

274. The magnificent seven

By Ron Klinger

Dealer East: Both vulnerable

North

♠ KQ2
♥ AKJ10
♦ 863
♣ KJ9

South

♠ A108764
♥ 82
♦ AQ
♣ AQ3

South has reached 7♠, with East-West passing throughout. West leads the ♣6. Trumps are 2-2. Plan the play.

Like the 2020 Gold Coast Congress (February 21-29), the Slava Cup (Moscow, February 21-23) was one of the last significant bridge events to be held just before the Covid-19 pandemic led to travel restrictions and lockdowns. The 3-day event is a Swiss Pairs, 16 rounds of eight boards each. The scoring is by Victory Points with 60 VPs available per match. Each pair starts with 30 VPs. The winner adds 1 for each Imp in the victory margin and the loser deducts 1. With 1 Imp = 1 VP, a win by 10 Imps translates into a 40-20 VP win.

Coincidentally, this is the same sort of Victory Point scale that we use on our Holiday Bridge holidays, as it is much more attractive than the World Bridge Federation's Victory Scale with decimal places. The 1 Imp = 1 VP scale could certainly be used by the Australian Bridge Federation for short matches of 8, 10 or 12 boards and also, with a little modification, for longer matches.

Today's deal is from the Slava Cup.

Dealer East: Both vulnerable

The actual auction went this way:

		North	West	North	East	South
		♠ KQ2			Pass	1♠
		♥ AKJ10	Pass	2♣ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2♠
		♦ 863	Pass	3♠	Pass	3NT ⁽²⁾
		♣ KJ9	Pass	4♣ ⁽³⁾	Pass	4♦ ⁽³⁾
West	♠ J5	East	Pass	4♥ ⁽³⁾	Pass	4NT
	♥ Q73	♠ 93	Pass	5♠ ⁽⁴⁾	Pass	5NT ⁽⁵⁾
	♦ KJ9	♥ 9654	Pass	6♥ ⁽⁶⁾	Pass	7♠
	♣ 108765	♦ 107542	Pass	Pass	Pass	
		♣ 42				
		South				
		♠ A108764				
		♥ 82				
		♦ AQ				
		♣ AQ3				

- (1) Natural and forcing to game
- (2) Serious slam interest
- (3) Cue-bid first- or second-round control
- (4) Two key cards plus the ♠Q
- (5) How many kings do you have outside trumps?
- (6) Two.

Some might bid it 1♠ : 2♣, 3♠ (although the spades are skimpy for the 3♠ rebid) : 4NT, 5♣ (0 or 3 key cards, obviously three) : 5NT (specific kings), 6♠ (none outside trumps) : 7♠, all pass. If South has no kings and has shown only three aces so far, South is likely to have 2-3 queens to justify the 3♠ rebid. The ♥Q would do.

You have 12 tricks on top. You win the lead and draw trumps. You could take the heart finesse or the diamond finesse. Each is 50-50. To improve your chances, play ♥A, ♥K and ruff a heart. As it happens, the ♥Q falls and you have your 13th trick. If the ♥Q had not dropped, you can take the diamond finesse. Of course, you could play some more trumps before embarking on the heart-ruff play. 7♠ +2210 was worth +9 Imps against datum.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer West : East-West vulnerable

North

♠ Q96

♥ AKQ

♦ AJ9843

♣ 6

South

♠ AKJ872

♥ 63

♦ Q

♣ A832

South has reached 7♠, with East-West passing throughout. West leads the ♣K. You have a straightforward plan: Take the ♣A, ruff a club, spade to hand, ruff a club, ♦A, ruff a diamond, draw trumps and ditch last club loser on dummy's third heart winner.

Good plan, but there is a hitch. You take the ♣A and ruff a club with the ♠9, but when you play the ♠6 from dummy East plays the three, you win with the ♠A and West discards a heart. How do you continue?

Why not phone or email your bridge partners and compare your answers and your reasoning?

I looked up 'opaque'. The definition wasn't very clear.