

The GNOT

Sydney Metropolitan Final 2023

Bid as if you mean it ...

by RAKESH KUMAR



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

The Metropolitan Final was played over the weekend of 5-6 August, in its customary format of a knockout section qualifying two teams to the national final, with a Swiss repechage that in 2023 qualified three teams rather than the usual two. Qualifying teams from the four rounds of knockout (two matches of 14 boards, two of 28 boards) were decided by lunchtime on Sunday, while the repechage continued through the afternoon (two further matches of 14 boards).

Numbers were much the same as the last couple of years, with a field of 22 contending teams. From the knockout section, the qualifiers were ASHTON (Sophie Ashton - Ellena Moskovsky - James Coutts - David Beauchamp - David Wiltshire - Matthew Thomson) and FOSTER (Margaret Foster - Colin Clifford - Steven Bock - Rakesh Kumar). The top three teams from the Swiss repechage were MUNDELL (Giselle Mundell - Andrew Peake - Tom Kiss - William Zhang - Peter Jeffery - Yumin Li), SHAO (Sherlock Shao - Patrick Jiang - Hui Li - Kelsey Chen) and BUTTS (Joan Butts - Michael Courtney - Liz Adams - Tony Nunn - Peter Gill - Liz Sylvester).

The event was as enjoyable as ever. Of course, being a Teams competition, there was a great deal of vigorous bidding which was often suggestive of rather more than 40 high card points in the pack! That in turn created all sorts of interesting problems with respect to deciding the contract or placing the missing cards. Here are three of those problems for you to chew over.

Firstly, a play problem. With both sides vulnerable, after RHO passes you open 1♥ and LHO overcalls 1♠. Partner bids 2♦ and now RHO comes in with 3♣. Someone is definitely overbidding, but you choose to trust partner and bid 3NT anyway. LHO leads ♣8 and this is what you see:

♠ Q9
♥ 85
♦ QJ9763
♣ KQ5



♠ KJ43
♥ AQ764
♦ T8
♣ A6

You win in hand with the ace and play ♦10, which is ducked all round, and continue with ♦8, won by LHO with the king. He returns ♠6. How will you play?

Next, a bidding problem. You hold:

♠ A
♥ A862
♦ AK
♣ QT7643

Vulnerable against opponents who are not vulnerable, after two passes you open 1♣. LHO overcalls 1♥ and partner bids 1♠, promising a 5-card suit. RHO joins in the fun, bidding 2♦. What will you do?

For one more problem, here's another bidding conundrum. This time you are the dealer and once again, you are vulnerable against opponents who are not vulnerable.

♠ KJT98432
♥ 3
♦ J4
♣ K4

Your call?

This is the board associated with the first problem, now in its correct orientation.

Board 7

Dealer S | Vul All

♠ KJ43 ♥ AQ764 ♦ T8 ♣ A6	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td style="text-align: center;">+</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W	+	E		S		♠ T8762 ♥ KT ♦ AK42 ♣ 84 ♠ Q9 ♥ 85 ♦ QJ9763 ♣ KQ5
	N										
W	+	E									
	S										
	♠ A5 ♥ J932 ♦ 5 ♣ JT9732										

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

You need 2 entries to dummy to establish and reach the diamonds. However, if you choose to play North for ♠ A on the basis of the overcall and rise with ♠ Q, you go down, because North had overcalled on a holding of 5 spades to the ten ...

I didn't get that one right. Nor this one either:

Board 6

Dealer E | Vul EW

♠ A ♥ A862 ♦ AK ♣ QT7643	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td style="text-align: center;">—</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W	—	E		S		♠ 754 ♥ KQT95 ♦ Q765 ♣ 8 ♠ KJT98 ♥ J743 ♦ 9 ♣ KJ9
	N										
W	—	E									
	S										
	♠ Q632 ♥ ♦ JT8432 ♣ A52										

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

Over South's 2♦, did you decide to bid 3♣ to show length and a reasonably strong hand? Unfortunately this turns out to be a road to nowhere, because North now raises to 3♦ and partner doesn't feel his hand is good enough to bid 4♣. Even if he had and you reached 5♣, it's beatable on perfect defence and quite difficult to make otherwise. A better idea would have been to bid 2NT despite having no obvious communication with partner's spades. East-West are cold for 3NT and with less competition from the opponents it is easy to reach, as more than half the field did.

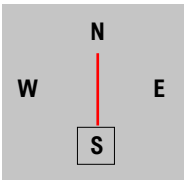
Finally, this is the deal associated with the last problem:

Board 15

Dealer S | Vul NS

♠	AQ5	♠	76
♥	AKT8	♥	74
♦	AK862	♦	T753
♣	A	♣	Q9852

♠	KJT98432	♠	76
♥	3	♥	74
♦	J4	♦	T753
♣	K4	♣	Q9852



	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	5	2	7	7
S	-	5	2	7	7
E	1	-	-	-	-
W	1	-	-	-	-

To my mind, even at adverse vulnerability the South hand is worth 4♠. If that's what you chose, partner has no trouble inferring that you must have an 8-card suit with the missing top honours and the ♣K (there's not much left to justify a 4♠ bid!) and simply raises to 7♠. This contract was bid at 3 of the 4 tables in the last stage of the knockout, but only half of the Swiss repechage field reached the grand slam. ♠