

Bob Whiting sent me details of an amazing deal played at Keymer on the 19th June. It was board 18, N/S were vulnerable, and the South players picked up this once-in-a-lifetime hand :

♠void  
♥void  
♦AKQ964  
♣AKQJ1073

East was the dealer and opened Three Spades. What would you bid as South ? Personally, I'd bid a straight Seven Clubs and forget about the diamond suit. It's hard to imagine a distribution that would play better in diamonds than in clubs. It's possible that you might have to lose a diamond trick but that is not going to stop me from jumping to a grand slam ! If you're lucky, West will hold an Ace or two and Double you rather than choosing to sacrifice in Seven Spades. Note that if West did decide to Double, you should resist the temptation to Redouble just in case East/West believe you and retreat to Seven Spades.

Partner (North) held :

♠Q9  
♥AK952  
♦108732  
♣4

The two missing diamonds were divided 1-1 and so Seven Clubs was unbeatable. Amazingly, only one pair bid the grand slam ... and they managed to go one down !

Now consider things from West's viewpoint :

♠K1042  
♥10763  
♦5  
♣8652

After a 3S-(7C) start, I think West should believe his vulnerable opponent and sacrifice in Seven Spades. This would go down four, Doubled, for -800, the par score on the board (ie the result assuming both sides have done as well as possible in bidding and play).

At one table, South decided on a more crafty approach. Perhaps hoping to be 'pushed' into bidding Seven Clubs later in the auction and getting Doubled, he began with a quiet Four Clubs overcall. There was no further bidding.

Back at Shoreham, a number of declarers had to play this trump suit combination for no loser. The lead was in dummy, and this was the last time declarer would be leading from dummy :

10 2 (dummy)

A K J 6 4 3

When you are missing five cards, taking the finesse is better than laying down the Ace and King, hoping the Queen will be doubleton. So, does it matter which card you lead from dummy ?

If second hand has Qxx it doesn't matter which card you lead - you will finesse successfully and avoid losing a trick. What if the suit is split 4-1, with second hand having Qxxx ?

Against us, declarer led dummy's 10, intending to let it run if second hand played low. The problem here is that if second hand holds Q875 or Q987 he will surely cover with the Queen, promoting one of his intermediate cards into a sure trick. And if you lead the 2, intending to finesse the Jack, you will lose a trick to the Queen later on if second hand started with Qxxx.

However, there is one distribution where leading the 2 wins and leading the 10 loses, and today the cards had found it :

10 2	
9 8 7 5	Q
A K J 6 4 3	

When you lead the 2, second hand's Queen appears. Now you can win, cross back to dummy's 10, enter your hand in another suit and complete the drawing of West's trumps. When our declarer chose to lead the 10, he couldn't avoid losing a later trick to West's 9.

Enjoy your bridge !