

Four Stars Swiss Teams – part 1

By Frances Hinden & Jeffrey Allerton

On board 22 from Friday evening, under half the field bid and made the best contract of 3NT by East (another three pairs made 4H by East).

Board 22 ♠ QJ82
Dealer E ♥ 9762
EW Game ♦ JT
 ♣ K72

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| ♠ 543 | ♠ K6 |
| ♥ AQ4 | ♥ KJT8 |
| ♦ AKQ42 | ♦ 7 |
| ♣ 63 | ♣ AT9854 |

 ♠ AT97
 ♥ 53
 ♦ 98653
 ♣ QJ

After the auction starts 1♣ P 1♦ P 1♥ P, West wants to make a forcing noise – it's worth discussing with your partner whether 1♠ here is natural, or fourth suit forcing. Some play 1♠ as natural and 2♠ as an artificial force, and others the reverse. The most common approach in England is that 1♠ is either, and partner raises spades with four just in case. In any case, East rebids 2♣ and West is left still trying to get partner to bid NT with a stop. It's not very likely that East has a singleton spade given the lack of bidding from N/S, but it's possible that partner has x KJxx xx AK10xxx when 5♣ is the best contract, and the actual spade holding of Kx is also a possibility so it's premature for West to bid 3NT immediately. The best approach is to bid 2♠, best played as 're-fourth-suit' (not natural), East can bid 2NT and West gratefully bids game.

A spade lead from South gives declarer a quick and easy nine tricks. However, on that auction it could easily be wrong – if declarer does have Kx (as sounds likely) then the best defence could be to hope partner has an entry and four spades will cash. A spade lead from five

is far more tempting. On a passive red suit lead, declarer can still make by playing carefully. She wants to ensure that North never gains the lead, so wins the diamond (say) in dummy, and plays a club to the 10 and jack. The next red suit can be won in dummy again, and another club played towards hand. On the layout, declarer ducks this easily to South as well, and still has enough communication in the red suits to win any return, cash dummy's diamonds and now run clubs for 11 tricks. (After this start South may switch to a spade on winning the first club to hold it to nine). If North plays a club honour on either of the first two rounds, East takes it and plays a third round, hoping either that South has the length or that North has the ace of spades.