

27 November

## From the toolbox ...

Rakesh Kumar

Modern bidding has some useful tools for getting to the right contract more often. A board that illustrates the potential use of some of them turned up on Monday 26 November.

In fact there's a lot to say about this board! For starters, while East will surely pass, it isn't automatic for South to do so: the hand notionally has 6 losers, two aces, support for both majors and an easy rebid if partner produces either a 1NT or a 2C response. Playing IMPs, I'd be very strongly inclined to open this 1D, despite having only 10 high card points. I might even do so at matchpoints ...

<b>BD: 14</b>	♠J8652	<b>Dlr: E</b>
	♥J2	<b>Vul: None</b>
	♦T5	
	♣Q654	
♠KT94		♠
♥AK9		♥QT65
♦7		♦KQJ64
♣AK983		♣JT72
	♠AQ73	
	♥8743	
	♦A9832	
	♣	
	♣♦♥♠	N
		T
N	- - - 1 -	4
S	- - - 1 -	17 9
E	5 3 4 - 3	10
W	5 3 3 - 3	

Anyway, let's say South does pass and West commences proceedings with 1C. North has nothing to contribute. With less than 12 hcp, East's first priority is to show a major suit, so she will bid 1H.

What happens next depends on whether South, having passed when he had a good opportunity to bid, now takes it upon himself to overcall 2D with a suit that has no discernible merit. Many would, but I certainly wouldn't recommend it.

Let's say South does pass again. West needs to show her spade suit *and* her strength, so a reasonable rebid is 2S. This creates an interesting problem for East. On the one hand, 3NT is likely to be cold because there probably are quite a few club tricks to be had, but on the other, the spade void is awkward and 3NT might best be played from the West hand.

What would a bid of 3D from East mean at this point? This has long been played not as a natural bid but as fourth suit forcing, asking West to bid 3NT with a diamond stopper, 3H with 3-card heart support, or else

to rebid clubs. Of course it's not very likely that West will have a diamond stopper, so on this occasion the bid doesn't make sense. East's choices really are limited to just bidding 3NT anyway (which works) or trying 5C (not a good choice at matchpoints, and very tricky this time because of the 4-0 break).

What if South does in fact decide to bid 2D? West can still bid 2S, which as a reverse should still show 16+ hcp, and the auction would proceed as above. However, West now has 2 extra options, if you have the right tools in your bidding toolbox.

One is to show partner that you have sufficient strength, cover in spades and interest in 3NT by bidding 3D. This bid of the opponents' suit asks for a stopper, and East will again end up as declarer.

The other is to consider the possibility that East might have 5 hearts and to specifically show 3-card rather than 4-card support. How might you do that? The answer is a "support double". After 1C-(P)-1H-(2D) a bid of 2H/3H/4H by West would promise 4-card support and a limited/invitational/game-forcing hand, while a double would show exactly 3-card support and unspecified strength. With a 5+ suit, East would now bid on in hearts; with only 4 cards, she would bid spades, bid notrumps or raise clubs as appropriate.

Or with this hand, she would pass ... the result would be gruesome for North-South!

The range of results on this board says something about its difficulties, which apparently were in bidding, play *and* defence!

Contract	Lead	Tricks	NS score	EW score
5CW	5D	10	50	
1NT W	5S	8		120
3NT W	5S	8	50	
3NT W	5S	9		400
2♠ N	KD	9	140	
2♥ E	AD	9		140
3NT W	5S	7	100	
5♣ W	TD	10	50	
4♥ E	AD	10		420
1NT W	5S	8		120
1NT E	8H	10		180
3♣ W	TD	8	50	

19 November

## Difficult to bid!

Rakesh Kumar

This hand from Monday 19 November was a challenge to bid correctly. Let's look at it first from the perspective of South, the dealer:

♠AK6  
 ♥J  
 ♦854  
 ♣AQJ643

Well, at least there's no problem getting things off the ground with a bid of 1C. However, have you thought about your rebid yet? This could be tricky – the hand has a lot of playing strength (and notionally only 6 losers) so if partner responds 1D you might want to upgrade and offer 3C. Perhaps you might also bid 3C in response to 1S, although you would then have to worry about missing a 5-3 spade fit: and if partner then rebids 3S is that forcing or not? It should be ...

What about if partner's response is the predictable and not-so-welcome 1H? Now your hand really doesn't look as good. You will have to settle for 2C, which understates your values but is at least accurate in terms of suit length.

Time to look at it from the other side of the table. North has quite a remarkable collection and it's not easy to show this 3-loser hand either. My partner made the practical jump bid of 3D. When I rebid 3NT, she made another practical bid – 6NT!

