

# 2022 NSBC Online Winter Teams

## Slams going begging ... again!

by RAKESH KUMAR



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

The NSBC Online Winter Teams, played on 31 July, was won by the COURTNEY team (Chris Depasquale - Michael Courtney - Simon Hinge - Stephen Lester). After 6 x 9-board matches, they finished well ahead of the rest of the field. In second place was the ROCKS team (Judy Marks - Liz Fanos - George Finikiotis - Julianne Rocks). The end of July was something of a purple patch for Michael Courtney, who won the Swiss Pairs (with Chris Depasquale) at the Brisbane Water Online Super Congress on 23 July and then the State Individual on 30 July!

Here are a few interesting deals from the NSBC event. They reprise a theme from back in March, when I wrote about the Central Coast Online Congress, which featured many potential slam deals that usually proved too difficult for the field to reach. Effective slam bidding is winning bridge, so it's worth looking at those situations where slam could have been and perhaps should have been reached, but usually wasn't.

How will you bid the North-South hands on this deal from the first match?

### Board 6

Dealer E | Vul E-W

<p>♠ 32 ♥ J764 ♦ AKT963 ♣ 6</p>	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W — E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W — E	S	<p>♠ JT6 ♥ T82 ♦ J4 ♣ AKT84</p> <p>♠ 97 ♥ KQ953 ♦ Q875 ♣ 97</p> <p>♠ AKQ854 ♥ A ♦ 2 ♣ QJ532</p>
N					
W — E					
S					

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	6	-	-	6	1
S	6	-	-	6	1
E	-	2	3	-	-
W	-	2	3	-	-

Across the field, only 4 of 30 North-South pairs reached slam, two each in clubs and spades. For a successful auction, obviously quite a lot depends on your agreements, but no matter what broad-brush agreements you might have, this is a tricky deal.

Firstly, after East passes, will you open the South hand 2♣? It has just 16 hcp, but two playable suits and only 3 losers. If you do open 2♣, unless North immediately shows a positive hand with clubs, South will rebid 2♠ and be raised to 3♠, which in a game-forcing auction should be stronger than a direct raise to 4♠. But now what? After suit agreement, what is a 3NT rebid by South? If North treats that as a request to cue 4♣ if possible, South might then be able to rationally head towards slam. Perhaps this is something worth discussing with your partner ...

This deal from the third round was a problem for East-West. How would you handle it?

**Board 26**

Dealer E | Vul All

<p>♠ AT97652 ♥ KQ3 ♦ 3 ♣ K7</p>		<p>♠ QJ3 ♥ J984 ♦ 964 ♣ QT4</p>	<p>♠ 8 ♥ A ♦ AKJT872 ♣ A965</p>
<p>♠ K4 ♥ T7652 ♦ Q5 ♣ J832</p>			

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

Most of the field ended up in 4 ♠ after the auction commenced 1 ♦-1 ♠-3 ♦. Those who opened 1 ♦ and jump rebid 3 ♣ had more success, because West could now bid a fourth suit forcing 3 ♥ to show extra values. Another useful approach could be a multi-2 ♦ opening, if you play that this includes 5-loser hands in the majors and 4- or 5-loser hands in the minors. Now after East opens 2 ♦, West will bid 2NT with the expectation of arriving in 4 ♥, but when East rebids 4 ♦ it would be unwise to sign off in 4 ♠. Of course if 4 ♦ is automatically minorwood (RKCB in the bid suit) then a sign-off isn't possible anyway. Overall, only 7 of 30 reached 6 ♦, while one reached 6NT.

Another challenge for East-West was this deal from the fifth round. After 1 ♦-2 ♣, you have choices, again in part depending on your methods. Do you play 2 ♣ in response to 1 ♦ as absolutely game-forcing? If so, do you also play that opener's first responsibility is to show a 5+ suit by rebidding 2 ♦, regardless of any other holding? Or do you play that 2 ♣ is forcing to game unless opener rebids 3 ♣? In that case West will rebid 2 ♥, showing shape but not promising anything extra, and East will bid 2 ♠, fourth suit forcing to game. Now West can show support with 3 ♣ and the slam should be reached.

**Board 39**

Dealer S | Vul All

<p>♠ ♥ J864 ♦ AJT762 ♣ KQ6</p>		<p>♠ KJT532 ♥ 53 ♦ Q8 ♣ 753</p>	<p>♠ A ♥ AQ9 ♦ 954 ♣ AJT942</p>
<p>♠ Q98764 ♥ KT72 ♦ K3 ♣ 8</p>			

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

In fact only 5 pairs bid to slam on this board. One East-West pair ended up in 6 ♦ with West as declarer. This was a somewhat fragile contract, but it made when a heart was not led. The other 4 were in 6 ♣ by East. This is quite safe given the lie of the diamonds, but one declarer somehow went down. Would you have reached the good 6 ♣ contract? 🟩