

The deals for the recent Summer Party Sim Pairs competition contained a number of strong and distributional hands. It is never easy to judge accurately when the distribution is a bit wild but, on some of the less wild deals, accurate bidding kept you out of a non-making slam :

Board 5, dealer North

52
AKQJ5
AJ86
96

J3
7
KQ74
AKJ854

The bidding begins One Heart – Two Clubs – Two Diamonds. South might jump to Four Diamonds now ... but will partner treat this as absolutely forcing ? Another option is a fourth suit bid of Two Spades. North has a better hand than he has shown so far and there must be the values for a game contract if South is strong enough to make a fourth suit bid. After a 2-level response to an opening bid, it's a good idea to play a fourth suit bid by responder at his second turn as game-forcing. It just takes the pressure off and means that you don't have to worry about partner passing your next bid.

The full auction here might be : One Heart – Two Clubs – Two Diamonds – Two Spades – Three Hearts – Four Diamonds – Five Diamonds – End.

Board 14, dealer East

1094	QJ3
KJ72	AQ65
AK75	10
Q9	AKJ83

After One Club – One Diamond – One Heart, it's West to bid again. West has a perfectly good limit bid of Four Hearts, showing a hand of opening bid strength with four-card heart support. On this hand there is no need for West to use a fourth suit bid of One Spade with the intention of supporting hearts later on. East has a good hand for his bidding and might think about looking for a slam but there is a possibility of two quick losers in the unbid suit, spades. If East does bid Four No-Trumps, he will sign off in Five Hearts at his next turn.

Of the slam deals, a few were marginal and/or difficult to bid :

Board 4, dealer West

AQ642
A763
K6
107

K7
KQ
Q104
AKQ862

The bidding might begin One Spade – Two Clubs – Two Hearts. South is too strong to rebid Three No-trumps and uses a fourth suit bid next, Three Diamonds. North replies Three No Trumps and South might then invite slam by raising to Four No-Trumps (not Blackwood because no trump suit has been agreed). Alternatively, South might just blast Six No-Trumps and hope his club suit runs for six tricks.

If South begins by responding Three Clubs to North's opening bid, he will be struggling again after North's Three Hearts rebid. Three No-Trumps might be best (North will Pass), or even Four No-Trumps if North would take this as showing a strong (19-20) balanced hand. A jump to Six No-Trumps is very risky with no top card in diamonds.

Say the defence lead a heart against your contract of Six No-Trumps. How should you play ? Best is to win and lead a diamond to establish a certain diamond winner. Now, if the clubs split evenly, you have no problem. If the clubs don't split, you can try the spades and hope for an even split there. If so, you have twelve winners thanks to that established diamond trick.

Board 10, dealer East

762	KJ1083
QJ96543	AK
AKQ	108
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After One Spade – Two Hearts, East has a close choice between Three Clubs and Two No-trumps. Whichever he chooses, West will have to take a leap of faith at some point and hope that East can cover four of his major suit losers. Slam was made here when North held the queen of Spades. A very difficult hand to bid.

Board 11, dealer South

A94	Q2
Q8732	AK6
4	AK8765
A654	K3

East has an awkward opening bid. A strong Two Diamonds looks about right but many would begin with One Diamond. What next after partner responds One Heart ? A jump to Three Diamonds is not forcing, a jump raise to Three Hearts looks a bit strange with just three trumps and the hand looks a bit skewed for a rebid in No-Trumps. If East does rebid Three Diamonds, West will likely bid Three No-Trumps next which West will Pass. When this was played in one of the Adur valley clubs, E/W bid and made Six Hearts. Well done for that but it looks a little against the odds.