

4 October

## Wrong again ...

Rakesh Kumar

The dealing computer was having fun on Wednesday 2 October, with one amazing distributional hand after another. Bidding these accurately can be very hard, but on the first deal I'm going to show you, I had all the information I needed. That didn't help, I still got it wrong. This was my hand:

♠Q  
♥JT63  
♦KT63  
♣T852

Not vulnerable against vulnerable opponents, partner opened the bidding with 2C (game forcing) and RHO overcalled 3H. With what seemed to be a sure stopper in hearts, I bid 3NT, but was completely unsurprised when partner now bid 4S.

Over this, to my surprise RHO bid 5H. This seemed to be a free offer of at least +500, better than the value of our game, so I doubled. And to my even greater surprise, partner rebid 5S, which RHO passed.

If you were in my seat, what would you do now?

Earlier in the same round, there had been another distributional hand on which I did manage to do the right thing. My hand wasn't particularly inspiring:

♠KJ  
♥AKJ2  
♦JT52  
♣862

Both vulnerable, as dealer I opened 1D and partner bid 2C. I rebid 2NT, showing either a minimum balanced hand or some 4-4-4-1 holding. Partner rebid 3C. This was clearly limited, say 9-11 hcp and a 6+ suit, and a request to pass unless my hand was something special.

What would you do at this point?

Back to that first deal. Clearly partner has some very shapely hand with a self-sufficient spade suit and an almost-guaranteed void in hearts. Equally clearly, she has bid 5S with every expectation of making it. So she must hold plenty of top honours in both clubs and diamonds ... and yet she is missing the ♠Q and the ♦K, both of which are in my hand.

So what did you do? I know what I should have done – bid 6S! But, lacking courage and with insufficient faith in partner, I didn't. She proceeded to demonstrate what a poor decision that was by taking all 13 tricks on the lead of the singleton club:

<b>BD: 28</b>	♠2	<b>Dlr: W</b>
	♥AKQ9842	<b>Vul: N-S</b>
	♦AJ94	
	♣3	
♠AKJ96543		♠Q
♥		♥JT63
♦		♦KT63
♣AQJ97		♣T852
	♠T87	
	♥75	
	♦Q8752	
	♣K64	
	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠	N
		T
N	- 4 3 - -	14
S	- 4 3 - -	15 6
E	7 - - 7 3	5
W	7 - - 7 3	

What an extraordinary hand she held!! In fact my ♦K was waste paper, but my ♣10 was useful ...

This was the second deal:

<b>BD: 26</b>	♠AQ63	<b>Dlr: E</b>
	♥T73	<b>Vul: All</b>
	♦K863	
	♣T5	
♠84		♠KJ
♥65		♥AKJ2
♦97		♦JT52
♣AQJ9743		♣862
	♠T9752	
	♥Q984	
	♦AQ4	
	♣K	
	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠	N
		T
N	- 1 1 2 -	9
S	- 1 1 2 -	7 13
E	4 - - - 3	11
W	4 - - - 3	

Did you rebid 3NT? There's a good reason why you should, rather than passing or raising clubs. The almost inevitable major suit lead will be worth a trick for you and partner will either have 6 running clubs to go with your 3 major suit tricks, or else will have greater length and game will at worst be on a finesse. Importantly, with your 3-card holding, you will have excellent communication with dummy's club suit.

As it turned out, South quite sensibly led a small heart, but this ran to my ♥AKJ. When I led a club, the singleton ♣K popped up, so 10 tricks were now easy.

The idea that one should explore a notrump contract when holding values in the outside suits and a fit with partner's long minor is emphasised in the "improvers" booklet on *Better Partnership Bridge*. There, it's discussed in the context of advancer's bid after partner overcalls in a minor suit, but exactly the same set of priorities applies in an uncontested auction when partner has responded to show a long minor suit.



11 October

## Straight out of the booklet!

Rakesh Kumar

Over the October long weekend, while Canberra was flower-focused for Floriade, members of SHBC travelled to play in the *Canberra in Bloom* Bridge Festival. The SVENSSON Team (Mardi Svensson – Rob Ward, Jenny Michael – Rakesh Kumar) had several successes in the Teams matches, finishing 9<sup>th</sup> out of 30. This was sufficient to win the Country Teams medal!

