

Victorian Festival of Bridge 2025 - Day 3

From Hugh Grosvenor

A rainy day in Melbourne for the start of the Victor Champion Cup. The name of this event has always amused me since 'Victor' and 'Champion' are synonyms. In fact, Victor Champion was a notable Victorian bridge player (1908-1974). He captained 16 Victorian Teams between 1934 and 1961 winning seven Australian championships. He was a bridge writer and theorist and one of the best players of his generation.

There are 90 teams in this year's event. George and I are playing with David Appleton and Brad Coles from Canberra. Brad is the editor of Australian Bridge, Australia's premier bridge magazine. They play a highly artificial system the details of which are not clear to me. One of the advantages of having them as teammates is that we don't have to play against them!

There are many strong teams in the field and again the luck of the draw will have some effect. The first round is a random draw. We are seeded 7 and play team 29. Tomer and Lavy Libman are a father and son pair from Sydney who recently qualified to play in the NSW Open Team at this year's ANC in Brisbane. Tomer has represented Australia in Youth bridge several times and is one of Australia's top young bridge talents. They are experienced and tough and have a lot of system agreement. Their teammates are Fraser Rew and Lakshmi Sunderasan. Fraser is a talented player from Sydney, Lakshmi played for Tasmania on the Open Team last year. Not the easiest draw.

George and I played Tomer and Lavy.



Board 1 09

Board 1
Dealer N
Vul None

♠ A J 2
 ♥ 6 5
 ♦ A K 6 3
 ♣ K T 6 4

♣ 9 8 7 5 3 2
 ♥ J 3
 ♦ Q 5
 ♣ 9 8 7 5 3 2

♠ Q T 7 5
 ♥ A 9 8
 ♦ J T 9 7 4
 ♣ J

♠ K 6 4
 ♥ K Q T 7 4 2
 ♦ 8 2
 ♣ A Q

3
 15 8
 14

Makeable contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	2	6	1	4	4
W	2	6	1	4	4

Leave played this contract conservatively, probably the best play if you have not bid game, and

Terranova had her assistant hiding a clay off two feet behind her from this second wall. A fair

Round 1 Team 7 NS vs 29					Round 1 Team 7 EW vs 29						
Pair: Hugh GROSVENOR - George KOZAKOS					Pair: David APPLETON - Brad COLES						
Opps: Tomer LIBMAN - Lavy LIBMAN					Opps: Fraser REW - Lakshmi SUNDERASAN						
Bd	Cont	Dec	Ld	Score	Bd	Cont	Dec	Ld	Score	IMPs +	IMPs -
1	2♦	E	♥K	-130	1	3NT	E	♥K	430	7	
2	3♣	S	♣6	140	2	4♣	S	♣7	100	6	
3	3♥	W	♣6	100	3	3♣	S	♦7	50	4	
4	3♣	S	♥6	-100	4	3♥	W	♣6	-100		5
5	4♣	E	♦2	50	5	2♣	W	♦Q	140	5	
6	4♣	E	♠2	-650	6	6♣	W	♣5	-100		13
7	3♣	E	♣J	100	7	4♥	N	♦3	100	5	
8	3♥	E	♣A	-140	8	4♥	E	♣K	-50		5
9	2♣	N	♦Q	110	9	3♥	E	♠3	140	6	
10	5♣	W	♦A	-680	10	5♣	E	♣Q	710	1	
11	2♣	E	♦2	-110	11	2♣ X	W	♣5	470	8	
12	1♥	E	♦2	-110	12	1♥	E	♦4	140	1	
13	2♣	N	♥J	90	13	3NT	N	♦3	100	5	
14	2NT	N	♥7	150	14	1NT	N	♥7	-90	2	
					Total					50	23
Team Rank					18 of 90					VPs	
Next Opps					11					Total VPs	
										16.55	
										16.55	

[Match 2](#) we played Team 11. Andrew Peake and Giselle Mundell are a strong pair from Sydney that I frequently play with as teammates, particularly in online events. For this event they are playing with Kate McCallum and Axel Johannsson from Adelaide. Kate is from the USA and has won 7 World Championships and 16 North American Titles – not a bad CV!

