

NSBC@Lindfield Online Teams

Feeling slammish?

by RAKESH KUMAR



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

With much of eastern Australia in lockdown in July-August, local congresses that have gone online have had very large entries. Those run on RealBridge, which has become the preferred platform for most serious bridge players, have frequently become cross-border or nearly-national events. So it was with the North Shore Bridge Club's Lindfield Online Swiss Teams in late August, which was won by the HOFFMAN team (Christopher Quail - Julia Hoffman - Richard Brightling - David Hoffman) from Canberra, who finished quite a long way ahead of the field. In second place was the EMUL team (Cevat Emul - Catherine Zhang - Bulent Kaytaz - Serhat Ozenir) which was a Sydney-Melbourne hybrid. Various other multi-jurisdictional teams featured in the top 10.

Many of the major swings through the day revolved around slam deals or potential slam deals, where the challenge was not only to get to slam but also to get to the *right* slam. With that in mind, here are a few questions for you. Firstly, with neither side vulnerable, will you open this hand in first seat? If so, what will you bid?

♠ K764
♥ AJ982
♦ QT2
♣ 5

For this next hand, you are vulnerable against opponents who are not vulnerable. LHO passes as dealer and partner opens 1 ♠. You play a Jacoby 2NT response to show either 13+ hcp with 4+ support or 16+ hcp with 3+ support, so you bid 2NT. Partner jumps to 4 ♠ to show a minimum hand, but with all your top controls you decide to try 4NT anyway. Partner responds 5 ♥, showing 2 keycards without the queen. Now what?

♠ Q98
♥ A874
♦ AKQT
♣ K4

Once more, you are vulnerable against opponents who are not vulnerable. Partner deals and opens 1 ♦, then rebids 2NT in reply your 1 ♠ bid, showing 18-19 hcp in a (semi-)balanced hand. What will you bid?

♠ AT754
♥ AJ4
♦ T85
♣ A7

And finally, once again nil vulnerable, will you open this hand in first seat? If so, what will you bid?

♠
♥ J532
♦ T2
♣ AQT8532

The deal related to the first question is from round 1. This was *not* a good hand on which to open any kind of weak 2-bid. True, West has only 10 hcp, but the hand has good shape, support for both majors and only 7 losers. A 1♥ opening seems entirely justified.

Board 8

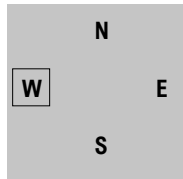
Dealer W | Vul None

♠ T93
♥ 63
♦ K65
♣ T8763

♠ K764
♥ AJ982
♦ QT2
♣ 5

♠ Q2
♥ KQ4
♦ AJ83
♣ AQJ2

♠ AJ85
♥ T75
♦ 974
♣ K94



	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	3	6	6	4	6
W	3	6	6	4	5

If you do open 1♥ as West, partner will have no hesitation about investigating the possibility of a slam, perhaps via a 2/1 game-forcing 2♣ response or (depending on how you play it) via Jacoby 2NT. Across the field, however, only 11 of 52 East-West pairs reached 6♥. One of those was Ozenir-Kaytaz for the EMUL team.

There was no shortage of slam deals in the first round. Here is the board associated with the second question:

Board 3

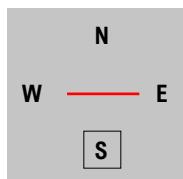
Dealer S | Vul E-W

♠ 7532
♥ 96
♦ 95
♣ T9876

♠ AKJT6
♥ KJT2
♦ 83
♣ 32

♠ Q98
♥ A874
♦ AKQT
♣ K4

♠ 4
♥ Q53
♦ J7642
♣ AQJ5



	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	1	-	-	-	-
S	1	-	-	-	-
E	-	4	6	6	6
W	-	3	5	5	2

The savvy slam bid is 6NT, which will be played by East, protecting the ♣ K. Across the field, 13 played in 6♠ and 8 of those went down when North found the club lead. The 3 in 6NT by East were all successful. Another 6 – including East-West for the EMUL team – failed in 6♥ by West.

Believe it or not, the deal associated with the third question was also from the first round! This time, West had the opportunity for savvy slam bidding. Of course, the hand looks slammish, but what's best? Should the partnership play in 6NT or is there a better option?

Board 6
Dealer E | Vul E-W

♠ KJ2
♥ T86
♦ 9763
♣ 984

♠ AT754
♥ AJ4
♦ T85
♣ A7

	N	
W	—	E
	S	

♠ 98
♥ KQ
♦ AKQJ4
♣ QJ62

♠ Q63
♥ 97532
♦ 2
♣ KT53

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	4	7	2	4	5
W	4	7	2	4	5

The way to find the answer to that is via a 5NT "pick-a-slam" bid – assuming you have this agreement. That allows East to suggest 6♦, which West is happy to play. All 6 Easts in this contract made it, with a club ruff in dummy providing the twelfth trick. In contrast, all 9 in 6NT from either side were unsuccessful.

Interestingly, if you play that 1♦-1♠-3♣ promises 16-19 hcp and 5/4 or 5/5 shape rather than an absolutely game forcing hand, it may actually be easier for your partnership to reach 6♦.

The final question relates to a deal that came up much later in the day. The wisdom of the ancients is that one should never pre-empt in a minor suit when holding a 4-card major suit. In this event, several Easts demonstrated that in their view, the wisdom of the ancients was ... well, ancient.

At those tables where East passed, it was sometimes possible for East-West to bid to and play in 4♥, making 10 or 11 tricks every time. However, most of the time, North-South got into the action and either reached 3NT by South (succeeding when West led a spade) or 5♦, which was often made by North (unless East led a heart and received a spade ruff) but failed when played by South.

In contrast, at those tables where East pre-empted with 3♣, East-West played in 5♣ on 3 occasions. Again, though, some Norths backed in with 5♦. At 3 of those tables, either West or East decided to bid on to 6♣ over 5♦ – which turned out to be unbeatable! The HOFFMAN team gained 13 IMPs in this manner.

Board 46
Dealer E | Vul None

♠ AQ76
♥ 4
♦ KJ98743
♣ 9

♠ J98542
♥ AK97
♦
♣ KJ7

	N	
W	—	E
	S	

♠ J532
♥ T2
♣ AQT8532

♠ KT3
♥ QT86
♦ AQ65
♣ 64

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	3	-	-	-
S	-	3	-	-	-
E	7	-	5	1	-
W	7	-	5	1	-

And then there was the action at our table: Tony Nunn decided his 6-loser hand was worth an opening of 4♣. Paul Dalley promptly raised that to 6♣ and as North, I didn't even get a look in! The gamble paid off handsomely ... ♠