

QBA Teams of Three by Nikolas Moore

It's good to see more young people playing Bridge. Geoff Martin returned in early 2014 after more than three years in England, and Abby Wanigaratne is also playing again after several years absence.

Each December, Kenmore Bridge Club hosts the QBA Teams of Three event that provides players with under 300 Master Points the opportunity to improve their Bridge by teaming up with a more experienced player, who is the captain of the team. It is a graded event with each of the other three less experienced players partnering the captain for two rounds, as well as each other for two rounds. This format makes it a fun and social event as well as a great learning experience.

I first played in this event back in 2007 as an inexperienced player. This time I was captain and my team-mates were Abby and two of her friends from Caboolture Bridge Club, Jenny and Charlene, in A Grade. As a captain, it is important to provide a friendly and welcoming atmosphere to encourage the newer players.

This was an interesting hand in the first round: a 'sacrifice' that can easily make:

BD: 4	♠97543	Dir: W
	♥632	Vul: Both
	♦9863	
	♣3	
♠A82		♠KT
♥AJT5		♥KQ9874
♦QT54		♦K7
♣Q9		♣874
	♠QJ6	
	♥	
	♦AJ2	
	♣AKJT652	

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
N	2	-	-	2	-	0
S	2	-	-	2	-	13 11
E	-	-	4	-	-	16
W	-	-	4	-	-	

West	North	East	South	
1♦	Pass	1♥	2♣	
2♥	Pass	4♥	5♣	All pass

As South, I could have bid 5♣ immediately to make the opponents guess at the 5-level, although it was possible that my partner could have defensive values in hearts. The opponent in the East seat could have doubled 5♣ holding 11 points opposite an opening hand, however with a known 10-card heart fit, her hearts are unlikely to be worth anything in defence.

West led the ace of hearts. Jenny, sitting North, had a genuine Yarborough with only one club, but there was some good news: no defence against 4♥, which is unbeatable, and we have a spade fit. I trumped the opening lead, and

luckily for me, I was unable to reach dummy to take the trump finesse, which would have lost. I instead had to lead the AK of trumps, dropping West's doubleton queen. I then ran trumps until I had only had two left, making the opponents discard. West discarded a spade, which helped me because now he cannot duck the third round, which would have prevented me from reaching dummy's last two spades.

I then led the queen of spades, with more good luck with East's ten dropping in two rounds, allowing me to reach dummy on the third round of spades by overtaking my six with dummy's nine. West won the first round of spades and continued the suit, allowing me to discard both of my losing diamonds on dummy's last two spades, scoring 600. The opposing captain, Craig Francis, also made 11 tricks in clubs, but was not 'pushed into game', so my team gained 10 IMPs on this board.

To take this three off needs West to find the unlikely lead of a low spade at trick #1, win the spade return and give his partner a ruff in that suit. Otherwise it can be taken two off if West retains three spades and ducks his ace on the first two rounds, preventing me from reaching dummy's winners in that suit. This is a lucky layout in any case, as if the queen of clubs and ten of spades had not been doubleton I would have gone four off.

Our second round was a winning draw thanks to more luck, on the following board:

BD: 14	♠AQJ62	Dir: E				
	♥QT84	Vul: None				
	♦6					
	♣KQT					
♠T9		♠K43				
♥765		♥				
♦QT8543		♦AJ972				
♣J4		♣98753				
	♠875					
	♥AKJ932					
	♦K					
	♣A62					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
N	1	-	5	5	1	14
S	1	-	5	4	1	3 8
E	-	4	-	-	-	15
W	-	4	-	-	-	

East	South	West	North
Pass	1♥	Pass	2♠
Dbl	3♥	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♥	All Pass	

We were playing Blackwood and my response showed two aces. Jenny nearly bid slam, and I nearly did too, because she had made a strong jump shift, as my hand was stronger than I'd shown. I decided not to because (1) I was worried about bad breaks after North's double, and (2) having three small cards in Jenny's suit is not great news because there could easily be a loser. Sure enough, despite a huge trump fit, slam needed the spade finesse, which I

was very happy to see lose, scoring +450. Our opponents at the other table did bid 6♥ (+50), so our team gained 11 IMPs when we could just as easily lost that many. Note that if playing splinters it is easier to avoid slam; a 4♦ response from North would show a singleton in that suit, which tells me that my ♦K is useless. Had it been the ♠K instead, slam is almost certain to make.

