

# Board of the Week 35

By Dick Chapman

It's time for a review. You have been reading my occasional articles about interesting hands, right?

You sit West, playing in a casual BBO pairs game (scored at imps). Your side is vulnerable, theirs is not. Your hand:

♠KQ75 ♥K107 ♦A10863 ♣3

In second seat, partner opens 2 clubs. Wow, you are thinking slam from the beginning. 2 diamonds. 2NT by partner, which by agreement is 22-24 balanced. Next?

Much depends on system. Your partnership is using 5-card Stayman ("puppet Stayman") over 2NT calls. Yes, opener could still have a five card major in this auction. So, 3 clubs by you.

Partner: 3 diamonds ("I have no five card major but do have a four card major"). You stick with system: 3 hearts by you says "I don't have both majors, and my major is spades"). Partner obliges with a call of 4 spades. 3NT by partner would show four hearts and not four spades.

Now what? 4NT is key cards for the known fit. You hear 5 diamonds, which in your system is 3 or 0 key cards. Guess which? Ha, ha, just kidding.

Well, you know you are getting to 6 spades. It's easy to blast 6 right now. The old adage is to not bid the grand when playing for imps unless it's almost a certainty. Up in the mid-90% range, in fact. You don't want to overly risk 1530 (lose the potential 1430 for making 6 and another 100 for being down 1 in the grand) to gain an extra 750 (2210 for bidding the grand vs. 1460 for bidding 6 and making 7). But you have plenty of time to stop at 6. Why not explore just a little more?

In your methods, 5NT asks for specific kings, so try that. The answer partner provides is 6 clubs.

Now it's time for the test. What is your next call? Don't go reading your notes, friends. The answer is in Board of the Week 32, but don't look. Just make a call.

(Music playing while you think)

Ready? I'm putting the answer on the next page rather than the next column, so you won't accidentally see it as you read the first part of this article. Make your call, then turn the page.

Remember your hand:

♠KQ75 ♥K107 ♦A10863 ♣3

Partner has 3 key cards. You have 2 plus the queen of trump. Partner has opened 2 clubs and the points have to be somewhere.

The correct call is six diamonds. Recall from the prior article: after specific kings, a call of 6 of a suit lower than trump says “bid the grand slam of our suit if you have the king of the suit I’m bidding, otherwise bid 6 of our suit.”

Partner does hold the king of diamonds and obligingly bids 7 spades. The contract makes easily on this layout:

	♠J6 ♥J964 ♦J975 ♣542	
♠KQ75 ♥K107 ♦A10863 ♣3	V: EW D: N	♠A1083 ♥A ♦KQ2 ♣AKQJ7
	♠942 ♥Q8532 ♦4 ♣10986	

Stop here and ask yourself what error East made. It wasn’t terrible, but it was indeed an error.

It was not the 2NT rebid. A call of 2NT after 2♣ – 2♦ “promises” a balanced 22-24, and that’s not what opener had. But sit East and make a second call in this auction. Nothing you say is going to be right. 3 clubs doesn’t do this hand justice. If you call 3 clubs, think of the problems responder is going to have finding a spade fit if there is one. Eventually you will play 3NT by one side or the other, and you will miss any spade fit there is. Yes, when you bid 2NT, partner will very likely transfer to hearts, but you will get another chance to push it back to no trump if you have to.

So that’s not the mistake. What was it?

It was bidding 7 spades. Just like Bill J. did in Board of the Week 32, East should bid 7NT. Sure, you have a stiff heart, but look at those clubs. Because partner is looking for the diamond king for the spade grand, you know the following:

- You have all the key cards
- Partner has the spade queen
- Partner has the heart king

With that information, don’t you want to push to 7NT? Yes, you do.

In the actual case, the auction was less sophisticated than what I have related (see next column).

I held the East cards and opened 2 clubs. 2 diamonds by West, 2NT by me, 3 clubs by West. We are not playing 5-card Stayman, so 3 spades by me. 4NT by West, 5 clubs by me (playing Roman Key Card but not 1430, I was showing 3 key cards). There was no king-ask; West blasted 7 spades and I passed. I did consider 7NT but didn’t think a BBO-rated 7 spades would be much different on the traveler. In a pairs game scored at matchpoints? I’m not sure.

Bidding 6 of the missing king as an asking call is standard expert, but most BBO casual players aren’t experts. Not one of the pairs used this method. In the typical BBO field of 16 pairs, here is the traveler:

Number	Contract	Result	Score	Imps
1	7NT	7	2220	12.27
3	7♠	7	2210	12.07
1	6NT	7	1470	3.00
2	6♠	7	1460	2.67
1	6NT	6	1440	2.20
1	6♣	7	1390	1.60
2	3NT	7	720	-8.27
3	4♠	7	710	-8.60
2	3NT	6	690	-9.13

Even given the nature of BBO play, you have to wonder how 7 pairs missed slam with these cards. Notice also that three pairs worked hard to abandon a winning fifth club in order to lose a diamond. Just cashing high cards brings in the first 14 of the 13 tricks: 4 spades, 2 hearts, 3 diamonds, and 5 clubs.

In casual BBO play, your opponents are usually not regular partners. It’s a good place to spend an evening hour or so, and to practice methods, but good scores mean nothing. Come to the club where your opponents know how to play bridge. Even more important: they are your friends.

See you at the table.