

15 June

SHBC on BBO #1

Rakesh Kumar

With the re-opening of our club now faintly visible on the horizon, it's time for me to start writing columns for the website again ...

During the lockdown, the Southern Highlands and Friends Pairs on BBO has been a conspicuous success. With a regular turnout of 8+ tables, our tournament – ably organised by Mardi Svensson, with support from Steve Brabyn – has done quite a bit better than a number of other ABF virtual clubs. Congratulations to all members who have participated and special congrats to those who learnt to find their way around BBO in these covidious times!

Of course, while the medium is different, the messages are the same. Monday 15th June was the fifth week of our event, and there were some interesting boards that illustrated key issues in bidding and play.

This first deal was all about showing some courage. Sitting North, you hear partner pass and RHO open 1C. You have a very good-looking suit in a 4-loser hand. There's a high likelihood that partner won't be absolutely broke but also a very high likelihood that s/he won't raise you even with a trick in hand. So what can you bid except 4H?

7		N 2+	
		♠KQ8	
		♥AKQ7542	
		♦5	
		♣73	
W	W N E S	E	
♠54		Pass	♠J109
♥96	1♣ 4♥ Pass Pass		♥J83
♦AQJ2	Pass		♦K10983
♣KQ942			♣J8
		S 2+	
		♠A7632	
		♥10	
		♦764	
		♣A1065	
		4♥ North	
		0	0

Remarkably, only 3 of 9 did so. In fact with both majors breaking 3-2, unless East can find a diamond lead (which happened at one table where West chose to make an initial 1D opening) North takes 13 tricks. By the way, note that opening 1D with the West hand is not a bad strategy, despite the clubs being longer, as it allows for a sensible rebid.

While competitive bidding is all about showing some courage, this can sometimes backfire, especially if you don't get to buy the hand – because then you may have given declarer information about the distribution than could enable him/her to bring home an otherwise failing contract.

That's well demonstrated, at least in principle, on this next deal. When South overcalls 1S with a vulnerable 2NT showing the minors, East has a lot of distributional information when

playing in 4S. There appear to be 2 unavoidable diamond losers, plus a likely club loser after the lead of ♣K, so how should East play the hearts?

10^D

N 2+
 ♠1065
 ♥Q7654
 ♦A95
 ♣J4

W 2+ W N E S E 2+
 ♠Q874 1♠ 2NT
 ♥AJ103 4♣ Pass Pass Pass
 ♦108
 ♣A73

S 2+
 ♠2
 ♥2
 ♦KJ732
 ♣KQ10986

4♣ East
 0 0

If you credit South with values in the minors and assume the ♥Q is with North, you can draw trumps in 3 rounds, then run the ♥J. If North is unwise and covers, you even get to discard your club loser!

This play wasn't actually found at any table, including those where South did bid 2NT. However, 2 declarers managed to make 11 tricks, because South led the singleton ♥2 and North did cover.

Here's another deal that illustrates an aspect of the play of the hand:

16^D

N
 ♠J43
 ♥84
 ♦A932
 ♣KQ42

W W N E S E 2
 ♠9 1♣ Pass 1♠ Pass
 ♥AJ96 1NT Pass 2♥ Pass
 ♦Q864 3♥ Pass 4♥ Pass
 ♣AJ93 Pass Pass

S
 ♠KQ75
 ♥1053
 ♦K10
 ♣10875

4♥ East
 0 0

East-West should reach 4H, which is quite a reasonable contract that will make on any lead except a trump or the very unlikely ♦K. At first glance it looks easy – all you have to do is cash 2 aces and cross-ruff the rest for 10 tricks. However, it's important to get the timing right. This is where playing the hand out mentally at trick 1, before actually playing a card, becomes important.

So ... say you receive the lead of ♠K. Take the ace but be careful not to first cash ♣A. Ruff a spade immediately, then ♣A and a club allows you to finish in dummy with a high ruff of your last spade. Exactly the same logic applies after a club lead: immediately play ♠9 to the ace and ruff a spade. The ♥K then becomes your 10th trick. Not everyone playing in hearts got this right ...



22 June
SHBC on BBO #2
 Rakesh Kumar

This column continues the story of the very successful Southern Highlands and Friends virtual club Monday Pairs tournament on BBO. Below are a couple of instructive hands from Monday 22 June.

This first one is a straightforward demonstration of the importance of the aphorism "keep length with dummy", which refers to what to do in defence when forced to discard as declarer runs a long suit.

