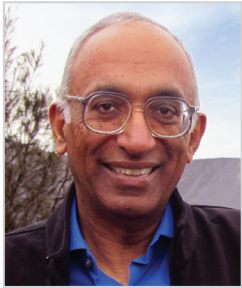


State Teams Metropolitan Final 2016

Of games and saves and penalties, of slams and singleton kings *

by RAKESH KUMAR



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

This year, the NSWBA ran the State Teams Metropolitan Final as a Congress, with teams that had qualified via their clubs plus direct-entry teams each competing for a spot in the State Final. The event was a 6-round Swiss of 9-board matches using the decimalised VP scale. When the smoke cleared, GREEN (*Murray Green, Helen Horwitz, Elizabeth Adams, Tony Nunn*) had finished a massive 10 VPs clear of the second placed ABEL team (*Julian Abel, Rakesh Kumar, Steven Bock, Kevin Davies*) with GREWCOCK (*Les Grewcock, Peter Jeffery, Bob Sebesfi, Richard Douglas*) close behind.

Most of the day was really about not doing silly things, but there were also quite a few interesting hands. Two tested the proposition that “the 5-level belongs to the opponents”. On this first board, with distributional hands it was clearly untrue: while East-West routinely headed in the direction of a 4♥ contract, North-South just as routinely bid on to 4♠. When they were allowed to play there, this turned out to be a cheap save, because not only is 4♥ cold, so is 5♥.

Board 12

Dealer W | Vul N-S

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|--|---|--|---|--|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| ♠ 5 ♥ AK2 ♦ 954 ♣ QT8732 | <table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td> </td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> | | N | | W | | E | | S | | ♠ K3 ♥ JT8543 ♦ Q ♣ AK94 |
| | N | | | | | | | | | | |
| W | | E | | | | | | | | | |
| | S | | | | | | | | | | |
| | <table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td> </td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> | | N | | W | | E | | S | | |
| | N | | | | | | | | | | |
| W | | E | | | | | | | | | |
| | S | | | | | | | | | | |
| | ♠ A864 ♥ 76 ♦ AKT863 ♣ 6 | | | | | | | | | | |

| | | |
|---|--|----|
| 7 | | 13 |
| 9 | | 11 |

| W | N | E | S |
|----|----|----|----|
| P | P | 1H | 2D |
| 2H | 2S | 3H | 3S |
| 4H | P | 4S | ? |

Only one pair successfully played in 5H

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

However, only one pair successfully played in 5♥. Two pairs decided to give partner an option and thus went on to make 5♣ (doubled on both occasions) without any real difficulty. Elsewhere, 5 East-West pairs were allowed to play in 4♥, while about half the field was in 4♠ by North-South, going down.

This next board had the potential to be quite eventful. If West opens a mere 3♥ in first seat, it's no problem for South to double and for North to bid 4♠. Things get a bit more complicated, however, if West decides to go for broke with a 4♥ opening. Now when South doubles and North bids 4♠, East is very likely to raise to 5♥.

Board 20

Dealer W | Vul All

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|--|---|--|---|--|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| ♠ Q2 ♥ AJ876542 ♦ 63 ♣ 7 | <table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td> </td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> | | N | | W | | E | | S | | ♠ AT94 ♥ KT ♦ QJ82 ♣ 983 |
| | N | | | | | | | | | | |
| W | | E | | | | | | | | | |
| | S | | | | | | | | | | |
| | <table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td> </td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> | | N | | W | | E | | S | | |
| | N | | | | | | | | | | |
| W | | E | | | | | | | | | |
| | S | | | | | | | | | | |
| | ♠ 85 ♥ Q93 ♦ 75 ♣ AQT652 | | | | | | | | | | |
| | ♠ KJ763 ♥ ♦ AKT94 ♣ KJ4 | | | | | | | | | | |

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 10 | | 8 |
| 7 | | 15 |

| W | N | E | S |
|----|----|---|---|
| 3H | P | P | X |
| P | 4S | | |

Things get a bit more complicated if west decides to open 4H

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

When that happened at our table, North continued to 5♠, which was also the final contract at another 4 tables. While this makes, it turns out that doubling 5♥ for penalties is actually worth a fair bit more! Only a couple of pairs collected the +800 on offer.

The exciting last round included two glacially cold slams, but these “sure things” weren’t always bid. Thus on board 19, 7 bid to 6♠, 13 did not, but everyone made 12 tricks. On board 26, again most didn’t manage to bid slam, although 7 pairs reached 6♠ and one even got to 7♠ and made it! How would you handle the bidding on these hands?

Board 26

Dealer E | Vul All

♠ K95
♥ A3
♦ A852
♣ AT84

♠ 2
♥ QT9
♦ JT643
♣ KQ65

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| N | | | |
| W | + | + | E |
| S | | | |

♠ J43
♥ 7654
♦ Q97
♣ J73

♠ AQT876
♥ KJ82
♦ K
♣ 92

| | | |
|----|---|---|
| 15 | | |
| 8 | □ | 4 |
| 13 | | |

| W | N | E | S |
|---|-----|---|----|
| | | P | 1S |
| P | 2D | P | 2H |
| P | 3C! | P | 3S |
| P | 4NT | P | 5C |
| P | 5D | P | 5H |
| P | 6S | | |

| | ♣ | ♦ | ♥ | ♠ | NT |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| N | 3 | 2 | 4 | 7 | 5 |
| S | 3 | 2 | 4 | 7 | 5 |
| E | - | - | - | - | - |
| W | - | - | - | - | - |

One possible auction is 1♠-2♦-2♥-3♣ (fourth suit forcing)-3♠ (now showing 6-4)-4NT (RKCB). If North can discover that South has one keycard, the queen of spades and two outside kings then bidding 6♠ is easy and 7♠ is certainly worth thinking about.

The other 3 boards were might-have-been slam hands, all of which included a singleton ♥K. On board 23, the singleton king was onside, so 6♥ was cold, but only 2 reached the slam and both went down. On board 24, once more 6♥ was makeable, but this time the singleton king was offside and had to be dropped: 3 bid the slam but only one made it. And then on board 27, a contract of 6♦ was makeable, but again this depended on dropping the offside singleton ♥K and again only 1 out of 3 was successful. Here’s the board, which was usually played in 3NT, as was the case at both tables in our match.

Board 27

Dealer S | Vul None

♠ J752
♥ 98532
♦
♣ KQ98

♠ AK9
♥ QJT
♦ AJT53
♣ A5

| | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| N | | | |
| W | | E | |
| | | S | |

♠ QT3
♥ A764
♦ KQ64
♣ J4

♠ 864
♥ K
♦ 9872
♣ T7632

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 6 | | |
| 19 | □ | 12 |
| 3 | | |

| W | N | E | S |
|-----|---|-----|---|
| | | | P |
| 1D | P | 1H | P |
| 2NT | P | 3NT | |

A contract of 6♦ was makeable, depends on dropping the singleton King of Hearts

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

It can be a cruel game! 🐼

Remarks.....

* The subtitle is a play on the third and fourth lines of this stanza from the famous Lewis Carroll poem –

"The time has come," the Walrus said,
"To talk of many things:
Of shoes--and ships--and sealing-wax--
Of cabbages--and kings--
And why the sea is boiling hot--
And whether pigs have wings."