The subsequent Swiss Pairs didn't yield anything exciting by way of results, but there were many interesting hands. Here is one, that elegantly illustrates several ideas put forward in the second booklet on *Better Partnership Bridge*:

<b>BD: 3</b> ♠T97 ♥J4 ♦J76 ♣KQ642 ♠KJ ♥AK8762 ♦Q954 ♣J ♠652 ♥T ♦T832 ♣T8753	<b>Dlr: S</b> <b>Vul: E-W</b> ♠AQ843 ♥Q953 ♦AK ♣A9
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	♣	♦	♥	♠	N	
					T	
N	-	-	-	-	-	7
S	-	-	-	-	-	14 19
E	2	6	7	7	7	0
W	2	6	7	7	7	

After South's pass, West of course opens 1H. East now has the perfect hand with which to bid a Jacoby 2NT to investigate slam. West responds 3C, promising shortage (a singleton or void) in that suit. This is encouraging news from East's perspective, as there will be no loser in clubs.

Now East can inquire a little further, using the method suggested in the booklet *viz.* to bid the first step over the shortage bid as an artificial inquiry, after which opener's rebid of the next step says "I have a minimum hand" while the rebid of the next+1 step says "I have a good hand". In this case, East can bid 3D as an inquiry and West should bid 3S to show a good hand. But West has only 14 hcp including two jacks, I hear you cry! True, but she has a 6-card heart suit, two top honours and only 5 losers now that a fit has been found. So she *does* have a good hand. Note that even for hands with 7 losers, upgrading with a 6-card suit and top controls in response to a Jacoby 2NT inquiry is emphasised in the booklet.

At this point, East will of course bid 4NT Roman Keycard Blackwood and West replies 5H (2 without the queen) so now East knows all the keycards are held. Can East bid all the way to 7H?

Well, if West has shortage in clubs and East has the king of diamonds, the only king West is likely to hold is the king of spades. So when a further inquiry reveals that West does indeed hold one king, it's odds-on that the grand slam will be makeable. Even better, if you play that in response to a 5NT inquiry, responder bids his/her cheapest king, the king of spades will be specifically shown with a bid of 6S and the contract will be a virtual certainty to make (as grand slams should be).



*15 October*

## **Almost James Bond ...**

Rakesh Kumar

Back in the late 1960s, I learnt about distributional bridge hands – even though I hadn't yet learnt to play bridge! However, back then I had a bit of a thing for James Bond novels, and anyone who has read *Moonraker* will know that this features 007 playing bridge against the evil Sir Hugo Drax, who is cheating. Bond out-cheats him with a fixed highly distributional hand – you can see it here:

[http://www.bridgebum.com/james\\_bond.php](http://www.bridgebum.com/james_bond.php)

The hand below, from the Monday 14 October session, isn't quite as extreme, but it is certainly interesting:

<b>BD: 10</b>	♠953	<b>Dlr: E</b>
	♥JT8764	<b>Vul: All</b>
	♦K972	
	♣	
♠6		♠QT874
♥AKQ95		♥2
♦		♦6
♣QT98643		♣AKJ752
	♠AKJ2	
	♥3	
	♦AQJT8543	
	♣	
	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠	N
		T
N	- 6 2 2 -	4
S	- 6 2 2 -	11 10
E	6 - - -	15
W	6 - - -	

At our table, East began with 1C and partner, sitting South, doubled with the intention of rebidding diamonds unless I responded in spades. As explained in the first booklet on *Better Partnership Bridge*, double followed by a new suit or a raise of partner's response shows a strong hand, typically 16+ hcp or distributional values. West now bid 1H, which silenced me, although I briefly had dreams of juicy penalties. East rebid 1S and partner decided all this had been quite enough, so she bid 5D!

Well, it wasn't quite enough, because West now bid 6C!! Having castigated myself in a column only the other week, for not trusting partner and not displaying any courage, I decided not to repeat the error. I bid on to 6D, hoping that it would turn out to be a cheap save, because the void and the ♦K ought to be worth *something* between them.

Were they ever! Well, actually, the void was of no value at all ... but partner brought 6D home without even breathing hard. The remarkable thing is that both 6C and 6D are cold, which is a bit like the *Moonraker* hand.

Across the room, two pairs played in 6C, three were allowed to play in 5D, two played in 6D ... and Adi Shroff – Maryanne Bawden got an absolute top in 6D doubled, making!!!



21 October

## What's trumps?

Rakesh Kumar

Several years ago, I heard David Beauchamp rhetorically ask: "What's an 8-card suit?" then answer himself: "Trumps!" That idea certainly works for me. I'm not even sure that it's possible to overbid when holding an 8-card suit – indeed if I hold an 8-card minor suit I tend to more or less automatically bid to the 5-level, unless I can find an excuse to go even further.

