

Following and Breaking the Rules.

If the rather dull series of mainly part-score boards from this evening are repeated at next week's National Bridge Congress, many will demand their money back! However, one board gave one pair an opportunity to follow a good guideline and another to break one... and both pairs were right!

What action would you take as South ♠ KQJ
with the following? ♥ A5
♦ KQT3
♣ AQT7

after East on your right opens 3♥ with only North-South vulnerable? We do not really want to play 5 of a minor while 4♠ has its deficiency too. So, "when in doubt and 3NT is an option, bid it! That's what happened at at least two tables but at one, the bidding was not yet over:

<p><u>Board 21</u></p> <p>North Deals</p> <p>N-S Vul</p>	<p>♠ 9 8 6 4</p> <p>♥ 7 2</p> <p>♦ 9 6 2</p> <p>♣ K 9 3 2</p>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center; width: 40px;"> ♠ A 7 5 3 2 ♥ 8 6 ♦ A J 7 4 ♣ J 8 </div> <div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center; width: 40px;"> W N S E </div> <div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center; width: 40px;"> ♠ 10 ♥ K Q J 10 9 4 3 ♦ 8 5 ♣ 6 5 4 </div> </div>	
	<p>♠ K Q J</p> <p>♥ A 5</p> <p>♦ K Q 10 3</p> <p>♣ A Q 10 7</p>		
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	3♥	3NT
Pass	Pass	4♥	Dbl
All pass			

Was East guilty of bidding the same hand twice? They could be found guilty of such an offence but there seemed little chance of defeating 3NT opposite a passed partner. Therefore, the sacrifice, as surely 4♥ would be, might be cheap.

3NT requires, after an initial heart lead and duck by declarer, that West holds both missing aces. The fall of the ♠10 on the first round of the suit was rather handy for South, too.

4♥x will never be worse than two down though after ♦K was led and ducked, West switched to a high spade and took the first round of trumps to play a second spade. A diamond finesse saw the declarer dispose of one club and escape for one down. (Declarer is always only one down after the ♦K lead is ducked.)

At most tables, either East opened 3♥ and West raised to game or South made a take-out double of a 4♥ opening (4♥ was certainly the winner for East this time) as North emerged with 4♠ which was twice doubled and always defeated. So, even though East saved disaster by escaping from the making 3NT, they should have opened at the 4 level with that heart suit and a passed partner. You be judge. Was East guilty of the crime of bidding the same hand twice or of having made the wrong opening bid first time?

You can tell me your answer at next week's National Congress. "Tales of Akarana" will return once the exciting hands at Hamilton have been played.

Richard Solomon