George and I played Andrew and Giselle. The other table saw the battle of two strong club relay systems. Don't expect me to explain their bidding!

Board 15

Board 15
Dealer S
Vul N-S

♠ A6
♥ Q95
♦ 8532
♣ KJT2

♠ 53
♥ K7432
♦ KJT
♣ Q86

♠ QJ4
♥ AT86
♦ Q4
♣ A743

♠ KT9872
♥ J
♦ A976
♣ 95

9
10 13
8

Makeable contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	1	-
S	-	-	-	1	-
E	5	1	3	-	4
W	5	1	3	-	4

We bid to 2S and they pushed on to 3C. With the cards lying very favourably Giselle guessed well to make 11 tricks (guessed the CQ, finessed the SK and led the HQ from hand pinning the J to play the suit for no losers). 2 IMPs to them as 2S went one off at the other table.

Board 17
Dealer N
Vul None

♠ 543
♥ 863
♦ KQJ95
♣ 96

♠ KJT96
♥ AK72
♦ 2
♣ K72

D
17

♠ A8
♥ 5
♦ AT876
♣ J8543

♠ Q72
♥ QJT94
♦ 43
♣ AQT

Makeable contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	5	4	1
S	-	-	5	4	1
E	-	3	-	-	-
W	-	3	-	-	-

14
6 9
11

North opens 1S. Would you bid 2NT showing 5-5 in the minors? Andrew did at our table, George bid 3D showing an invitational or better spade raise and Giselle bid 5D. Neither of us could realistically bid on at the 5 level so we doubled and collected 300. At the other table David chose to pass so that the opponents had a free run to 4H. I would bid 2NT with this hand but have sympathy with the choice not to – poor suit quality, more defence than offence.

Board 19	♠ T932	
<i>Dealer S</i>	♥ 94	
<i>Vul E-W</i>	♦ 964	
	♣ T543	
♠ AKQ		♠ 8765
♥ KT5		♥ QJ763
♦ Q8532		♦ 7
♣ KQ		♣ 876
	♠ J4	
	♥ A82	
	♦ AKJT	
	♣ AJ92	

0
19 3
18

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	2	1	-	-	1
S	2	1	-	-	1
E	-	-	3	1	-
W	-	-	3	1	-

George opened 1D, too strong for 1NT, planning to rebid 2NT. Giselle doubled. I passed and Andrew bid 1H. George chose to pass (1NT was an alternative – this would show 18-19 since I had not responded). Instead, Giselle bid 1NT showing 18-19. Andrew bid 2H showing 5+ hearts and a weak hand, preferring to play hearts rather than NT. Giselle raised this to 4H. This seems like too much to me since partner had not promised any values – I would be choosing between pass and 3H. George doubled and had to find a lead – what would be your choice? Maybe the DA looks safe but look what happened. I played the 9 discouraging and George switched to HA and another H. Andrew could now trump three diamonds in his hand, establishing the last D. The third heart in the dummy drew the last trump for 10 tricks and 790. A nice example of a dummy reversal. George needed to lead a heart to win 7 IMPs instead of losing 12 IMPs.

Board 25	♠ K3	
<i>Dealer N</i>	♥ 65	
<i>Vul E-W</i>	♦ KT62	
	♣ AJ876	
♠ QT		♠ J854
♥ AJ8742		♥ KQT9
♦ Q3		♦ J94
♣ T93		♣ KQ
	♠ A9762	
	♥ 3	
	♦ A875	
	♣ 542	

11
9 12
8

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	4	4	-	2	-
S	4	4	-	2	-
E	-	-	2	-	1
W	-	-	2	-	1

Giselle did a lot of bidding on this hand as well. I opened 1C, Andrew doubled and George bid 1S. Giselle is never backward in coming forward so bid 4H. Three was probably enough to describe her hand. This was passed back to George who doubled. I led the SK and continued with another spade. When George won this, he had to decide what to do next. He led another spade and Giselle was able to ruff high, draw trumps and discard one of her diamond losers on

the SJ. Ace and another diamond from George would have beaten the contract 2 tricks for 500. 200 was worth 2 IMPs when NS made 9 tricks in spades at the other table.