11		N		E	
♠AQ86		♠75		♠75	
♥K10		♥Q732		♥Q732	
♦Q96		♦83		♦83	
♣KJ85		♣Q10976		♣Q10976	
W	N	E	S		
♠J1043			1♦		
♥J964	Pass	1♠	Pass	2NT	
♦J104	Pass	6NT	Pass	Pass	
♣43	Pass				
S					
♠K92					
♥A85					
♦AK752					
♣A2					
				6NT	South
				0	0

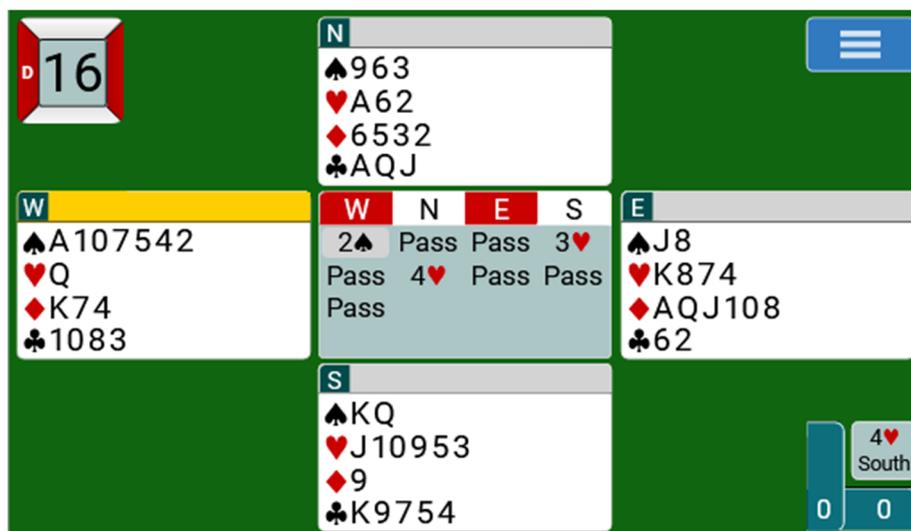
All but two North-South pairs reached a contract of 6NT. When the auction did not reveal North's spade suit, West usually led a spade, which guaranteed 13 tricks. However, when the auction was as shown, West quite rightly chose to lead either a diamond (better) or a heart (although leading from an unsupported jack can be dangerous).

Despite this, only one declarer was held to 12 tricks because at tables other than ours, West discarded a spade on the run of the diamonds. Looking at 4 spades in dummy, this isn't a good idea. If you do what Craig did and hang on to your ♠J1043 for dear life, you are duly rewarded, because the spades are not set up and partner eventually wins a club trick. This result against me contributed to the impressive score of 70% that Craig and David accumulated that afternoon.

Of course it would help if I heeded my own advice – a little later on board 14, in a moment of inattention, I failed to keep length with dummy and handed Margaret Hibbert an easy top!

The next board is yet another demonstration that in competitive auctions, shape is king. After LHO opens a weak 2 in a major and the next two players pass, you should try very hard to get into the auction, especially if you have a shapely hand.

On this deal, after West's 2S opening, I came back in with 3H and partner, who had quite a good hand but no sensible bid over 2S, promptly raised me to 4H.



This contract proved to be unbeatable, but no one else was in it. The moral of the story is clear – with useful shape, don't be scared, just bid!



