

Missing the bus

Rakesh Kumar

Tony Lye and Steve Brabyn were convincing winners of the Pairs Championship this week, with a 66.7% score in the 4-table Howell Final held on 14 September. Interestingly, although they have won many club titles over the years – including twice winning the Monday Championship – this is the first time that they have won the Pairs. Congratulations!

Last week I wrote about grand slams and suggested that having two of them available in a single session was rather like waiting for London buses. This week, the Monday afternoon session offered another impossible-to-bid grand slam. However, there really was no good reason not to get to a small slam on the deal, yet most of the field in both the Pairs Final and the Plate missed the bus altogether and played in game, making 13 tricks.

Perhaps this might have had something to do with slam bidding methods. To introduce you to the potential problems, let me ask how you would bid these two hands after partner opens 1NT promising 15-17 hcp:

Hand A	Hand B
♠J62	♠J62
♥AKT74	♥AKQT74
♦KQ7	♦KQ7
♣K4	♣4

With hand A, of course you will start with 2D, a transfer to hearts. What now? If partner has a minimum hand with 15 hcp and only 2 hearts, you want to be in 3NT; if she has 15 hcp and 3 hearts you want to be in either 3NT or 4H, depending on whether she has an outside doubleton; if she has a maximum hand with 17 hcp and 2 hearts you want to be in 6NT; but if she has a maximum hand and 3 or more hearts then perhaps 6H will be best. How do you cater for all of that?

The answer is to rebid 4NT as a quantitative response i.e. to agree that 1NT (by partner) – 2D (by you) – 2H (by partner) – 4NT (by you) is *not* asking for keycards in hearts! It specifically says that you have a slam-invitational hand with 5 hearts – with a minimum 1NT opening lacking 3-card support, partner can pass and the contract is likely to be absolutely safe.

You might say that's all too complicated; you and your partner are perfectly happy to use 4NT only as Roman Keycard Blackwood. Well, good luck getting to the right contract with hand A, although you won't have a problem with hand B ...

Of course if you do agree to play a quantitative 4NT in the sequence above, you then have the converse problem, namely how to bid hand B correctly. That requires another agreement. If 2D/2H are transfers to hearts/spades respectively, what does a 4D/4H response mean for you? Many play this as *either* a transfer to game in hearts/spades, with a modest but shapely hand i.e. some 7-9 hcp and a reasonable

BD: 16						AKQ4		Dir: W	
						965		Vul: EW	
						A54			
						A52			
T9875								3	
2								J83	
J8632								T9	
T8								KQJ9763	
						J62			
						AKQT74			
						KQ7			
						4			
						N			
						T			
N	1	5	7	6	7		17		
S	1	5	7	6	7	1	7		
E							15		
W									

♣ ♦ ♥ ♠

The
**SOUTHERN
WIRE**
REGIONAL NEWS