**BD: 31 ♠72**      **Dlr: S**  
 ♥AKQT7 **Vul: N-S**  
 ♦AKQ96  
 ♣7

♠QJ85	♠T943
♥8542	♥963
♦J3	♦T72
♣KT2	♣985

♠AK6  
 ♥J  
 ♦854  
 ♣AQJ643

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N	
					T	
N	6	7	7	4	7	18
S	6	7	7	4	7	7 0
E	-	-	-	-	-	15
W	-	-	-	-	-	

My congratulations to Eric and Patricia, who successfully reached 7NT (by North). I honestly can't think of a safe and reliable road to the grand slam using natural bidding methods (it's easier playing a strong club system) so I will have to get them to tell me how it's done. No wonder they keep winning with scores of 65% and more!

Meanwhile, at our table West led a spade and it was time to concentrate on the play. However, there really wasn't that much to it – take the lead in hand, cash two rounds of diamonds to confirm that the suit is breaking 3-2, then play a heart to the jack and a diamond back. That's 5 diamonds, 5 hearts, 2 spades and a club. Which leaves me puzzling over the table of results: the other 2 pairs in 6NT and 2 of the 4 pairs in notrump games only made 12 tricks. Is finessing addictive?

7NT by NS = 2220 1  
6NT by NS +1 1470 1  
6NT by NS = 1440 2  
5NT by NS +2 720 1  
3NT by NS +4 720 1  
3NT by NS +3 690 2

## *12 November*

### **A curious hand ...**

Rakesh Kumar

A board from Monday 12 November illustrated some interesting aspects of bidding, as well as being instructive in terms of the inferences one can draw to play a hand correctly.

To start with, if partner has passed and your right-hand opponent opens the auction with 1D, what are you going to bid with this hand?

♠KJT7  
♥A642  
♦KQ93  
♣Q

A takeout double is possible, although you have no tolerance for clubs and might be forced to bid a very dubious 2NT if that is what partner responds. The choice seems to be between two kinds of falsehood. You can either make an overcall on a 4-card suit, in which case 1S makes more sense – but this loses the possibility of a heart fit with partner – or you can bid an off-shape 1NT in the hope that partner will at least have length in clubs to stop the run of the suit against you.

I chose the latter option because it does at least get the stoppers and strength across (our 1NT overcall promises 15-18 high card points). Partner bid 2C (simple Stayman) and raised my 2H response to 3H. Now what? Well, although the hand is a minimum for 1NT, it has actually improved quite a bit – on the assumption that partner has 8-9 hcp for the invitational raise, the shortage in clubs is a real advantage for a suit contract. Moreover, RHO's opening bid should help with the play because the location of most of the missing points is known. So I went on to 4H ...

East led a diamond and South put down a rather doubtful collection as dummy:

♠KJT7  
 ♥A642  
 ♦KQ93  
 ♣Q  
  
 ♠654  
 ♥KJT5  
 ♦J5  
 ♣K632

West took his ♦A, then cashed ♠A and continued with ♠8. What can you infer?

This play looks suspiciously suggestive of a doubleton, with East having ♠Q. Obviously you can't afford to finesse as this will lead to the immediate defeat of the contract (in fact 2 down – 3 aces, the spade queen and a ruff). So you rise with the ♠K. Now as long as you can pick up the hearts you can discard a spade loser from dummy on the diamonds ... how will you play?

A little bit of counting helps. Your side has 23 hcp and you know about 2 hcp with East. No guarantees, of course, but as this particular East-West pair play a 16-18 hcp 1NT opening, West can have up to 15 hcp and is odds-on to have the ♥Q. So ... low heart to the king, run the ♥J with all following low (phew!) and draw the last trump with the ace. Now discard a spade on a top diamond, play the ♣Q to West's ace and the remaining tricks are yours in the form of ♣K and a cross-ruff ... just making your contract. This was the full hand:

**BD: 10** ♠KJT7    **Dir: E**  
 ♥A642    **Vul: All**  
 ♦KQ93  
 ♣Q

♠A8	♠Q932
♥Q98	♥73
♦A642	♦T87
♣AJ74	♣T985

♠654  
 ♥KJT5  
 ♦J5  
 ♣K632

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N	T
N	-	2	4	2	2	15
S	-	2	4	2	2	15 2
E	1	-	-	-	-	8
W	1	-	-	-	-	

However, there's more to the story. If playing a 15-17 or 15-18 1NT opening, West will start with 1NT and may be allowed to play there, going down but getting a good matchpoint score. This illustrates the pre-emptive value of a 1NT opening and also raises the question of what North should do in that case.