29 June

SHBC on BBO #3

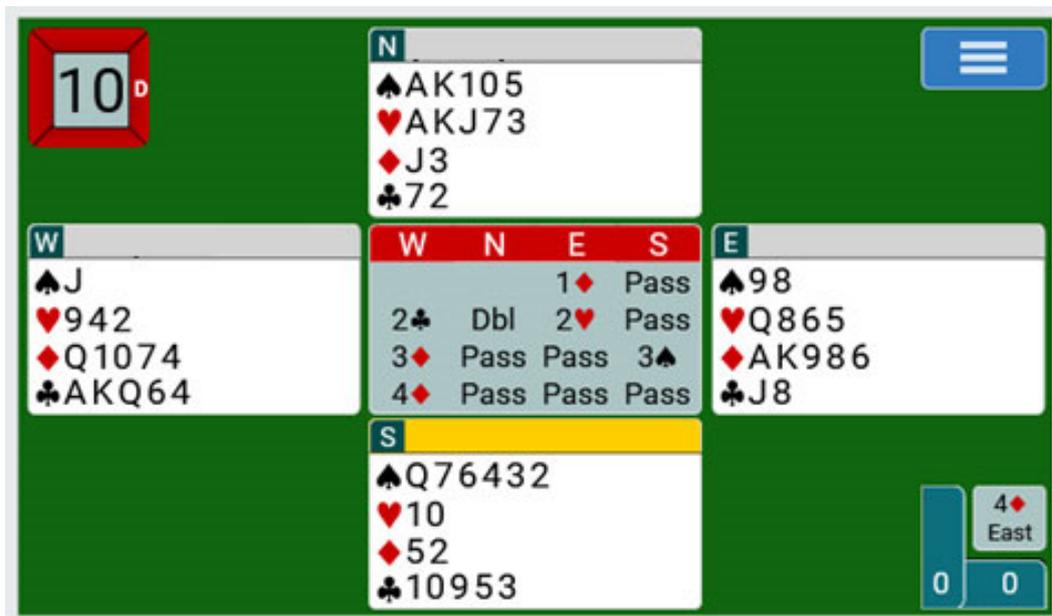
Rakesh Kumar

Here's another tale from the very successful Southern Highlands and Friends virtual club Monday Pairs tournament on BBO. By the way, did you know that there is now a 9:30 am session on Thursday as well? If you haven't yet given this a try, do so!

This deal comes from the session on Monday 29 June and is a fine illustration of how the battle for the smallest score differential is crucial at matchpoints. It's only a little part-score hand, but there's a lot to think about ...

For starters, will you open the bidding as East? Most did not, but with 2 quick tricks, a decent 5-card suit and only 7 losers, I think 1D is a perfectly reasonable bid. That led to the auction shown in the image below: a 2C response by West, double by North, a delayed 3S bid by South and an eventual contract of 4D which goes one

down. That is just about the par result! Fortunately for us (and unfortunately for our opponents) that result scored quite a bit below 50% in the SHBC field.



The range of scores on this board was very wide indeed. Say East does not open: then West will start proceedings with 1C, which is what happened at most tables. Now North will overcall 1H in the first instance rather than doubling, East will bid 2D and West will raise to 3D. Should North get back into the auction? Mostly, this didn't happen, so quite a number of East-West pairs played in 3D, which makes.

However, North-South can make 3S and if North does double 3D for takeout, this contract will be reached. It's important that South doesn't encourage North too much, though, because otherwise the partnership will find itself in 4S going one down.

The scores on the day are shown in the table of frequencies below. So many possibilities ... all those you might have predicted turned up across the 9 tables in the event, plus at least couple of those that you might not have!

FREQUENCIES FOR BOARD 10

Contract	Result	Score	Frequency
3♠ by NS	=	140	1
4♦ by EW	-1	100	1
3♣ by EW	-1	100	1
4♠ by NS	-1	-100	2
1♥ by NS	-1	-100	1
3♦ by EW	=	-110	2
3♦ by EW	+1	-130	1



2 July
SHBC on BBO #4
Chris Bayliss

This hand occurred during the Southern Highlands on-line session on Thursday, 2nd July.

The screenshot shows a bridge hand interface with the following details:

- Table:** 24
- North (sa1sa2kach, 2+):** ♠K97653, ♥4, ♦3, ♣K10875
- West (Craggy23, 2+):** ♠8, ♥AKQJ8, ♦QJ98, ♣QJ9
- East (Robot):** ♠AQJ102, ♥53, ♦AK104, ♣A4
- South (nasusX, 2):** ♠4, ♥109762, ♦7652, ♣632
- Bidding:** 1♥, 2♠, Pass, Pass, 3♦, Pass, 6NT, Pass, Pass, Pass
- Score:** 6NT East, 0-0

I have shown the bidding at Craig's table. Because of the extended session, David had left and Craig was playing with a robot.

After North's interference, East is in a quandary. There seems to be no natural bid that describes the hand. Yet if West is not minimum, a slam is a very good possibility. Otherwise, a double of 2S should rake in lots of points. Still, an immediate 6NT seems a bit of a gamble while double here would show the minors.

This dilemma can be resolved if you have good partnership agreements and you trust your partner. Craig and the robot clearly met both of these criteria. East passes with the sure knowledge that partner will take some action.

There are several different strategies that can be employed in the pass out seat. My preference is to double if weak and short in the opponent's suit or bid something if strong. Rakesh tells me he will double provided he is short in the opponents suit and can tolerate the other suits.

On this hand, either method will work. Because of the extreme length in the opposition suit, East knows West is short and will take some sort of action. It is perfectly safe for East to pass. After West shows strength, the slam is inevitable, either in diamonds or no trumps.

