated as keycard Blackwood, so that it's possible to stop in five-of-a-minor if two keycards are missing. A bid of $4\heartsuit$ by North would elicit a response of $5\clubsuit$, showing 2 keycards but no queen – then $6\heartsuit$ should be easy to reach.

Board 7

Dealer S | Vul All

\heartsuit A65
 \heartsuit AKJT8
 \heartsuit Q932
 \heartsuit K
 \heartsuit T983
 \heartsuit Q93
 \heartsuit J86
 \heartsuit Q85
 \heartsuit Q742
 \heartsuit 642
 \heartsuit
 \heartsuit AJT743
 \heartsuit KJ
 \heartsuit 75
 \heartsuit AKT754
 \heartsuit 962

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

What will you bid?

	\clubsuit	\heartsuit	\spadesuit	NT
N	-	6	6	1
S	-	6	5	1
E	1	-	-	-
W	1	-	-	-

Across the field, however, only 4 of 20 reached the slam. Would you have got there?

This last hand illustrates aggressive bidding as well as the successful use of minorwood, this time to stop safely in game:

Board 22

Dealer E | Vul E-W

\heartsuit 9853
 \heartsuit AK3
 \heartsuit 5
 \heartsuit Q9743
 \heartsuit A
 \heartsuit Q542
 \heartsuit AQ8743
 \heartsuit 52
 \heartsuit KQT76
 \heartsuit 6
 \heartsuit JT92
 \heartsuit AT6
 \heartsuit J42
 \heartsuit JT987
 \heartsuit K6
 \heartsuit KJ8

W	N	E	S
		1S	P
2D	P	3D	P
4D	P	5D	//

	\clubsuit	\heartsuit	\spadesuit	NT
N	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-
E	-	6	-	2
W	-	6	-	2

After a $1\heartsuit$ opening by me as East (points, shpoints – the hand has 7 losers, 2 quick tricks, a good suit and shortage) partner bid $2\heartsuit$ as a 2-over-1 game force. I raised to $3\heartsuit$, which elicited $4\heartsuit$ minorwood, but I could only claim possession of one keycard, even though I knew in my bones that the heart shortage would be valuable. So we played in $5\heartsuit$, duly making 12 tricks. There were 8 East-West pairs in this contract, plus one in 3NT, while half the field subsided in a part score. 🍀