

MasterBridge

April Online Swiss Teams

All about courage

by RAKESH KUMAR



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

A field of 16 teams entered for this 6-round event, efficiently hosted on RealBridge by the friendly folks from MasterBridge Online. There was one obviously strong team and a whole lot of other potential contenders. Unsurprisingly, the strong BLOOM team, comprised of Martin Bloom - Peter Gill with Liz Sylvester - Yumin Li, was the winner. What was surprising, however, was the margin of their victory – they averaged 16.7 VPs per round to finish on 100.3 VPs, with the second-placed COOK team of Alex Cook - Heath Henn with Catherine Chaffey - Andrew Goodchild on 73.3 VPs. Expressed another way, the BLOOM team had done so well through the day that if they had headed for the nearest pub/restaurant after round 5, they would still have won!

There were of course lots of tricky bidding decisions, as well as opportunities for misplay or misdefence. Our team gleefully seized many of these opportunities and was duly rewarded with adverse swings. Here are a couple of the bidding problems that arose. Firstly, you hold:

- ♠ A
- ♥ K8542
- ♦ KQ2
- ♣ KQ94

Vulnerable against not, partner passes as dealer and RHO opens 1 ♠. Not wishing to breach every possible guideline on suit quality, you don't overcall 2 ♥ but instead make a takeout double. LHO pre-emptively raises to 3 ♠, which comes back to you. Of course you double again and now partner bids 4 ♥, but RHO backs in with 4 ♠. What will you do?

Secondly, this time not vulnerable against vulnerable opponents, you hold:

- ♠ AQ
- ♥ AJT98
- ♦ T653
- ♣ 85

RHO opens 1 ♠ as dealer and you overcall 2 ♥. LHO raises to 2 ♠ and partner bids 3 ♣. RHO now continues to 3 ♠ and it's your turn. What will you do?

Enthusiastic bidding landed quite a number of South players in 3NT on this next deal:

Board 14

Dealer E | Vul None

♠ 65
 ♥ QT9642
 ♦ Q62
 ♣ T4

♠ QJ2
 ♥ AK8
 ♦ K543
 ♣ 872

	N			
W		E		
	S			

♠ T9743
 ♥ J53
 ♦ JT8
 ♣ Q3

♠ AK8
 ♥ 7
 ♦ A97
 ♣ AKJ965

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

Say LHO leads ♥ K and then switches to ♦ 3. What's the best line of play?

It seems to be putting altogether too many eggs in one basket to rise with ♦ Q, although a couple of declarers did just that and had no further problems. If instead declarer plays low and wins with the ace, what then? Playing clubs from the top solves everything, but if a cautious declarer plays a small club towards the 10 in dummy, this loses to the queen with East. Now if the return is a spade rather than a diamond, it gets interesting. Cashing 5 club tricks brings about this position:

Board 4

Dealer W | Vul All

♠
 ♥ QT
 ♦ Q6
 ♣

♠ QJ
 ♥ K
 ♦ K
 ♣

	N			
W		E		
	S			

♠ T74
 ♥ J
 ♦
 ♣

♠ K8
 ♥
 ♦ 97
 ♣

Keeping careful track of the discards, declarer should now play a diamond, after which only 2 more tricks will be lost so the contract makes. Of course I didn't get that right ... across the field, 6 of 16 played in 3NT and 4 of those made it. Another 8 pairs played in part-scores.

Back to the first problem hand. You know the opponents are trying to steal the teeth out of your head, but did you find the courage to bid 5 ♥?

Board 37

Dealer N | Vul N-S

♠ 74
 ♥ QT3
 ♦ A964
 ♣ J853

♠ Q653
 ♥ 976
 ♦ JT85
 ♣ 62

	N			
W		E		
	S			

♠ KJT982
 ♥ AJ
 ♦ 73
 ♣ AT7

♠ A
 ♥ K8542
 ♦ KQ2
 ♣ KQ94

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

I decided that I would and, for a change, this turned out to be a good decision. The contract is cold on anything other than the double-dummy defence of ♣ A and a small club from East, who then rises with ♥ A to give West a ruff.

This board generated the widest range of results across the field:

Contract	Result	Score	Frequency
5♥ by NS	=	650	3
4♥ by NS	+1	650	1
4♠X by EW	-2	300	2
3♣ by NS	+2	150	2
4♦ by NS	=	130	1
4♠ by EW	-2	100	2
4♠ by EW	-1	50	1
3♠ by EW	-1	50	1
4♦ by NS	-1	-100	1
3♠ by EW	=	-140	2

There was also a range of results on the other problem hand. For the best possible outcome, what was again needed was courage. Did you trust that partner's clubs might be worth 5-6 tricks and bid 3NT?

Board 32

Dealer W | Vul E-W

<p>♠ K76532 ♥ KQ742 ♦ A ♣ 4</p>	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="text-align: center;">—</td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W	—	E		S		<p>♠ AQ ♥ AJT98 ♦ T653 ♣ 85</p> <p>♠ J98 ♥ 65 ♦ KQ987 ♣ K63</p>
	N										
W	—	E									
	S										

♠ T4
♥ 3
♦ J42
♣ AQJT972

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

Only 2 Norths did so, but it was cold. Two played in 5♣, one doubled, but both went down – the contract needs double-dummy play and a lot of luck. After ♦ A and a spade switch, declarer draws trumps via the finesse and then plays a heart up. When West splits her/his honours, declarer takes the ace and plays ♥ J to West's queen, discarding a diamond loser. Because West cannot continue diamonds, the contract now makes! ♠