Unfortunately, my partner and I had not discussed this situation and had no agreements in place. East improvised and we ended up in a disappointing 3NT. It is so much easier if you have agreements and can trust your partner to follow them!



27 July

SHBC on BBO #5

Chris Bayliss

In Bundanoon on Monday, 27th July, the weather was wild – strong winds and heavy rain. The last board of the Monday BBO session was wild too.

Hand details:

- N Mishahmay:** ♠ Q7, ♥ Q7, ♦ AQJ1064, ♣ Q7643
- W Robot:** ♠ QJ752, ♥ AKJ10843, ♦ 2, ♣
- E Robot:** ♠ A1043, ♥ 62, ♦ 53, ♣ KJ985
- S georgebird:** ♠ K986, ♥ 95, ♦ K987, ♣ A102

Bidding sequence:

W	N	E	S
1♥	2♦	Dbl	Pass
3♥	4♦	4♥	5♦
5♥	Pass	Pass	Pass
4♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

Contract: 4♠ West

The bidding shown here was at the table where two robots were in partnership. The board was played at eight tables and there were no less than eight completely different bidding sequences!

W	N	E	S
1♥	2NT	Pass	3♦
3♥	4♦	4♥	5♦
5♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

W	N	E	S
2♣	2♦	Pass	3♦
4♥	5♦	5♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		

W	N	E	S
1♥	2♦	3♣	3♦
4♥	5♦	Pass	Pass
5♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

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

W	N	E	S
1♥	2♦	Dbl	3♦
3♠	4♦	Pass	Pass
4♥	5♦	Dbl	Pass
Pass	Pass		

W	N	E	S
1♥	2♦	Dbl	3♦
4♠	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Pass	Pass	Pass	

W	N	E	S
3♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

W	N	E	S
1♥	2♦	Dbl	Pass
3♦	Pass	4♣	Pass
4♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

The 2NT overcalls were showing the minors. The 2C opening was not alerted but was presumably a game-force or near game-force. East's double was a negative double showing spades.

At first sight, the two pairs who ended in 4S were unlucky with the trumps breaking so badly. In practice, the bad break is not a problem and there are eleven easy tricks. The good thing about 4S is that South was not tempted to sacrifice in 5D; to South, it looks like 4S is doomed.

Anyway, there were eight bidding sequences. Which one is your preferred option? Or can you do better?



3 August

SHBC on BBO #6

Rakesh Kumar

The Southern Highlands and Friends virtual club Monday Pairs tournament on BBO continues to be very successful. On 3 August, it got off to an unusually exciting start, especially if you were sitting North.

In the first 10 boards, North was dealt a 6-5 hand, an 8-card suit and then a 7-5 hand. But that last one was no match for what partner held: an 8-5 all black hand!

10	N rkk101 3+	♠K10976 ♥J ♦KQJ8632 ♣
W 3	W N E S	E 2+
♠2 ♥A108654 ♦975 ♣KJ6	1♥ 2♥ 4♥ 4♠ 5♥ 5♠ Pass Pass Dbl Pass Pass Pass	♠A3 ♥KQ9732 ♦A104 ♣Q9
	S jenberry 3	♠QJ854 ♥ ♦ ♣A10875432
		5♠x North 0 0

Unsurprisingly, there were some very vigorous auctions on this board, usually involving West raising dealer's 1H opening to 4H after an intervening overcall.

When South chose to overcall in clubs, the subsequent 4H bid ensured that the spade fit was never found, so East-West played in their best contract, making 10 tricks even after the lead of ♣A and another club for North to ruff, because one of the two diamond losers could be discarded on a third round of clubs.

A couple of imaginative folks sitting South chose to make a takeout double, despite a complete lack of tolerance for a response by partner in diamonds. After West's 4H bid, North duly bid 5D, which of course can't make, but this turned out to be quite a reasonable save even if doubled by East.

After interventions such as these, two Easts found their way to 5H and were allowed to make on less than optimal defence.

At 2 tables, South overcalled 1S. This is not an unreasonable action, but the South hand is an excellent advertisement for a Michaels cue bid of 2H, showing 5+ spades and 5+ of a minor suit. Curiously, this only happened at one table – ours – and it seemed entirely appropriate that Jenny Michael made this bid!

Regardless, once South has shown spades, North automatically bids 4S over West's 4H. East – almost equally automatically – bids 5H. Now at all 3 tables, either North or South continued to 5S.

