

## ONCE MORE INTO BATTLE



*Lancaster Rose*



*York Rose*



*Tudor Rose*

In English History, it could be “The Wars of The Roses” between Yorkshire and Lancashire. In cricket, it could be the battle for “The Ashes” between England and Australia.

It could be Trans-Tasman rivalry in most sports like rugby’s Bledisloe Cup.



In bridge, it is the perennial battle between hearts and spades. It took place in earnest this week at Akarana with three boards featuring the regular “how high should we bid” question.



The three boards tested the validity of the statement about “the five level belonging to the opposition”. There was every reason for East and West to believe that on the following board.

### Board 15

South Deals

N-S Vul

♠ K J 10 8 3 2  
♥ 7  
♦ A 3 2  
♣ J 7 4



♠ A Q 4  
♥ 10  
♦ K 10 5 4  
♣ K 10 9 6 5

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1 ♥
2 ♠	4 ♥	4 ♠	Pass
Pass	5 ♥		

West had made a weak jump overcall and despite the vulnerability had, for once, a decent hand. East had competed to the 4 level with their opening values but was there any reason to move to the 5 level? The only reason, surely, was that if North held the ♣Q, then 5♠ was going to make. If 5♠ was cold, then surely 5♥ would be defeated? Indeed, if North did hold the ♣Q, then it looks like 5♥ must be defeated.

What neither East nor West knew from the bidding was that both their partners also held a singleton heart and that North had a real freak of a hand.

**Board 15**

South Deals  
N-S Vul

♠ 7  
♥ A K 9 8 6 4  
♦ J 9 8 7 6  
♣ 8

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A Q 4  
♥ 10  
♦ K 10 5 4  
♣ K 10 9 6 5

♠ 9 6 5  
♥ Q J 5 3 2  
♦ Q  
♣ A Q 3 2

♠ K J 10 8 3  
♥ 7  
♦ A 3 2  
♣ J 7 4

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1♥
2♠	4♥	4♠	Pass
Pass	5♥	All pass	

Even if North scored a club ruff, 5♠ was only a couple down while 5♥ was absolutely cold.

Only 5 of the 12 East-West pairs bid on to 5♠. At only one table was 5♠ doubled.

The 5 level here belonged to anyone lucky enough to be declarer.

Board 13 was indeed unlucky or should have been, for those who subscribed to the standard rule of leaving the opposition to play at the 5 level. What action would you take as East hearing this brief auction?

**Board 13**

North Deals  
Both Vul

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 9  
♥ 9 6 4  
♦ A Q 10 9 6 2  
♣ A 9 4

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	4♠	Pass	Pass
5♥	Pass	?	

I know partner may be a little short of a genuine 5♥ call (indeed they were) but you seem to have a little more than you might have done. Rightly or wrongly, I would have raised partner a level. When a number of East players did not raise, they decided to take the plus when South bid 5♠.

A couple lived to tell the tale but 4 recorded -850.

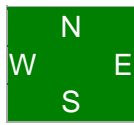
I would have been much happier giving West the problem of what to play to trick 2 in 6♥ after a spade was cashed at trick 1 and ♣ 2 appeared from North at trick 2 than be doubling 5♠. As it happens, West could afford to get this decision wrong and still get a good score.

**Board 13**

North Deals  
Both Vul

♠ K Q J 10 6 4 3 2  
♥ 7 3 2  
♦ K  
♣ 2

♠ 7  
♥ A K Q J 10  
♦ 8 5  
♣ 7 5  
♣ Q 8 6



♠ 9  
♥ 9 6 4  
♦ A Q 10 9 6 2  
♣ A 9 4

♠ A 8 5  
♥ —  
♦ J 8 4 3  
♣ K J 10 7 5 3

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	4 ♠	Pass	Pass
5 ♥	Pass	6 ♥	All pass

The interesting contract was 5♠ x.

After a heart lead, ruffed, and an unsuccessful attempt at stealing a trick with a diamond from table, East might play their trump won in the North hand. When the ♣2 is played, East has to duck and hope... hope that declarer misguesses and that maybe West has a second trump. While in theory the ♣A should be with the hand that bid freely at the 5 level, East's double might suggest the opposite. The outcome of this contract depends on this guess.

Four times, 5♠x made while twice it went down.

Meanwhile, anyone in 6♥x could afford to go down.. and even better news for East-West at two tables was that their opponents bid on to 6♠, giving East-West a handy plus score. East's decision about bidding on over 5♥ was not about whether the 5 level belonged to their opponents but about whether their side could make slam. That was similar to the issues North faced on Board 20.

♠ A 5 3  
♥ 9 8  
♦ A K 10 9 8 5  
♣ 4 2

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
4 ♠	Pass	Pass	5 ♥
Pass	?		

Both sides were vulnerable. Board 13 showed that partner could have 7 hearts and little else but you do seem closer to having a raise to slam than not.

This time, raising to 6♥ was correct not because it was a good dive. It was indeed a small underbid! Why not try 5♠ first?

**Board 20**

West Deals  
Both Vul

♠ A 5 3  
♥ 9 8  
♦ A K 10 9 8 5  
♣ 4 2

♠ K Q 10 8 7 6 2  
♥ —  
♦ Q 3  
♣ K 7 6 5



♠ J 9 4  
♥ 10 5 2  
♦ 7 6 4  
♣ J 10 9 3

♠ —  
♥ A K Q J 7 6 4 3  
♦ J 2  
♣ A Q 8

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
4 ♠	Pass	Pass	5 ♥
Pass	5 ♠	Pass	6 ♣
Pass	6 ♦	Pass	

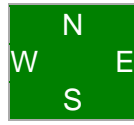
If North is really serious about grand slam, then South might co-operate though in reality, grand was not a great contract even if it was a making one:

**Board 20**

West Deals  
Both Vul

♠ K Q 10 8 7 6 2  
♥ —  
♦ Q 3  
♣ K 7 6 5

♠ A 5 3  
♥ 9 8  
♦ A K 10 9 8 5  
♣ 4 2



♠ J 9 4  
♥ 10 5 2  
♦ 7 6 4  
♣ J 10 9 3

♠ —  
♥ A K Q J 7 6 4 3  
♦ J 2  
♣ A Q 8

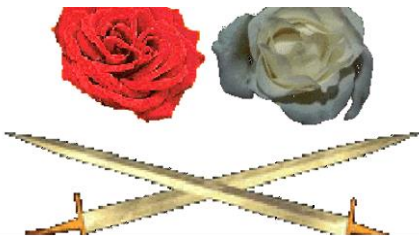
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
4 ♠	Pass	Pass	5 ♥
Pass	5 ♠	Pass	6 ♣
Pass	6 ♦	Pass	7 ♥

6♥ would have been enough with less than half the field in slam and only one pair in Grand.

So, you would not have opened 4♠? An 8<sup>th</sup> spade would have been nice but one was not dealt one!

If North intervened after West started at the three level, the West players would surely have regretted their initial choice.

If any rule about high level competitive auctions was universal, then the effectiveness of pre-empt might be lost. There are times for conservatism and pessimism though we can get a little bogged down in such thoughts. Like other perennial battles, those between hearts and spades will continue on as long as we all sit down and play the game.



*Richard Solomon*