

other spade being ruffed in East). There are signalling methods that will allow South to signal diamonds in this situation – see advanced section.

4♠ played by South will most likely receive the ♥Q lead. One or two tables led a diamond (presumably because their partner had opened 1♦) which was disastrous because East had to put in a diamond honour and then their other honour could be picked up via a ruffing finesse (see advanced section). Even if partner has opened 1♦ I'd probably still lead the ♥Q as it's so much safer to lead from a solid sequence.

Technically the defence do need to switch to clubs to be sure of taking it off because declarer can make the same play in diamonds himself. In practice the South hand is hidden and East West may be tempted to just play a "safe" 2nd heart. West should certainly consider the ♣K though – see advanced section for why.

The traveller shows a fairly typical range of scores for a board like this. 3 NS pairs made 4♠, 2 made a spade partscore, 3 beat heart contracts, 3 went off in 4♠, and 2 allowed 4♥ to make. Although in theory passing 4♥ out was correct, in practice 4♠ was still usually a winning action. Either it was allowed to make or in 2 cases the opponents went onto 5♥ which can never be made. The moral of the story is that it's right to bid 4♠ over 4♥ an amazing proportion of the time in a competitive auction!

Key points to note

- 4441 hands are awkward to bid. Before opening, decide what your rebid will be if partner responds your singleton (they usually do!). Also consider what opening might be most helpful to partner if they later end up on lead.
- It is almost always right to bid 4♠ over 4♥ in a competitive auction – especially when not vulnerable.
- If you think you will want to bid over their likely contract it is better to do it immediately rather than wait for them to bid it, and then bid again (the opponents get to exchange more information that way which could help them judge whether to bid more or how to defend).
- Defensive signals are critical – playing suit preference when there is a singleton in dummy is a useful method (see advanced section).

More advanced

The weak NT (11-14) is often quite an effective pre-empt as it removes the entire 1 level from the opponents and I would be happy to try it from North. East will probably double for penalties and South will run to spades – they might even gamble 4♠. They should certainly compete to that if the opponents do reach 4♥ but there's no guarantee they will after 1NT X 2♠.

If North South do sell out to 4♥ they need to be able to beat it! A good signalling method in suit contracts is to play suit preference when dummy has a singleton of the suit led and opening leader is likely to hold the trick. You obviously aren't making any more tricks in that suit so attitude or count in that suit (the usual signals) aren't much use. What is more important is to know which of the other two side suits the defence should attack. Here South can play the ♠10 to show a preference for diamonds instead of clubs. This should allow North to find the diamond switch and the defence can take their ruff to beat the contract before declarer's 3rd diamond can be discarded on a club.

4♠ by South is harder to defend against. Technically it can only be beaten if West switches to the ♣K and the defence cash their 3 club tricks. The reason is that declarer can build an extra trick in diamonds to discard one of their clubs on if they are careful. Declarer needs to cross to a spade and lead a low diamond towards the A10. If East plays low declarer can win the 10, cash the A, complete drawing trumps in dummy and discard a loser on the ♦K. If East puts in the ♦J declarer wins the ♦A, draws the last trump and plays the ♦K then the ♦9 using the 98 to take a ruffing finesse through East. If East doesn't cover the loser is discarded immediately; if he does cover, declarer ruffs, crosses back to dummy with a 3rd trump to take the discard on the established ♦8. Of course in practice declarer doesn't know that East has both the Q and J and he will lose an extra trick if East plays low and he plays the ♦10 losing to the J or Q. So he might not risk doing that (in which case he should go a quiet one off unless the defenders make a mess of the club

suit!). But he might consider the risk of losing an extra 50 points is a good gamble for the chance to make 420 on a hand with 4 top losers.

Declarer might also choose to just play ♦A,K and a ruff hoping that either defender has an initial holding of QJx (that may be influenced by East's original opening bid – if East opened 1♦ the ruffing finesse will be far better).

Of course if East had opened 1♣ initially it will be much more reasonable for West to try switching to ♣K! But he should think about it anyway – the only time it's wrong is if South has ♣AQ. That's possible but it's pretty unlikely for a hand that has pre-empted in spades. If East has chosen to double 4♠ it's almost certain that he has something in clubs so the ♣K will be safe to play. It could also be essential if East has ♣A but not ♣Q as now West can get a club ruff.

Julian Foster (many times NSW representative)

Join us to celebrate the Australia Day ONLINE!



The Sydney Bridge Centre has moved the **Australia Day Swiss Paris Congress** ONLINE! This is a one-day congress to be held on Wednesday 26th January on BBO with 24 boards in the morning, lunch break, then another 24 boards in the afternoon.

All are welcome! Let's make it a real Australia Day celebration with all players in the country.

We intend to run separate field for Novice & Restricted and Open players. Please nominate the field you would like to compete when enter.

An invaluable and meaningful prize for the winners in each category – **Over the Shoulder Mentoring** by selected advanced players.

BB\$12 per player. **RED** masterpoints awarded. Please refer to [programme brochure](#) for details and [enter online](#).

The regular F2F Wednesday morning club session will run as normal in City but no evening session on that day.

More Bridge in the New Year

Our City venue has reopened on Monday 3rd January 2022, and our Inner West venue at Canada Bay Club has restarted bridge sessions on Monday 10th January 2022.

- F2F @ CITY -

There will be sessions every day from Monday to Thursday at City, with a separated field for Supervised players on Wednesday morning. All morning sessions start at 10.00am. We have two evening sessions – the Tuesday night is for Open (7.15pm start), please contact office for pre-arrangement if you are not a regular of this session. The Wednesday night is a study group for Supervised players, 6.30pm start and aim to finish at 9.00pm.

- F2F @ CANADA BAY -

To start with, we will have two morning sessions in Canada Bay Club. We co-host the Monday morning session with Strathfield Bridge Club and add an extra Thursday morning session to the week. Both club members will

enjoy member's rate for the table money fee. Cash only for the moment, we intend to extend the usage of PP over there.

Please find the details of [the session timetables](#) and find out [more about our venues](#) on our website.

- ONLINE @ BBO -

If you prefer to play online, there are regular club sessions on Monday morning (10.15am), Thursday afternoon (1.45pm) and Saturday afternoon (1.45pm) on BBO. To join our online game, please follow this [step by step guidelines](#).

BB\$4 for 24 boards.