At this point, what would you do as East? With 2 aces and prospects of a third trick from hearts, a double seems appropriate.

Unfortunately, as it turned out, this wildly distributional board wasn't one on which to double. South's clubs can be ruffed good and declarer makes the contract with an overtrick.

Remarkably, North's impressive-looking diamond suit proved to be completely worthless!



11 August
SHBC on BBO #7
Rakesh Kumar

Playing matchpoint pairs, as we do in the regular Monday afternoon session of SHBC & Friends on BBO, every board is equally important – your relative result on a little partscore hand counts for just as much as your result on a potential slam hand.

This is why it makes sense to bid as much as you dare when the opposition hasn't shown great strength, especially when you are not vulnerable. Even going 2 down in a partscore for –100 will be a better score for your side than letting the opponents make 2-of-a-major, which will score –110.

This is the key reason for raising partner aggressively, for making re-opening doubles and for generally being a nuisance when the opposition subsides in 2-of-a-suit, because letting them play there in their best trump fit cannot be good for you.

What about if your side didn't open the bidding but overcalled, and you don't have a fit with partner? This isn't much of a problem if you don't have significant values, but what about if you do? And what about if partner's overcall was in a minor, but you have a reasonable major suit?

That problem faced East-West on the deal below on Monday 10 August. It's a very instructive board, which yielded the widest range of results for the session.

Firstly, sitting East, would you open 1H as dealer? I certainly would: 11 high card points in prime cards, a 5-card major suit, 7 losers, 2.5 quick tricks – what is there not to love about the hand? Remarkably, East opened at only 3 of the 11 tables.

When East passed, South routinely opened 1D, West overcalled 2C and North passed. Now what?

6^D

N jenberry 3

♠KQ962
♥3
♦632
♣7643

W

♠84
♥J862
♦J
♣AKQJ95

W	N	E	S
		Pass	1♦
2♣	Pass	Pass	Dbl
3♣	3♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

E

♠A7
♥A9754
♦K1098
♣82

S rkk101 3+

♠J1053
♥KQ10
♦AQ754
♣10

3♠ North

0 0

East had already started at a disadvantage by not opening, but now some pairs compounded the problem for their side by not showing the heart suit – perhaps because of an agreement that a new suit after an overcall is a "drop dead" bid. If that's what you and your partner play, this would be a good time to change your agreement so that a new suit in response to an overcall is forcing for one round and tends to deny 3-card support for partner's suit.

On this deal, a bid of 2H by East would make things awkward for South, who might at this point feel that pass was the best option. In contrast, if East passes again, South has an easy re-opening double and now, whether or not West rebids the clubs, North will back in with 3S. This buys the contract and yields a good score for North-South, even though it goes down on correct defence. In contrast, making 3H would yield a fine score for East-West!

The range of contracts and results on this board (see next page) makes interesting reading ... not only was there much variety in terms of the final contract, some East-West pairs were allowed to make 10 tricks in hearts on less-than-optimal defence.

Board	Result	We	They	We	They
6	3♠N=	140		100%	0%
6	4♥E-1	100		85%	15%
6	4♥E-1	100		85%	15%
6	3♠N-1		50	65%	35%
6	4♠N-1		50	65%	35%
6	2♣W+1		110	45%	55%
6	3♣W=		110	45%	55%
6	2♥E+1		140	30%	70%
6	3♥E+1		170	15%	85%
6	3♥E+1		170	15%	85%
6	4♥E=		620	0%	100%



25 August
SHBC on BBO #8
 Rakesh Kumar

Regardless of whether one is playing for matchpoints or IMPs, one of the sure ways to lose (or not gain) is to miss a makeable slam contract. Good bridge players invest a lot of effort improving their slam bidding.

Although total high card points are the primary consideration when both members of the partnership have relatively balanced hands, many slams are makeable with fewer than the 32-34 hcp often quoted as the expected requirement. There are two important aspects to slam bidding with, say, 25-30 hcp (i) being able to show hands with long, strong suits and therefore considerable trick-taking potential (ii) being able to show controls in outside suits.

For this column, let's focus on just one issue: how does one show a hand of intermediate strength (say a good 15 hcp up to 20 hcp) with a strong 6+ suit and therefore relatively few losers? Don't you think that opening a hand such as:

♠AJT972
 ♥AQ
 ♦KQ64
 ♣5

with 1S is pretty uninformative if you would also open this:

♠AT972
 ♥A94
 ♦KJ6
 ♣85

with the same bid? The first hand has only 5 losers whereas the second has 8 losers. Clearly their trick-taking potential is very different.