On Monday 21<sup>st</sup> October the dealing computer found its way to generating not just one but two 8-card club suits – in both cases headed by the ♣AQ. After what I've said above, you might expect that I was very surprised to see the table of results for the first of these boards:

<b>BD: 13</b>	♠A52	<b>Dlr: N</b>
	♥KT52	<b>Vul: All</b>
	♦T842	
	♣J9	
♠K843		♠J6
♥Q96		♥
♦AKJ63		♦Q95
♣7		♣AQT86542
	♠QT97	
	♥AJ8743	
	♦7	
	♣K3	
	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠	N
		T
N	- - 3 1 1	8
S	- - 3 1 1	13 9
E	5 3 - - -	10
W	5 3 - - -	

North-South played in 3H once and 4H twice, somehow being allowed to make the latter contract even though there are 4 losers provided East-West do not open the spade suit. What East-West were doing in contracts of 3NT and 4D is truly puzzling, although no doubt their North-South opponents had no objection to the sizeable negative scores in 3NT.

The "no such thing as overbidding" approach would yield a very brief auction: pass by North-5C by East-all pass. Making 11 tricks on normal play: East wins the lead of the singleton ♦7 diamond then plays ace and another club, or plays low on a spade lead, wins any return, then continues as above. If South leads the singleton diamond and then attempts to cash ♥A, declarer makes 12 tricks.

Contract	Result	Score	Frequency
4♥ by NS	=	620	2
3NT by EW	-4	400	1
3NT by EW	-2	200	1
3♥ by NS	=	140	1
5♣ by EW	-1	100	3
4♦ by EW	-1	100	1
3♣ by EW	+3	-170	3
4♥X by NS	-1	-200	1
5♣ by EW	+1	-620	1

I'm sure it won't surprise you that on the second deal, when I was sitting North and held the 8-card suit, the auction began 1S by West, followed by 5C by me. Yes, I have a 4-card heart suit and there might be some wonderful contract possible in hearts – but the 8-card suit needs to be trumps, so that was that.

BD: 24 ♠		Dlr: W				
♥K854	♠A84	Vul: None				
♦3	♥AJ3					
♣AQT87643	♦AT7654					
♠KJ632	♣2					
♥T62	♠QT975					
♦KJ9	♥Q97					
♣KJ	♦Q82					
	♣95					
		N				
		T				
N	4	-	-	-	-	9
S	4	-	-	-	-	12 13
E	-	4	1	3	-	6
W	-	4	1	3	4	

Partner held nothing much, so in a sense this was a good sacrifice at matchpoints, because I made the expected 10 tricks for -50, whereas East-West can make 9 tricks in spades for +140. However, mine was an altogether Pyrrhic victory, because when North bid only 4C, East-West unwisely went on to 4S, or even reached 5S over 5C. These were notably unsuccessful contracts, as the table of results shows. So the five of us who bid to and played in what I would have regarded as the "correct" contract had to settle for a 19% score!! Who said bridge (or life) is fair?

Contract	Result	Score	Frequency
5♠X by EW	-6	1400	1
4♠X by EW	-2	300	1
5♠X by EW	-2	300	1
5♠ by EW	-4	200	1
4♠ by EW	-3	150	1
4♠ by EW	-2	100	1
4♠ by EW	-1	50	3
5♣ by NS	-1	-50	4
5♣X by NS	-1	-100	1



*7 November*

**Dead heat!**

Rakesh Kumar

A day after the Melbourne Cup was run, it was interesting that the racing term could almost be applied to the North-South results in the Wednesday evening duplicate pairs. Although there were only 5 tables, have you ever seen a result like this one?

Place	Result	Percentage
1	102.0	51.00%
2	101.0	50.50%
3	100.0	50.00%
3	100.0	50.00%
5	97.0	48.50%

A mere 5 matchpoints between first and fifth. And no, this wasn't because the hands were flat and boring – quite the contrary, see the East-West results!

Place	Result	Percentage
1	133.0	66.50%
2	117.0	58.50%
3	108.0	54.00%
4	71.0	35.50%
4	71.0	35.50%

The hand on the next page was both interesting and instructive:



11 November  
**Slam season again!**  
 Rakesh Kumar

About 18 months ago, I wrote a column for this website entitled "Slam season in the Highlands". It seems that slam season has returned, although this time it's not in mid-winter but in the bushfire season ...

