

Lyons or lambs *by Derrick Browne*

This week's column features two deals that helped Frances Lyons and Heather Cusworth win the recent NSW Bridge Association Swiss Pairs.

A fortnight ago, we considered the recommended strength for a 1NT opening. Let's change tack to suits. Would you open the East hand?

WEST	EAST
S KT	S A762
H KT3	H 4
D KJ753	D Q6
C A86	C KJT742

With a 6-card suit, 11 HCP is enough to open the bidding. But this hand has only 10 HCP. Could that be sufficient?

According to the Rule of 20, you should add your HCP (10) to the length of your two longest suits (six clubs + four spades = 10) and open if the total comes to 20 or more.

On that basis, this hand is just good enough. Some would downgrade for having a queen-doubleton but against that, there are some good features too – the rest of the points are in the long suits, the C10 could be useful, and you have a major (indeed the boss suit, spades).

Frances Lyons opened 1C as East, South bid 2C (Michaels, showing at least 5-5 in the majors), and West, Heather Cusworth, finished in 3NT. The heart lead quickly forced out her king. Plan the hand.

With hearts wide open, declarer does not have time to drive out the DA, and so needs six tricks in clubs. But how should the suit be played?

When missing the queen, the normal guideline is "eight ever, nine never" – with eight cards between the two hands, finesse, but with nine cards it is better to play for the queen to drop, by banging down the ace and king.

However, with nine cards the decision is so close that a player who is known to have extra length elsewhere should be played for a singleton in your 9-card suit. Here, with South having shown at least ten cards in the majors, Cusworth rightly cashed the CA then finessed to the CJ, figuring South to be short in clubs. That worked, for 5 IMPs in.

Is the West hand below good enough for any opening?

Dealer West, both vul.

NORTH	
S KQT72	
H 98	
D JT96	
C 53	
WEST	EAST
S J96543	S 8
H 7	H KQT2
D 2	D AQ743
C T9874	C KQ2
SOUTH	
S A	
H AJ6543	
D K85	
C AJ6	

If considering a super-light weak two such as with the West cards, it is best that the vulnerability be favourable and that you are in third seat (where partner is a passed hand and will not get excited). Neither of those conditions applied here and trouble ensued when West opened 2S showing two suits of the same colour.

East bid 2NT, a strong enquiry, which convinced Cusworth as South to pass. West bid 3C, showing both black suits and minimum. East might have passed this but, expecting better for a vulnerable opening, tried 3NT. Although she did not double, Cusworth picked up 11 IMPs when 3NT went four down. Out of 17 tables in play, there was only one contract made by anyone: one South was left in 1H, making seven tricks.