

# Southern Highlands Congress 2022

Back face-to-face after 3 years!

by RAKESH KUMAR



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

The last time the Southern Highlands Congress was able to be held face-to-face was in 2019. An online event was a partial substitute in 2020, but this year the congress returned in its full glory, albeit with reduced table numbers – which seems to be a problem afflicting all f2f events at the moment. Let's hope things improve.

The Moss Vale Services Club once again provided a comfortable environment for the event, which was ably directed by Jeff Carberry. The format for both the Swiss Pairs on Saturday and the Teams on Sunday was 6 x 9-board matches.

On the Saturday, sisters Ruth and Judith Tobin had a convincing win in the Open Swiss Pairs, which had 20 tables. In second place were David Weston and Helena Dawson, while third were Stephen Brabyn and Tony Lye, who are respectively the President and Vice-President of the Southern Highlands Bridge Club. Who says the folks out in the regions can't play?

The Tobin sisters certainly earned their win. My partner and I played them in the fourth match of the day, at which point they were running third and we were fourth. They smashed us, in part because of the board below. Here's your hand:

♠ Q762  
♥  
♦ A543  
♣ AQT72

As dealer, you opened 1♣. LHO overcalled 1♠, partner passed and RHO jumped to 4♥. You passed, as did LHO, then partner doubled for penalty in the pass-out seat. Don't peek – what will you lead?

This was the deal:

**Board 2**

Dealer E | Vul NS

♠ 954	♠ 8	♠ Q762						
♥ J9863	♥ AKQT742	♥						
♦ J	♦ KT92	♦ A543						
♣ K963	♣ J	♣ AQT72						
	<table style="border: 1px solid gray; border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="border: 1px solid gray; width: 20px; height: 20px;"></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N		E	W		S	
N		E						
W		S						
	♠ AKJT3							
	♥ 5							
	♦ Q876							
	♣ 854							

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

Ruth and Judith Tobin found the perfect defence: ♦ A and another diamond for a ruff, a club back to the ace and another ruff. This earned them 11 IMPs against the datum. Meanwhile fifteen pairs made 10 or more tricks in hearts.

After that round, the Tobin sisters climbed into first place and never let go!

This was another interesting deal from the Swiss Pairs. Partner took to heart the advice that in such events, one should "bid anything that moves". So she opened 2♠ (showing 5 spades and a 4+ minor suit) with the South hand below. West doubled and of course I bid 4♠, which was the end of the auction. The contract could not be beaten.

**Board 22**

Dealer E | Vul EW

♠ AKQ73  
♥ 876  
♦ JT72  
♣ A

♠ J4  
♥ AKQJ  
♦ AK  
♣ K9654

♠ 2  
♥ T95432  
♦ 63  
♣ T873

♠ T9865  
♥  
♦ Q9854  
♣ QJ2

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

Would you open that South hand? Most didn't, although quite a few caught up by jumping to game later. Across the 20 tables, 8 played in game in hearts, making, while 11 played in spades, 6 of them doubled and happy ...

On the Sunday, there were 24 teams in the combined field. The DOBES team (Warren Dobes - Yumin Li - Witold Chylewski - George Bilski) had a resounding victory in the Open section. Three of the members of this team were winners at the Southern Highlands Congress in 2018 and runners-up in 2019. On this occasion, one could argue that daylight came second, because there was a huge 22.5 VP gap to the LISLE team (Ian Lisle - Vicky Lisle - David Weston - Helena Dawson) in next place, followed by the TOBIN team (Judith Tobin - Ruth Tobin - John Spooner - Andrew Spooner) in third spot.

We played DOBES in round 2 and one of the largest swings of the day was generated on this deal :

**Board 13**

Dealer N | Vul All

♠ AK83  
♥ J872  
♦ AJT2  
♣ 2

♠  
♥ A94  
♦ Q9843  
♣ KJ874

♠ QJ942  
♥ 3  
♦ 5  
♣ AT9653

♠ T765  
♥ KQT65  
♦ K76  
♣ Q

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

As North, I opened 1 ♦ and Warren Dobes in the East seat overcalled 1 ♠. Partner bid 2 ♥, Yumin Li passed as West and I jumped to 4 ♥. However, Warren wasn't about to surrender – he bid 5 ♣. When this came back to me I bid on to 5 ♥, which went around to Yumin who now joined the party with 6 ♣. Would you have bid? Of course I doubled, expecting to take at least the two pointed suit aces – but I was wrong! Meanwhile 4 ♥ made at the other table so that was 19 IMPs out; part of a huge win to DOBES, who never lost a match all day. 🟩