There were 3 excellent slams available in the session on Monday 11 November, which illustrated several principles and useful conventions described in the *Better Partnership Bridge* booklets. We'll look at 2 of those slams. The first was this:

<b>BD: 19 ♠A2</b>		<b>Dlr: S</b>	
♥KJ876		Vul: E-W	
♦KQ2			
♣KQ6			
♠9763		♠T854	
♥T532		♥Q9	
♦4		♦J8753	
♣T542		♣J9	
♠KQJ			
♥A4			
♦AT96			
♣A873			
	♣	♦	♥
	♠		
	N		
	T		
N	6	7	6
S	6	7	6
E	-	-	-
W	-	-	-
	5	7	18
	7	0	4
	-	-	18
	-	-	-

If your 1NT opening shows 15-17 hcp, the South hand is too strong for this. After 1D-1H-2NT (showing 18-19 hcp if you play a 20-21 hcp or similar 2NT opening) North can inquire about 3-card heart support via checkback, but it's then effortless to bid 6NT. Of the 9 pairs playing on the Monday afternoon, 2 were in this contract, while 2 stretched to 7NT, but failed as that requires dropping the off-side doubleton ♥Q.

The North-South hands highlight the desirability of being able to show strong balanced hands within a narrow range of high card points, preferably only 2 hcp. If you do play a 1NT opening showing 15-18 hcp, you need some mechanism by which to find out whether opener has 15-16 or 17-18 hcp. Although extended Stayman is often regarded as a bit old-fashioned, it achieves this purpose quite well. As North, with a 5332 hand I would be quite happy to play in notrumps, especially at



about slam and ask for controls. RKCB yields 2 key cards plus the trump queen, so we're there. In fact 13 tricks are relatively easy, but only 3 of 9 pairs bid and made the slam.



## 25 November

### Counting tricks in defence

Rakesh Kumar

As I've said before in these columns, defence is hard. Indeed there are days when it seems as if the opponents just keep bidding, while finding the correct defence is near impossible. However, most of the time it's not *that* hard. Here's a board, from Monday 25 November, that nicely illustrates the basic principle of counting one's defensive tricks.

The opponents reach 4S after an uninformative auction and the ♥J is led, revealing this dummy:

(dummy)	
♠853	
♥K98	
♦KQT53	
♣K4	
	(you)
	♠964
	♥A2
	♦J8
	♣AJT753

Declarer calls for a low heart from the table. As third hand, what are your thoughts?

Well, to start with you know that declarer has the ♥Q. It's highly unlikely you will get to use the ♥A to behead the king, so a better option is to take the trick and play back a heart, hoping that partner will get in before trumps are drawn and will then be able to give you a ruff.

Declarer allows your return of the ♥2 to run to the king in dummy, then leads a spade to the jack and partner's ♠A. Partner, bless her, returns a heart and you ruff, as declarer drops the ♥Q. Now what?

Dummy still has the ♣K and it's quite possible partner has the queen, so declarer may have 2 more losers in clubs. Should you return your third trump and wait to collect another 2 tricks?

If that's what you decided to do, I guess you will still be waiting. Declarer held  $\spadesuit A$  and two small diamonds, so after drawing trumps she could simply run the diamond suit, discarding her club losers.

You had already scored 3 tricks and instead of being greedy, you needed to cash the  $\clubsuit A$  and forget about the possibility of another club trick. Note that to work this out, you didn't need to count out declarer's hand – but you could easily do so, because with 6 hcp in spades, 2 in hearts and at most 2 in clubs, she really must have the  $\spadesuit A$  to have an opening hand at all.

Here's the full board – East was the declarer. Of the 12 times this was played, on 9 occasions East-West played in spades. A heart was led every time, which was normal enough; although Deep Finesse can hold East to 8 tricks, that requires a club lead, followed by a heart switch at trick 3. Surprisingly, 7 of the East-West pairs in spades made 10 tricks, or even more – and 6 were in game. Clearly some folks weren't counting defensive tricks ...

<b>BD: 6</b> $\spadesuit 964$ $\heartsuit A2$ $\diamondsuit J8$ $\clubsuit AJT753$ $\spadesuit 853$ $\heartsuit K98$ $\diamondsuit KQT53$ $\clubsuit K4$	$\spadesuit A2$ $\heartsuit JT763$ $\diamondsuit 962$ $\clubsuit Q86$	<b>Dlr: E</b> <b>Vul: E-W</b> $\spadesuit KQJT7$ $\heartsuit Q54$ $\diamondsuit A74$ $\clubsuit 92$
$\clubsuit$ $\diamondsuit$ $\heartsuit$ $\spadesuit$		
N	-	T
N	3 - 1 - 2	10
S	3 - 1 - 2	11 12
E	- 3 - 2 -	7
W	- 3 - 3 -	

