

Spring Nationals Mixed Teams

Bold... at least sometimes

by RAKESH KUMAR



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

Here are a couple of interesting and instructive deals from the Mixed Teams qualifying rounds at the Sydney Spring Nationals. Let's start by looking at them as problems. Firstly, a bidding question. You hold:

- ♠ 62
- ♥ JT6
- ♦ AK643
- ♣ T82

Both sides are vulnerable. Partner is the dealer and opens 1♣ (2+). RHO overcalls 1♠. What will you do?

Secondly, a defence problem:

- ♠ T
- ♥ KQ5
- ♦ AQ97543
- ♣ 64

	♠ A9854
	♥ 98763
	♦
	♣ K85

Your hand is at right, dummy is at the top. As dealer, not vulnerable against vulnerable opponents, you passed because you did not have a method for opening a weak 2 showing both majors. The auction continued 1♣ (2+) by LHO, pass by partner and 1♦ by RHO. You overcalled 1♠, LHO rebid 1NT, partner raised to 2♠ and RHO jumped to 3NT, which was passed out.

Playing standard leads, partner starts with ♠6 and you take your ace. What will you do at trick 2?

Here's the full deal for the first problem. The South hand is annoying – a negative double isn't possible because you don't have four hearts, the hand doesn't have enough high card strength for 2♦, has too few clubs to raise to 2♣ opposite an opening that only promises 2+ cards, and hasn't even got a half stopper in spades so you can't consider bidding 1NT. What's left?

Board 13

Dealer N | Vul All

- ♠ A9
- ♥ AK74
- ♦ 82
- ♣ AK654

- ♠ T74
- ♥ 9532
- ♦ T975
- ♣ Q7

	N		
W	+	E	
	S		

- ♠ KQJ853
- ♥ Q8
- ♦ QJ
- ♣ J93

- ♠ 62
- ♥ JT6
- ♦ AK643
- ♣ T82

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

Even though teams bidding involves a lot of thin games, sometimes one gets sufficient warning to eschew the game try of the "bid game and then try to make it" variety. The 1♠ overcall appears to be such a warning, suggesting that it might be appropriate to be a scaredy cat and pass.

If you do, West passes and North bids 2♥, promising reversing values. Now you could perhaps consider bidding 2♠ asking for a stopper, but with some 16 hcp opposite your 8 hcp and indifferent shape, do you feel confident that you can make 5♣ or that if partner does have a spade stopper, she will be able to run 9 quick tricks? You shouldn't, so the best thing to do is simply correct to 3♣. The contract makes an overtrick without difficulty – in fact 11 tricks are possible but that requires dropping the off-side doubleton queen of hearts.

Most of the field failed to heed the warning of the 1♠ overcall. Thus 11 of 22 found their way to 3NT regardless, each conceding -200 as a consequence. Interestingly, while no one bid to 5♣, two pairs did manage to make the Moysian 4♥, although the play is not trivial and two pairs went down in a heart contract.

This is the deal associated with the second problem, now in its correct orientation:

Board 9
Dealer N | Vul EW

♠ A9854
♥ 98763
♦
♣ K85

♠ T	N	♠ KQJ7
♥ KQ5	W — E	♥ AJ4
♦ AQ97543	S	♦ J8
♣ 64		♣ T932

♠ 632	♠ 632
♥ T2	♥ T2
♦ KT62	♦ KT62
♣ AQJ7	♣ AQJ7

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

When defending at teams, the question always is: where could the setting trick come from? It appears that the lead of ♠ 6 is top of nothing, so you aren't going to set the contract by returning the suit. Your only real hope is to find partner with winners in clubs, so a bold switch is required. A low club would be the theoretically best choice, catering for partner holding ♣ AJ10x, but on this deal ♣ K would do just fine. However, the club switch wasn't found too often: while 4 North-South pairs set 3NT, 9 East-West pairs made it. Others were in assorted contracts, mostly part-scores in diamonds. 🟩