Although I didn't play on Monday 24 August, I did look at the hand records with some interest and noted there were two boards on which one of the players held an intermediate hand with a strong 6+ suit. Slam was certainly biddable on one of those boards, but wasn't often reached.

In the first of the *Better Partnership Bridge* booklets, an old-fashioned but still effective way of bidding these hands is discussed viz. so-called Benjamin Twos, in which 2C is used for hands with 4 or 5 losers while 2D is used for game-forcing hands with 3 losers (each opening can also include a balanced hand in a specified hcp range). The modern alternative is to play 2C with all the game-forcing or near game-forcing hands (4 losers or better in a major, 3 losers or better in a minor) and a multi-2D for a weak two in either major or any of several hand types of intermediate strength.

It doesn't matter what you do but have to do *something* to bid the two quite strong hands from Monday 24 August effectively!
 Here's the first deal in question:

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 20px; margin: 0 auto;">3</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 20px; margin: 0 auto;">D</div> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 20px; margin: 0 auto;">N</div> <p>♠ 64 ♥ 97532 ♦ 854 ♣ Q63</p> </div>	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 20px; margin: 0 auto;">W</div> <p>♠ AKJ1053 ♥ A4 ♦ A93 ♣ A7</p> </div>		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 20px; margin: 0 auto;">E</div> <p>♠ Q72 ♥ KJ10 ♦ 72 ♣ K10542</p> </div>
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 20px; margin: 0 auto;">S</div> <p>♠ 98 ♥ Q86 ♦ KQJ106 ♣ J98</p> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">NS: 0 EW: 0</div>

Only 2 pairs reached the optimum 6S contract on this board, but if West opens a Benjamin 2C (strong balanced or a-bit-short-of-game-forcing unbalanced) and East responds 2D (waiting) West can show a good hand with spades by rebidding 2S. Now East can/should get interested.

Similarly on this deal:

14 ^d		N	
		♠ 10653	
		♥ 2	
		♦ QJ7	
		♣ Q10943	
W		E	
♠ KQJ972		♠ A84	
♥ AQJ5		♥ K10973	
♦ 84		♦ 2	
♣ 6		♣ 8752	
		S	
		♠	
		♥ 864	
		♦ AK109653	
		♣ AKJ	
			NS: 0 EW: 0

If South can start proceedings with something stronger than a mere 1D opening, when s/he backs in over spades bid by East-West to show the diamond suit, at least game will be reached. However, the majority of the field allowed East-West to play in 4S. What's more, if North raises to 5D and East-West go on to 5S, South can "sacrifice" in 6D – and discover that it makes!



8 September

SHBC on BBO #9

Rakesh Kumar

The opening lead often has a huge impact on the outcome of a contract, sometimes in terms of whether it makes at all and sometimes in terms of overtricks, which are of course crucial at matchpoint pairs. To find a good lead, one must "listen" to the bidding i.e. extract what information is available and attempt to draw inferences about what might or might not be safe or effective.

Doing this mattered on at least two deals that I noticed on Monday 7 September. On the first one, you hold:

♠K106
♥K
♦J962
♣J9762

and as dealer, your RHO opens a strong 1NT. LHO bids 2D as a transfer, RHO accepts the transfer with a bid of 2H and LHO jumps to 4H, which is passed out. What's your choice?

The second deal of interest has you holding:

♠J5
♥AQJ92
♦4
♣Q10763

Nil vulnerable, if you don't play weak 2-bids showing 5 cards in a major and a 4+ minor, as dealer you can either bid a brave (crazy?) 1H or else pass. If you pass, LHO opens 1D, RHO responds 1S and now you will surely bid 2H. After this, LHO passes but RHO jumps to 3NT. What will you lead?

Returning to that first hand, it's not an easy choice. With the strong hand on your right, you certainly don't want to lead ♥K but nothing else looks attractive either: leading away from ♠K is dangerous, while leading from 4 or 5 cards to a jack has little going for it at a suit contract. Should you be brave and lead low from ♠K anyway, hoping to find partner with the queen or even the ace? I don't think the decision is clear cut, but as we'll see shortly, it matters.

What about the second hand? This time you have different things to think about. It's virtually guaranteed that your RHO holds ♥K with one or more small cards in the suit, so a heart lead will give him/her that trick. Then again, it might allow you to set up hearts to defeat the contract, if partner has an entry and another heart (or if you are somehow allowed in with ♣Q). At IMPs, you might consider the attacking lead of ♥Q, but at matchpoints, I think your choice is easier – let declarer do his/her own work and lead something else.