Board 28

Dealer W

Vul N-S

♠ AQT76

♥ J54

♦ A763

♣ 7

♠ 843

♥ Q972

♦ 54

♣ KQ85

D 28

♠ KJ952

♥ K83

♦ KJ

♣ A93

♠ -

♥ AT6

♦ QT982

♣ JT642

11

7 15

7

Makeable contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	3	-	-	-
S	-	3	-	-	-
E	1	-	-	1	1
W	1	-	-	1	1

I opened 1S, Andrew passed on a hand that I think I would have tried 1NT on. George responded 1N. I bid 2D and he had some choices. He told me afterwards that his first instinct was to bid 5D, then he thought maybe 4D was better. Eventually he decided on 3D. I was happy to pass that. Andrew led a low H. Giselle had to decide whether to play the 9 or the Q. The 9 would be right if partner held the J, the Q was probably right if he had the K (notice if he had both the K and the J it didn't matter which she played). The 9 lost to my J, I gave up a club, won the D return with the Ace, cashed the SA pitching a heart, then cross ruffed spades and clubs. A defensive slip from Andrew at the end saw me making 11 tricks.

At the other table they got to 5D which our guys doubled. The play to the first trick was the same but the higher stakes sharpened the concentration and they beat it a trick.

Round 2 Team 7 NS vs 11					Round 2 Team 7 EW vs 11						
Pair: Hugh GROSVENOR - George KOZAKOS					Pair: David APPLETON - Brad COLES						
Opps: Andrew PEAKE - Giselle MUNDELL					Opps: Axel JOHANSSON - Kate MCCALLUM						
Bd	Cont	Dec	Ld	Score	Bd	Cont	Dec	Ld	Score	IMPs +	IMPs -
15	3♣	W	♠5	-150	15	2♠	S	♥5	100		2
16	3NT	N	♠K	430	16	3NT	N	♠2	-400	1	
17	5♦X	W	♥A	300	17	4♥	N	♣3	-480		5
18	3NT	E	♠Q	-400	18	3NT	E	♣3	400		
19	4♥X	E	♦A	-790	19	2♥	E	♥2	110		12
20	3NT	W	♣5	-600	20	3NT	W	♠3	600		
21	4♥	S	♣7	620	21	4♥	S	♦8	-650		1
22	1NT	N	♥K	90	22	4♠	S	♥9	100	5	
23	3NT	W	♦6	-690	23	3NT	E	♥Q	630		2
24	2♥	E	♠K	-140	24	3♥	E	♠K	-100		6
25	4♥X	W	♠K	200	25	2♠	S	♣9	-140	2	
26	3♦	N	♠2	110	26	3♣	S	♠10	-130		1
27	2♥	W	♣2	-140	27	3NT	E	♣Q	-100		6
28	3♦	N	♥3	150	28	5♦X	N	♥3	200	8	
					Total					16	35
Team Rank					37 of 90					VPs	
Next Opps					15					Total VPs	
										4.94	
										21.49	

[Match 3](#) was against a Canberra based team of Christy Geromboux and Sebastian Yuen, playing with the father and daughter pair of Peter and Jane Reynolds. We are playing Christy and Sebastian, a very good pair who have had consistently good results in recent years. They play a highly evolved form of 2 over 1 with many agreements.

There were a lot of flat boards in this match but 2 tough decisions that we got right.

Board 9	♠ T75																															
<i>Dealer N</i>	♥ QJ42																															
<i>Vul E-W</i>	♦ AK7																															
	♣ 984																															
♠ AKQJ63	<table><tr><td colspan="2">D</td></tr><tr><td>9</td><td></td></tr></table>	D		9		♠ -																										
D																																
9																																
♥ -		♥ AT975																														
♦ Q3		♦ JT865																														
♣ AJT32		♣ KQ6																														
	♠ 9842																															
	♥ K863																															
	♦ 942																															
	♣ 75																															
Makeable contracts																																
	<table><tr><td></td><td>♣</td><td>♦</td><td>♥</td><td>♠</td><td>NT</td></tr><tr><td>N</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr><tr><td>S</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr><tr><td>E</td><td>5</td><td>4</td><td>2</td><td>5</td><td>5</td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td>5</td><td>4</td><td>2</td><td>5</td><td>5</td></tr></table>		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	N	-	-	-	-	-	S	-	-	-	-	-	E	5	4	2	5	5	W	5	4	2	5	5	
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT																											
N	-	-	-	-	-																											
S	-	-	-	-	-																											
E	5	4	2	5	5																											
W	5	4	2	5	5																											
10																																
17 10																																
3																																

Christy opened 1H and Sebastian bid 1NT which they play as forcing with spades. Christy showed diamonds. Sebastian bid 3C fourth suit forcing. Christy bid 3NT showing her club stoppers. After some thought Sebastian jumped to 6S.

