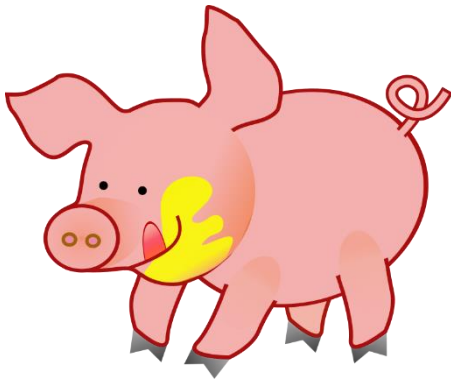


A Little "Porky"



The last night of bridge at Akarana for 2019 saw both the club's AGM and 14 boards of play, a cunning ploy by the committee to get a goodly number at the AGM. While this feature is not the place to discuss the club's issues especially as its coverage is well beyond the Auckland area, it is worth reflecting the members' desire to increase the number who play at the club and to emphasize that the club will welcome all. There still seems to be a belief by some that one needs an invite. This is absolutely **not true**.

The standard is higher than at most other New Zealand clubs and the Wednesday night fare is always Teams or Swiss Pairs based. Everyone is welcome. Perhaps you would like to try the club out for one month, as events usually last the 4 or 5 weeks of one month. If you are still unsure about coming and would like to come, please contact me, especially if you need a partner or teammates.

Back to the real business of the night, the final 14 board match of the year. It featured four possible slams, two which could be made by dropping diamond honours offside: no-one did. One other required an unlikely diamond lead to defeat the slam though no-one bid it. The fourth slam needed a normal trump break but bidding it was much harder than making it.

In short, staying in game usually offered the best chance of success. At one table, one North-South pair had it extremely tough to reach the right game. Many players do not like the concept of psyching. Yet, psyches are certainly allowable bids, as long as they do not occur too often and as long as all three other players are fooled by the psyche, including the psycher's partner.

Would a common psyche work on the following board?

Board 12 ♠ K 10 9 2
West Deals ♥ —

N-S Vul		♦ K Q 9 3	
		♣ A J 10 8 5	
♠ 8 3		<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> W N E </div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 5px;">S</div>	♠ A Q 6
♥ J 8 5 4 3			♥ A 10 7 6 2
♦ 7 6 2			♦ 8 4
♣ K Q 9			♣ 7 6 3
		♠ J 7 5 4	
		♥ K Q 9	
		♦ A J 10 5	
		♣ 4 2	
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	1 ♣	1 ♥	Dbl
1 ♠!	4 ♥	Pass	5 ♣
All Pass			

Calling 1♠ when you have a wonderful heart fit and few values, has been done many times before and yet still makes it difficult for the opposition to unravel, as the above sequence shows. North's leap to game in hearts seemed to agree spades and be a slam try, maybe a void, all very logical except that West had bid 1♠ even though South's double had shown that suit.

The only players at the table who were aware of the suit which the 4♥ bid agreed were North (who made the bid!) and West who was not letting on to South.

After a short, well not so short gap, South decided that his partner had to have a long strong suit of clubs and with no interest in slam (look at those heart honours opposite a void!), signed off there.

So, the psycher's job had been well done in that it had driven the opposition away from a cold 4♠ game to an unmakeable 5♣. 12 imps in then since there would be no psyche at the other table?

We must bring in the fourth player at the table who up to this point had only made a very honest 1♥ overcall. What lead would they make? Well, partner did bid spades. So, the ♠A seemed a good start. No harm in that as far as the defence were concerned. However, the next two cards played by the defence were extremely harmful.

West followed with the ♠3 (low encourage) with North making sure East knew where the ♠2 was by playing it and that encouraged East to play a disastrous ♠Q at trick 2. All that remained was for declarer to cross to dummy at trick 3 with a diamond and play a low trump (well, both were pretty low!) and insert

the jack when West too played low. 5♣ made for just a loss of 2 imps as there was an unlikely overtrick in the spade game at the other table.

Oh, what might have been! It is hard to know whether we should enforce the rule which says a psycher's partner can never be wrong (East might have wondered where the other 8 hearts had gone which cast much doubt as to the validity of 1♠) or indeed blame the psycher for encouraging their partner to continue spades.

As the season of goodwill is upon us, we will not even name the psycher as she may well wish to commit similar acts in the future.

So, do come along to Akarana and play good quality Teams and Swiss Pairs bridge. Our final hand of the year shows that even the best have lapses!

We will return with more Tales when the club resumes in early February.

Richard Solomon