On the following hand, due to a misunderstanding, our side overbid:

BD: 12	♠QJ	Dir: W
	♥65	Vul: N-S
	♦KT862	
	♣KT83	
♠96543		♠AKT
♥8		♥AT73
♦Q4		♦753
♣J9542		♣A76
	♠872	
	♥KQJ942	
	♦AJ9	
	♣Q	

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	2	2	-	2
S	-	2	2	-	2
E	2	-	-	2	-
W	2	-	-	2	-

			9
3			15
			13

West North East South

Pass Pass 1♣ 1♥

Pass 1NT Pass 2♥

Pass 3♥ Pass 4♥

Pass Pass Dbl All Pass

To take this two off the opponents need to lead trumps, to prevent me from trumping a spade in dummy, and then they need to take their spade tricks. Unsurprisingly, West led her partner's suit, clubs. East won and played three rounds of spades. I ruffed the third spade in dummy, and played a heart to the king, and then the queen, which East won and West showed out. It now looks like East will make a trick with the ten of hearts, as I have no trumps left in dummy to finesse this. To pick up East's trumps, I had to perform a **trump coup**. For this to work I have to reduce my trump length to the same as East's. Therefore, when East returned a club, I trumped instead of a discarding a diamond on ♣K.

I then led the ace and jack of diamonds and was lucky to find West with Qx in that suit otherwise a trump coup will not work, as I needed two more entries to the table. I won the second diamond with the king and trumped another club, reducing me to the same number of trumps as East. Finally I overtook my nine of diamonds with dummy's ten, with the lead in dummy. East's last two cards were T7 in hearts while I had J9 so I took the last two tricks. The result

of -200, was still a loss of 8 IMPs opposite the more normal -140 in the other room, from playing in a heart part score.

We gained our revenge on the next board:

BD: 13	♠9		Dlr: N			
	♥K96543		Vul: Both			
	♦9					
	♣AKJ62					
♠765		♠AQJT42				
♥QJ8		♥A				
♦Q5		♦JT732				
♣QT987		♣4				
	♠K83					
	♥T72					
	♦AK864					
	♣53					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
N	2	-	4	-	1	11
S	2	-	4	-	1	7 12
E	-	1	-	2	-	10
W	-	1	-	2	-	

North East South West

1♥ 1♠ 2♦ 2♠

3♣ 4♠ Dbl All Pass

I had a hand suitable for a penalty double opposite partner's opening hand, as my ♠K is sitting over the spade bidder, and partner's bidding indicates that she is short in diamonds. The only downside is that I have a fit for partner's hearts, but my values are outside of that suit. I led ♦AK and sure enough, partner discarded on the second round. A third diamond from me was trumped by dummy, but Jenny overtrumped having a better trump, and we had two more tricks: the ace of clubs and king of spades. 4♠ is still a good sacrifice, because we make game in hearts; conceding 500 is better than 620. However, declarer accidentally crossed to the table at the wrong time, allowing me to ruff a club for three down and +800. This was 12 IMPs to our team when the same contract was two off undoubled at the other table (-200).

A penalty double would have been disastrous on this board in the last round:

BD: 20	♠92		Dir: W				
	♥92		Vul: Both				
	♦T76532						
	♣874						
♠K		♠A87653					
♥AKJ754		♥T863					
♦94		♦					
♣AQ53		♣J92					
	♠QJT4						
	♥Q						
	♦AKQJ8						
	♣KT6						
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT		
N	-	2	-	-	-		0
S	-	2	-	-	-	17	5
E	6	-	6	5	1		18
W	6	-	6	5	1		

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	3♥	Dbl
4♥	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Pass	5♦	5♥	All Pass

My second double was risky and I made it hoping we'd have a spade fit. Abby, sitting North, correctly determined that both of my doubles were takeout and bid diamonds, which I liked as it was my longest and strongest suit. Even with an 11-card fit, 5♦x goes for -800 with best defence. The opponents, with no values in diamonds, preferred to bid to the 5-level in their fit. Although I have lots of points, I do not want to make a penalty double with this hand. Partner's diamond bid means I won't take many tricks in that suit, and I don't have much defence in the other suits. Sure enough East is void in diamonds and this made 12 tricks for -680 – the only trick I took was the ten of clubs! This was the same score as at the other table: a flat board.

We were leading after two rounds before losing by 9 IMPs to Dawn Cullen's team. Although we won all of our afternoon matches, including two big wins, we were never able to catch this team, who finished with five wins and one draw. My team-mates all played well and were happy with second place.