In fact on the first board, leading a low spade solves one of South's problems: in 4H there are 4 potential losers (two spades, a heart and a diamond) but the spade lead guarantees a diamond discard from dummy, so after the inevitable losing finesse to the singleton king declarer can still come home, provided s/he stays awake – but I didn't!*

7 D	N	♠Q3 ♥Q109762 ♦K108 ♣43	<table border="1"> <tr><td>W</td><td>N</td><td>E</td><td>S</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1NT</td></tr> <tr><td>Pass</td><td>2♦</td><td>Pass</td><td>2♥</td></tr> <tr><td>Pass</td><td>4♥</td><td>Pass</td><td>Pass</td></tr> <tr><td>Pass</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>	W	N	E	S				1NT	Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥	Pass	4♥	Pass	Pass	Pass				E	♠A9754 ♥8543 ♦Q3 ♣Q5
	W	N		E	S																				
					1NT																				
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥																						
Pass	4♥	Pass	Pass																						
Pass																									
W	♠K106 ♥K ♦J962 ♣J9762	S	♠J82 ♥AJ ♦A754 ♣AK108																						
				4♥ South																					

0 0

Anything else leaves declarer struggling, unless s/he decides to give up on the low probability of finding a doubleton ♥K on side and instead just cashes the ace, intending to cross to dummy by overtaking the jack. Then virtue becomes its own reward ...

On the second board, a safe spade or club lead should limit declarer to 9 tricks. A heart lead will allow her/him to wrap up 10 tricks, provided the diamond suit is played sensibly.

14 D	N	♠KQ72 ♥K5 ♦KQ97 ♣K54	<table border="1"> <tr><td>W</td><td>N</td><td>E</td><td>S</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>Pass 1♦</td></tr> <tr><td>Pass</td><td>1♠</td><td>2♥</td><td>Pass</td></tr> <tr><td>Pass</td><td>3NT</td><td>Pass</td><td>Pass</td></tr> <tr><td>Pass</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>	W	N	E	S				Pass 1♦	Pass	1♠	2♥	Pass	Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass				E	♠J5 ♥AQJ92 ♦4 ♣Q10763
	W	N		E	S																				
					Pass 1♦																				
Pass	1♠	2♥	Pass																						
Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass																						
Pass																									
W	♠10963 ♥84 ♦J652 ♣J82	S	♠A84 ♥10763 ♦A1083 ♣A9																						
				3NT North																					

0 0

What's sensible? Well, if a 4-1 break is going to turn up, it's more likely that the 2H overcaller will have the shortage, so first cash ♦K, then play a low diamond to the ace – that allows the marked finesse to be taken on the way back.



29 September
SHBC on BBO #10
 Rakesh Kumar

In these columns I have repeatedly written about the matchpoint pairs battle for the partscore, most recently in *SHBC on BBO #3* in July 2020. On Monday 28 September there was a deal that illustrated this tussle very well, as well as highlighting an important aspect of competitive bidding.

Nil vulnerable, as dealer you are looking at this very boring opening hand:

♠K108
 ♥J84
 ♦Q53
 ♣AK92

Of course unless you play a weak notrump, you open 1C. LHO passes and partner bids 1S. RHO buys into the auction with 2H. What are you going to do?

You certainly don't have a 1NT rebid with a holding of ♥J84. Besides, partner may have more than 4 spades, in which case your 3-card support for her suit could be invaluable. How are you going to show it?

The answer is a "support double" promising exactly 3-card support for partner's suit in this situation, so that a bid of 2S then promises 4-card support. I first discussed support doubles in an SHBC website column back in November 2018. They are also described in the *Better Partnership Bridge* booklet #2.

After you make a support double, partner's relatively weak hand suddenly blossoms: as you can see on the deal below, she has shortage in hearts and a second suit headed by an ace, which may be a source of tricks. Whether or not she now bids that second suit, the partnership is certainly going to reach 3S after the opposition rebids hearts.

