

Sapphire Coast Congress

Pushy competitive bidding

by RAKESH KUMAR



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

It was a pleasure to be able to play in the Sapphire Coast Congress at the end of April, as this was the first time it had been held since 2019. The drive down the coast to Merimbula was a little holiday in itself – and then there was a whole weekend of bridge to enjoy, in a delightful destination with no shortage of nice cafes and restaurants.

There was a good turnout, with 18 tables in both the Swiss Pairs on Saturday and the Swiss Teams on Sunday. A number of Canberra players participated, plus there was good support from Far South Coast clubs, as well as a small contingent from the Southern Highlands. The Canberra folks were particularly successful. The Pairs was won by Brian Thorp - Andrew Struik; while in the Teams, first place went to Janet Kahler - Peter Quach - Peter Kahler - Adrienne Stephens and in second place were Vanessa Brown - Will Jenner-O'Shea - Daryl Whitfield - Christy Geromboux.

There was a lot of exciting bridge because of the sheer number of highly distributional hands, which led to some very pushy competitive bidding. Especially in the Swiss Pairs, it didn't help if you were on the wrong side of some of this!

Let me show you a small selection of the more interesting competitive bidding situations. Firstly, with neither side vulnerable, LHO opens 1♣ and RHO responds 1♥. You are looking at:

♠ AKQJ8742
♥ KT98
♦
♣ 9

Of course you bid 4♠, but LHO rebids 5♣ and now RHO rebids 5♦. What are you going to do?

Secondly, both sides are vulnerable and LHO as dealer opens 1♦. Partner makes a weak jump overcall of 2♥. RHO doubles for takeout and you happily bid 4♥ with this:

♠ JT96
♥ AT864
♦ KJ9
♣ J

However, now LHO rebids 5♣, passed back to you. Will you bid again?

And thirdly, the opponents are vulnerable while you are not. LHO deals and opens 3♥. Partner doubles and RHO passes. You hold:

♠ KJ6
♥ Q52
♦ AKT
♣ K873

What action will you take?

Here's the board associated with the first problem – it's from the second session of the Pairs. If you now bid 5♠, South will bid 6♦. On the lead of ♠A followed by a switch to ♣9, the contract makes without too much difficulty as declarer can ruff out and establish the clubs, drawing trumps along the way and returning to dummy with a heart ruff.

Board 11

Dealer S | Vul None

	♠ 9							
	♥ AQ762							
	♦ KT8432							
	♣ 5							
♠ T53 ♥ J43 ♦ J65 ♣ KJ72	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: 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="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>	N		E	W	S		♠ AKQJ8742 ♥ KT98 ♦ ♣ 9
N		E						
W	S							
	♠ 6							
	♥ 5							
	♦ AQ97							
	♣ AQT8643							

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

So if you do push the opponents to 6♦, you will have to sacrifice in 6♠! In the event, 3 pairs played in 6♦ (2 made it) while 4 saved in 6♠ (3 of them were doubled). Another 6 were allowed to play in 5♠ (4 of them were doubled).

The second problem is once again tricky at multiple levels. After 1♦ - (2♥) it's not at all clear just what South should do. A double seems the least of evils and this time it works out well, as South is delighted to play in 5♣.

Board 13

Dealer N | Vul All

	♠ AQ3							
	♥							
	♦ T8652							
	♣ AK984							
♠ JT96 ♥ AT864 ♦ KJ9 ♣ J	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: 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="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>	N		E	W	S		♠ 842 ♥ QJ9753 ♦ A43 ♣ T
N		E						
W	S							
	♠ K75							
	♥ K2							
	♦ Q7							
	♣ Q76532							

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

However, when North's rebid comes back to West, saving in 5♥ is entirely reasonable at equal vulnerability. In practice only 4 pairs bid 5♥ – of course our opponents were among them. If West does bid 5♥, this gives North quite a headache. Should she double? It doesn't seem like ♣AK will cash, so where is a setting trick going to come from? In fact only one East-West pair was doubled in 5♥; for the others it proved to be a cheap save.

On the third problem, after 3♥- (X) North has several issues to deal with: he doesn't have 4 spades, his longest suit is of only 4 cards and looks awful, his potential stopper in hearts appears rather fragile, but he has a considerable excess of high card points.

Board 22

Dealer E | Vul EW

♠ KJ6
♥ Q52
♦ AKT
♣ K873

♠ 97432
♥ 98
♦ 742
♣ T94

	N	
W	—	E
	S	

♠ 5
♥ AKJ7643
♦ Q965
♣ 6

♠ AQT8
♥ T
♦ J83
♣ AQJ52

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

In our match, at the away table North solved the problem by bidding 4♥, then rebidding 5♣ over South's rebid of 4♠. This was raised to 6♣. Andrew and Karen Creet were thus the only pair to reach the slam, which cannot be beaten.

At our table, I didn't have the option of forcing with a bid of the opponent's suit, because East started proceedings with 4♥. A 4-level pre-empt with 7411 shape and a reasonably good suit is very much a part of the modern game, but would you have made it on this hand at adverse vulnerability? Once 4♥ was doubled, every other decision seemed fraught so I decided to pass and take whatever plus score was available. It wasn't enough! 🟩