I led the DK, George contributed the 9 and Sebastian the Q. If the Q was singleton I needed to shift to something else. If he had two the Q was the obvious card to play and I might well need to continue with the ace. Was George's 9 a count card showing 3 or an attitude card saying he didn't like diamonds? After some consideration I cashed the A. If I had switched the diamond loser would have disappeared on the HA.

This is probably a situation where the lead of the Ace should ask for attitude and the lead of the King should ask for count.

Board 12		♠ J	
<i>Dealer W</i>		♥ J7	
<i>Vul N-S</i>		♦ KJT965	
		♣ J875	
♠ 73		♠ AKT642	
♥ QT9862		♥ 53	
♦ 84		♦ A73	
♣ 643		♣ KT	
		♠ Q985	
		♥ AK4	
		♦ Q2	
		♣ AQ92	
		Makeable contracts	
		♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ NT	
		N 5 5 - 1 4	
		S 5 5 - 1 4	
		E - - 1 - -	
		W - - 1 - -	

Sebastian opened 2D which included a variety of strong hands but was most likely to be a weak 2 bid in hearts. At this vulnerability it could be very weak, as indeed it was! I passed and Christy bid 2S which was natural, constructive but not forcing. George bid 2NT, natural and it was over to me. Anything could be right but I decided on a pragmatic bid of 3NT.

Sebastian led a S to Christie's K. She switched to a H which George won with the Ace. Now he played a low D to the J which Christy ducked, then the CJ covered and won. When the CT dropped this created an entry to the dummy to enjoy the diamonds after the Ace was knocked out. A little lucky but nicely played.

Round 3 Team 7 NS vs 15					Round 3 Team 7 EW vs 15						
Pair: Hugh GROSVENOR - George KOZAKOS					Pair: David APPLETON - Brad COLES						
Opps: Christy GEROMBOUX - Sebastian YUEN					Opps: Jane REYNOLDS - Peter REYNOLDS						
Bd	Cont	Dec	Ld	Score	Bd	Cont	Dec	Ld	Score	IMPs +	IMPs -
1	3♦	N	♠Q	-50	1	3♦	S	♥3	-110		4
2	4♥	S	♠J	650	2	4♥	S	♠Q	-650		
3	1NT	N	♥3	150	3	1♠	S	♦3	-140		
4	3♠	S	♣K	-100	4	1NT	W	♠2	120	1	
5	1NT	N	♣5	180	5	1NT	N	♦3	-180		
6	4♠	S	♣J	450	6	4♠	S	♥A	-450		
7	4♠	W	♣K	-620	7	4♠	W	♣K	620		
8	3NT	W	♠2	-400	8	1NT	E	♠Q	120		7
9	6♠	W	♦K	100	9	5♠	W	♦A	680	13	
10	4♦	S	♥7	-100	10	2♥	S	♦5	300	5	
11	4♠	S	♦2	420	11	4♠	S	♦2	-420		
12	3NT	S	♠7	630	12	3♦	N	♠K	-150	10	
13	4♠	N	♥9	680	13	4♠	S	♦K	-650	1	
14	3NT	N	♠J	-50	14	3♦	S	♠2	100	2	
					Total					32	11
Team Rank					24 of 90					VPs	
Next Opps					4					Total VPs	
										15.46	
										36.95	

The [last match](#) of the day wasn't a particularly lucky draw. Warren Lazer and Pauline Gumby playing with Michael Ware and Pam Livingston. Michael is one of New Zealand's best players. Pam is a highly regarded teacher and coach. Both have represented New Zealand many times.

