

Interesting hand 9 : Board 20 Friday 7th April (Soberton Shield)

This week saw the first hands dealt by our new Dealing Machine. A number of interesting hands were played on Friday evening in the Soberton Shield, a teams event.

West has a straightforward opener with 1NT. N is equally easy and he will pass. The interest in the hand attaches to E. he has only 6 HCPs but two 5 card majors and a surprising LTC of only 7. A good illustration of the power of shape. The pair are hovering around 20 HCPs as E sees it and 1NT is not attractive.

Dlr: West	♠ Q 3	♠ J 7 6 5 2
Vul: All	♥ 8 4 3	♥ K Q 10 6 5
	♦ 10 7 6	♦ 3
	♣ A 10 7 5 4	♣ 9 8
♠ 9 8	WEST	♠ A K 10 4
♥ A 9 2		♥ J 7
♦ K Q J 8		♦ A 9 5 4 2
♣ Q J 6 3		♣ K 2

With a strong hand and two 5 card majors one would expect E to transfer into hearts (by bidding 2Ds) and then rebid in 2S or, even stronger, to transfer into spades and then rebid 3Hs. However, this E does not have that strength and it is unlikely that a game is on. The LTC of a 1NT is assumed to be 8 as the balanced shape of the hand increases the losers.

Normally a Stayman 2Cs will require a hand with some chance of a game provided the fit is found. However, here it seems a good bid! With 5:4 in the majors and a poor hand one would expect a Stayman 2Cs with the intention of bidding the 5 card suit after a diamond response (2Ds). Such a sequence would be weak but adds the chance of a 4:4 fit in the other major to the transfer.

There seems no good reason why the same strategy should not apply to a weak hand with two 5 card majors but with one added bonus. Let us assume that E bids 2Cs and W gives a positive reply in either 2Hs or 2S. Now you have found a 9 card fit! E may well now begin to feel the value of his shape and consider the prospect of the unlikely game. The LTC suggests 9 tricks will make and to bid 3 of the major is to get to the "level of the fit". The raise has merit and ought to be safe.

Again this is not where we are, as W will reply 2Ds leaving E to drop into his stronger major by bidding 2Hs. This should be passed. The hand analysis shows that the contract will go one off. However, there are problems here for the defence and a failure to take the club winners may even allow declarer to make 10 tricks! If you look at the N and S hands a club lead by either is unattractive. In a teams' event some pairs may be ambitious enough (or have a bidding misunderstanding!) to end up in 4Hs and make it! Such is life.

Team bridge is an exciting and interesting form of the game.