My preferred defence to 1NT is 2C to show both majors, 2D to show a 6+ major suit and 2H/S to show 5+ in the bid suit and a 4+ minor suit. This is properly known as multi-Landy, although often called Cappelletti in error. A 2C bid usually shows at least 5-4 in the majors, but with this much strength 4-4 is fine and would at least get North-South to 2H. Following such an auction, this contract should always make 10 tricks, as almost every outstanding high card is placed by the opening.

Indeed, the full range of possible outcomes on this board was well illustrated by the table of results from the day:

<u>Contract</u>	<u>Lead</u>	<u>Tricks</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>EW</u>
1NT W	7S	6	100	
2♥ S	AS	8	110	
2♥ S	AS	9	140	
1NT W	7S	6	100	
3♥ S	AS	8		100
1NT W	JS	6	100	
1NT W	7S	6	100	
2♥ S	AS	9	140	
4♥ N	TD	10	620	

## *14 September* **(Not) thinking it through** Rakesh Kumar

Southern Highlands performed well in the Interclub Teams played in Berry on 12 September. Exactly how well remains unclear, because there was more than a little chaos with the scoring in the afternoon, although it seems likely we finished second.

Despite playing reasonably for most of the day, I was thoroughly annoyed with myself for mucking up the defence on one hand and the play on another. On both occasions, I committed a very common bridge error, which is to think through a problem only part of the way, then act on the basis of an incomplete and inaccurate "solution". See if you can do a better job of working out the correct line on the hands in question.

Firstly, you are defending 4H. With opponents vulnerable, the bidding has been pass by partner as dealer, 1H by RHO, double by you, 3H by LHO (described as a limit raise), pass by partner, 4H by RHO and everyone passed (although you felt unhappy about having to do so). You (South) lead a top spade and West tables this dummy:

♠J9  
 ♥QJT3  
 ♦532  
 ♣KQJT  
     ♣AKT5  
     ♥  
     ♦KJT97  
     ♣A852

All follow to the first trick. On the next top spade, declarer plays the queen. What will you play at trick 3?

Secondly, after two passes, you bid 4H and the opponents lead 3 rounds of clubs. You ruff the third round, cash ♠AK and ruff your low spade in dummy. Now what?

♠53  
 ♥76  
 ♦AKT875  
 ♣932

♠AKQ6  
 ♥KQJ9852  
 ♦  
 ♣84

So ... on that first hand it seemed clear that another spade would simply give a ruff-and-sluff, while for East to continue to 4H, she must surely have the ♦AQ. I was determined *not* to give her a free finesse, so I firmly decided I would *not* switch to a diamond. Instead, I played the ♣A and a low club. This turned out to be the only way to allow declarer to make the contract, because the full hand was:

<b>BD: 9</b>	♠86432	<b>Dlr: N</b>
	♥K9	<b>Vul: EW</b>
	♦86	
	♣9763	
♠J9		♠Q7
♥QJT3		♥A876542
♦532		♦AQ4
♣KQJT		♣4
	♠AKT5	
	♥	
	♦KJT97	
	♣A852	
	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠	N
		T
N	2 4 - 5 1	3
S	2 3 - 5 -	10 12
E	- - 2 - -	15
W	- - 2 - -	

If I do play a diamond, declarer cannot take the heart finesse and must also lose a diamond eventually anyway, thus going 2 down. My thoroughly unwise switch allowed both the finesse and a couple of discards.

I'm not sure I could have diagnosed the singleton club in declarer's hand, but I had only thought through the problem part way – if declarer did have two clubs there was nothing I could do, but if not, I might be giving away a diamond trick but at least I wasn't providing a quick entry to dummy.

My poor defence cost us 13 IMPs on the board, almost the entire margin of the only match that our team lost.

On the next hand, there was crime without punishment. After ruffing a low spade, given that there are no losers to discard on the top diamonds, the I-didn't-think-it-through play is to lead dummy's remaining heart, on the grounds that declarer's only remaining loser is the ♥A.

However, when West won the trick, she returned the ♠J. East could have ruffed this and defeated the contract. Fortunately for me, she didn't, possibly believing that she would simply be over-ruffed.

I should never have allowed the situation to arise. A thinking declarer would have played a top diamond and discarded the ♠Q *before* leading the last trump in dummy. Sure, the ♠Q is not a loser, but it could be ruffed!

<b>BD: 21</b>	♠53	<b>Dlr: N</b>
	♥76	<b>Vul: EW</b>
	♦AKT875	
	♣932	
♠J984		♠T72
♥A4		♥T3
♦J63		♦Q942
♣KQT5		♣AJ76
	♠AKQ6	
	♥KQJ9852	
	♦	
	♣84	
	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠	N
		T
N	- 1 3 2 2	7
S	- 1 3 2 2	11 7
E	1 - - - -	15
W	- - - - -	

Exactly the same misplay and misdefence happened at the other table, so it was a flat board ....