Board 16		♠ Q82
Dealer W		♥ J8654
Vul E-W		♦ KQ
		♣ Q63
♠ A943		♠ KJ6
♥ K7		♥ AQ
♦ A642		♦ JT97
♣ A98		♣ KJ72
		♠ T75
		♥ T932
		♦ 853
		♣ T54
		Makeable contracts
		♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ NT
		N - - - - -
		S - - - - -
		E 6 6 4 6 6
		W 6 6 4 6 6

Pam opened 1D, I overcalled 1H, Michael bid 2H showing a diamond raise, at least invitational to game. Pam discovered that they were missing a keycard and the DQ. Undeterred she bid 6D. I guess that she thought their fit might be better. With both black queens favourably positioned the only remaining problem was the trump suit. Pam took two finesses, losing to

both the K and the Q. This is obviously the best percentage play in the suit in isolation but given the bidding playing for the drop must have been tempting. Teammates played in 3NT with no opposition bidding and went down on a heart lead and the same double finesse in diamonds.

Board 23	♠ Q643	
<i>Dealer S</i>	♥ QT3	
<i>Vul Both</i>	♦ A42	
	♣ J87	
♠ AK	<div>♠ JT9</div>	
♥ 62	<div>♥ AJ98</div>	
♦ K863	<div>♦ J9</div>	
♣ AKQ53	<div>♣ T642</div>	
	♠ 8752	
	♥ K754	
	♦ QT75	
	♣ 9	
	Makeable contracts	
	♣♦♥♠NT	
	N - - - -	
	S - - - -	
	E 4 2 2 1 3	
	W 4 2 2 1 3	

9

197

5

An interesting hand. Pam opened 1C, Michael responded 1H and Pam rebid 2D, a natural reverse showing a good hand typically with 5+ clubs and 4 diamonds. Michael bid 2NT natural and forcing to game which was raised to 3. George led the S7. Declarer has 8 likely tricks (barring a 4-0 club break). The question is how to get the ninth trick. On the face of it hearts appears to be the best chance. The best chance for 2 tricks there is to play a low one to the 9. Presuming that this forces either the K or the Q you can then finesse the J the next time. This will work if North holds KTx(x) or QTx(x). Michael saw another possibility. The play to the first trick and our silence in the bidding suggested that the spades were probably 4-4. In this case he might be able to establish a D trick. Backing his judgment as good players do he played a diamond to the 9. This would work if North held the ten (presuming that the spades broke 4-4). When the 9 lost to the ten he was in trouble.

George thought about this for quite a while and eventually returned a diamond. A mistake but a well-considered one!

At the other table our teammates chose 5C. This basically needed the DA onside and when it wasn't went one down.

A disappointing way to finish the day.

Round 3 Team 7 NS vs 15					Round 3 Team 7 EW vs 15						
Pair: Hugh GROSVENOR - George KOZAKOS					Pair: David APPLETON - Brad COLES						
Opps: Christy GEROMBOUX - Sebastian YUEN					Opps: Jane REYNOLDS - Peter REYNOLDS						
Bd	Cont	Dec	Ld	Score	Bd	Cont	Dec	Ld	Score	IMPs +	IMPs -
1	3♦	N	♠Q	-50	1	3♦	S	♥3	-110		4
2	4♥	S	♠J	650	2	4♥	S	♠Q	-650		
3	1NT	N	♥3	150	3	1♠	S	♦3	-140		
4	3♠	S	♣K	-100	4	1NT	W	♠2	120	1	
5	1NT	N	♣5	180	5	1NT	N	♦3	-180		
6	4♠	S	♣J	450	6	4♠	S	♥A	-450		
7	4♠	W	♣K	-620	7	4♠	W	♣K	620		
8	3NT	W	♠2	-400	8	1NT	E	♠Q	120		7
9	6♠	W	♦K	100	9	5♠	W	♦A	680	13	
10	4♦	S	♥7	-100	10	2♥	S	♦5	300	5	
11	4♠	S	♦2	420	11	4♠	S	♦2	-420		
12	3NT	S	♠7	630	12	3♦	N	♠K	-150	10	
13	4♠	N	♥9	680	13	4♠	S	♦K	-650	1	
14	3NT	N	♠J	-50	14	3♦	S	♠2	100	2	
					Total					32	11