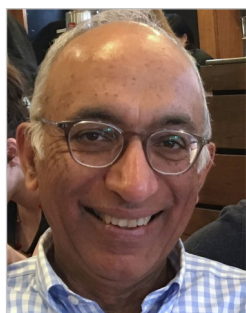


Southern Highlands Congress 2018

All about hand evaluation

by RAKESH KUMAR



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

Once again, the Southern Highlands Bridge Club ran a superb congress in Mittagong, thanks to the considerable efforts of the numerous club volunteers, the ambience of the 40-table venue, and the amazing food provided on the Sunday. No, I'm not biased ... yes, it is my home club. If you haven't come to this congress yet, you should!

On the Saturday, the hard-fought contest in the Open Swiss Pairs was won by Wendy Boxall - Sean Mullamphy, with Neil Williams - Peter Fitzmaurice coming in second and Cevat Emul - Catherine Zhang in third place. In the Teams on the Sunday, Warren Dobes - Witold Chylewski - Marek Kolodziejczyk - George Bilski were clear winners, 4 VPs ahead of Les Grewcock - Rakesh Kumar - Steven Bock - Kevin Davies, with Vicky Lisle - Ian Lisle - Helena Dawson - David Weston very close behind.

The theme on Sunday seemed to be hand evaluation and the challenges began in match 1 – indeed this board was the first of the day for my partner and me:

Board 5

Dealer N | Vul N-S

<p>♠ A43 ♥ QJ3 ♦ J97 ♣ K942</p>	<p>♠ KQJT7 ♥ AKT742 ♦ 85 ♣</p>	<p>♠ 85 ♥ 865 ♦ K6432 ♣ Q63</p>
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<p>♠ 962 ♥ 9 ♦ AQT ♣ AJT875</p>		<p>♠ 85 ♥ 865 ♦ K6432 ♣ Q63</p>
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W	N	E	S
	1H	P	1NT
P	2S	P	3NT
P	4H	P	4S
P	P	//	

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

Playing 2/1 game force in response to major suit openings, my 1♥ bid elicited a forcing 1NT response (showing 6-12 hcp) from partner (Standard would of course bid 2♣). The North hand has only 13 hcp, but has great playing strength and clearly belongs in a suit contract, so I reversed into 2♠. On face value, this shows 5+ hearts, 4 spades and some 16+ hcp. However, the reverse is justified with extra distribution. Partner now jumped to 3NT, over which I bid 4♥, clarifying that I had a shapely hand with 5/6 in the majors. Partner corrected to 4♠ and I was happy to play there.

The contract turned out to be cold for 12 tricks, but we certainly wouldn't have bid to slam. However, others evaluated the combined hands as worth quite a bit more: there were 5 gutsy North-South pairs who got to 6♠! A further 19 were successful in a major suit game (2 of them were in 4♥, which works out OK because hearts are 3-3) and 10 were in 3NT.

Marek Kolodziejczyk, George Bilski, Witold Chylewski & Warren Dobes with Craig Curry, SHBC President.



Our first match after lunch was against the eventual winners, who thrashed us. Their hand evaluation was clearly better. Here's the first relevant exhibit:

Board 2

Dealer E | Vul N-S

♠ AJ965
♥ 86
♦ QT
♣ J752

♠ 843
♥ J9
♦ J9872
♣ 943

♠ KT
♥ K43
♦ K543
♣ KQT6

♠ Q72
♥ AQT752
♦ A6
♣ A8

W	N	E	S
		1C	1H
P	1NT	P	3H
P	?		

How would you evaluate your hand after partner's 3H?

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

After East opens 1♣, South has choices: double first or show your suit and push on later. Partner overcalled 1♥ and I developed a headache. We play that a new suit by advancer is forcing for one round, but I had relatively few scattered points and minimal tolerance for hearts, so I thought my hand lacked the playing strength for a forcing 1♠ bid and instead bid 1NT, denying a fit and showing 8-11 hcp. Partner now jump rebid 3♥ and my headache got worse. Sure, he had some 16+ hcp hand, but not as much as 19-20 hcp or he would certainly have doubled first. Was 3♥ the last making contract, or should I bid 3NT or 4♥? Had I managed to miss a 5-3 spade fit?

I chose to pass. Anything else would have been better! Our opponents played in a thin but unbeatable 3NT. However, across the field, only 14 of the 40 North-South pairs reached game. What would you have done? This hand triggered some discussion with partner about what is a minimum acceptable hand for a (forcing) bid of a new suit in response to an overcall, which is perhaps a conversation you should have with your partner as well.

And then in the same match came this board:

Board 7

Dealer S | Vul All

♠ QJT8
♥ 85
♦ J93
♣ QJ72

♠ 9754
♥ KJT64
♦ AQT
♣ T

♠ AK6
♥ AQ972
♦ 74
♣ A86

♠ 32
♥ 3
♦ K8652
♣ K9543

W	N	E	S
			P
1H	P	2NT	P
3C	P	3S	P
4D	P	4NT	P
5H	P	6H	//

Would you open?

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

The important question here is whether, as West, you will open 1♥. Yes, the hand has only 10 hcp – but it has a reasonable suit, only 7 losers, and good support for the other major if partner turns up with spades. At our table, West did open 1♥ and the auction went 2NT (Jacoby) – 3♣ (shortage) – 3♠ (cue) – 4♦ (cue) – 4NT (RKC) – 5♥ (2 keycards, no queen) and 6♥ was duly reached.

I led the ♠Q and declarer won and drew trumps in two rounds, finishing in dummy. He now finessed the ♦10 and when another spade came back, followed with a finesse of the ♦Q. The probability of at least one finesse working was 75% and the second finesse duly paid off, allowing declarer to discard a spade loser from dummy. Across the field, only 8 found their way to this slam. However, 31 East-West pairs made 12 tricks in hearts.

The message of this column obviously is: bid 'em up!! ♠