

Bidding in the margins *by Derrick Browne*

The early stages of the Interstate Teams selection are currently being held at the NSW Bridge Association. Today's column features two hands from the event, with some marginal bidding decisions.

Dealer North, nil vul.

NORTH
S K5
H QJ983
D AKT62
C 8

WEST
S QT974
H 2
D 9754
C AJ3

EAST
S A632
H AK75
D 3
C Q962

SOUTH
S J8
H T64
D QJ8
C KT754

| WEST | NORTH | EAST | SOUTH |
|----------|-------|------|-------|
| | 1H | Pass | 2H |
| Pass | 3D | Pass | 4H |
| All pass | | | |

Nick Hughes, East, observed that his side can make 4S, and yet if North had passed 2H, he would have passed too and finished with a likely -110.

As it happened, North bid 3D, a long suit try for game and South liked the Q-J-x in partner's second suit so 4H was reached; two down.

Is there any way for East-West to reach their good spade game? Over South's 2H, it would be conceivable for West to venture a 2S bid: when the opponents have found a fit, it is less dangerous to come in. Still, that is pushy, even not vulnerable, and only 10 out of 35 pairs in the ITS bid to 4S.

On the next hand, North-South reached their spade game, but in an unusual auction:

Dealer East, NS vul.

NORTH
S KQT974
H Q3
D T72
C 63

WEST
S 32
H 874
D J53
C AQJT7

EAST
S 65
H JT6
D AQ96
C K982

SOUTH
S AJ8
H AK952
D K84
C 54

| WEST | NORTH | EAST | SOUTH |
|-------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|
| <i>Nunn</i> | <i>Chosid</i> | <i>Bloom</i> | <i>de Ravin</i> |
| | | Pass | 1H |
| 3C! | Pass | 4C | Pass |
| Pass | 4S | All pass | |

In third seat (opposite a passed partner, who therefore will not get too excited) and at favourable vulnerability (not vul against vul opponents) is the time to stretch furthest to make life hard for the other side, hence Tony Nunn's weak jump to 3C with only a good 5-card suit.

Ben Chosid figured the North cards were not quite up to the mark for a negative double at this level, and definitely not strong enough to bid 3S, new suit forcing. Martin Bloom with the East cards heightened the pre-empt with a 4C bid, cutting John de Ravin out from making a reopening double.

Chosid, however, liked his good 6-card major, honour in partner's suit and lack of wastage in the enemy suit, and backed in with 4S. With the diamond finesse working, this was unbeatable.