Week 83

In valuing balanced hands, a five card suit of reasonable quality is worth an extra point, and a six card suit two points. Therefore a hand such as the following should be treated as 15 -16pts.

Kxx

Axx

Xx

AQJxx

This theme cropped up in a hand from the Somerset Swiss Teams at the weekend, where the lay out was as follows:

Kxxx

Kx

AKQTx

Kx

AQ

Axxx

Xx

QJxxx

Only a combined 31 points, it is true, but notice the two five card minor suits which provide potential extra tricks. Once the CA is knocked out, declarer has ten winners and if clubs are 3-3 (a 36% chance) it is cold. The considerable extra chance is that the diamond suit will come to the rescue and provide the necessary two additional winners (another 3-3 break plus the chance the DJ will drop).

6NT is over 60% so a contract worth bidding, and yet only one table out of 22 reached it.

In addition to the minor suit chances, which in fact do not materialise, there are squeeze chances since the left hand held:

JT9x

Qxx

Jxxx

Ax

This hand guards both spades and diamonds, and when declarer cashes his winners he comes under pressure. Declarer will be able to count his hand and play it for a four card diamond holding and thus finesse the ten in the end position.