The screenshot shows a bridge deal interface with the following details:

- Deal:** 14^D
- North (N):** ♠AJ, ♥AK10965, ♦86, ♣Q64
- West (W) jenberry 3:** ♠Q9532, ♥7, ♦A10742, ♣53
- East (E) rkk101 4:** ♠K108, ♥J84, ♦Q53, ♣AK92
- South (S) 2:** ♠764, ♥Q32, ♦KJ9, ♣J1087
- Bidding Sequence:**

	W	N	E	S
			1♣	Pass
	1♠	2♥	Dbl	Pass
	3♦	3♥	Pass	Pass
	3♠	Pass	Pass	Pass
- Score:** 0-0 (3♠ West)

Finding the fit proved to be crucial for success on the deal, because North-South can make 3H, losing only one spade, one diamond on a finesse of the jack, and 2 clubs. In fact Bridge Solver shows that not only can East-West make 10 tricks in diamonds, it's even possible for them to make game in spades. However, all of that requires playing South for exactly \spadesuit KJ9, which is a little far-fetched.

	\clubsuit	\diamond	\heartsuit	\spadesuit	NT
N	1	-	3	-	1
S	1	-	3	-	1
E	-	4	-	4	-
W	-	4	-	3	-

In any case, getting to and making 3S yielded a good score on the board, as the full table of results shows:

Board	Result	We	They	We	They
14	4 \spadesuit W=	420		100%	0%
14	3 \spadesuit W=	140		85.7%	14.3%
14	4 \heartsuit N-2	100		71.4%	28.6%
14	3 \spadesuit W-1		50	57.1%	42.9%
14	2 \heartsuit N+1		140	21.4%	78.6%
14	3 \heartsuit N=		140	21.4%	78.6%
14	3 \heartsuit N=		140	21.4%	78.6%
14	2 \heartsuit N+1		140	21.4%	78.6%

Remember that if you can show support for partner, you should strive to do so – you may find that adding a support double to your bidding armamentarium will make this a little easier.



14 October
SHBC on BBO #11
 Rakesh Kumar

If the theme of this column seems familiar, that's because it is. On Monday 13 October there was yet another demonstration of the value of the support double, although unlike in the column from a fortnight ago, this time it wasn't just in terms of competing for the partscore, but rather in terms of getting to a cold game. As the Monday session this week was IMPs, that was of critical importance.

Here's the deal:

BOARD 6			
BD: 6	♠AKQ75	Dir: E	
	♥K2	Vul: EW	
	♦JT432		
	♣Q		
♠832		♠6	
♥AJ974		♥QT8	
♦A		♦K987	
♣J982		♣AKT65	
	♠JT94		
	♥653		
	♦Q65		
	♣743		
	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠	N	
		T	
N	- 1 - 2 -		15
S	- 1 - 2 -	10	12
E	5 - 5 - 2		3
W	5 - 5 - 2		

Whether you open 1C or 1D with the East hand is a personal preference: those who would like to prepare their rebid and don't mind misrepresenting their shape might choose the latter. In any case, partner responds 1H and North overcalls 1S. At this point, absolutely no one playing in our event doubled to show their 3-card heart support ... well, no human at least. The robots who were filling in demonstrated good methods and good hand evaluation by bidding thus:

East	South	West	North
1C	Pass	1H	1S
Dbl (3-card support)	Pass	3H (invitational)	Pass
4H	All Pass		

The contract is unbeatable.

What's perplexing, though, is that 2 Easts chose to raise partner to 2H (which should promise 4-card support) but then after South passed, West did not invite game by bidding 3H, which seems mandatory at IMPs.

Also of some interest is what South should do after a double or a bid of 2H by East. With no defence to anything and 4-card support for partner, at favourable vulnerability a pre-emptive raise to 3S is worth considering – this is discussed in *Better Partnership Bridge* booklet #2. However, with 4333 shape and therefore no ruffing value, I though this seemed a bit of a stretch, so I passed.

Potentially, this was a good decision, because the opponents didn't move towards game. Unfortunately, it turned out to be a bad decision, because partner made a re-opening double, after which the opponents *did* reach 4H. Without an earlier pre-emptive raise by me, partner had no reason to consider sacrificing in 4S. That would have been a good move in a field in which East-West routinely bid to 4H, because -300 in 4S doubled would have gained IMPs against -650 in 4H making an overtrick when hearts break 2-2 and the singleton ♣Q drops.

As it was, after the robots' scores were removed, we were the only pair to lose 9.6 IMPs to opponents making 4H ...

FREQUENCIES FOR BOARD 6

Contract	Result	Score	Frequency
3♠ by NS	+1	170	1
3♠ by NS	-2	-100	1
4♠ by NS	-2	-100	1
3♣ by EW	+2	-150	1
2♣ by EW	+3	-150	1
2♥ by EW	+2	-170	1
2♥ by EW	+3	-200	1
4♥ by EW	+1	-650	1

