Instructive Hands Part Two

♠ A K Q J 8 ♥ 7 ♦ K 5 ♣ J 8 7 4 2	
♠ 6 ♥ Q J 8 2 ♦ Q 10 8 6 3 ♣ 9 6 3	♠ 10 9 4 2 ♥ A K 6 5 ♦ A 9 7 ♣ 10 5
♠ 7 5 3 ♥ 10 9 4 3 ♦ J 4 2 ♣ A K Q	

Board 1 : Dealer North : Love all

West	*North*	*East*	*South*
	1♠	Pass	2♣ (1)
Pass	3♣	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♠	All pass	

1 *See text*

South has the one shape where it is right to make a 2level change of suit response in a 3card suit. The hand is too strong for 2♠; lacks a fourth spade for a 3♠ bid; and 2♥ would promise 5+hearts. It is a temporising bid. When partner raises clubs he implies 5+spades so South can now show that the partnership has arrived in an 8card fit.

East cashes ♥A on which West will show encouragement, usually playing ♥8 but those playing "low likes" will play ♥2. East plays a second heart, ruffed in the North hand. A complacent declarer will think "Easy. Provided both the spades and the clubs don't break 5-0 I have at least ten tricks – five spades and five clubs." The 4-1 spade break, however, creates a complication. If declarer draws all the opponents' trumps he can cash dummy's three club winners but how does he get back to hand to enjoy the other two club tricks? He could play a diamond but even if West holds ♦A (so ♦K is both a winner and the entry to the North hand's clubs) the defence can win the first round of diamonds and cash winning hearts.

The solution is as follows : once the trumps are known to be 4-1 declarer should cash two rounds of trumps before cashing two clubs (hoping for a 3-2 club break). Now he comes back to the North hand to draw East's remaining trumps. On the fourth spade he throws the blocking ♣Q. Now three clubs can be cashed in the North hand and the game is successful.

♠ J 9 7 5 ♥ Q 9 5 2 ♦ K 7 5 ♣ Q 5	
♠ K 8 4 ♥ K 6 3 ♦ A J 10 8 ♣ 8 4 3	♠ A Q 3 ♥ A 10 8 ♦ Q 9 6 3 ♣ K J 9
♠ 10 6 2 ♥ J 7 4 ♦ 4 2 ♣ A 10 7 6 2	

Board 2 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable

West	*North*	*East*	*South*
		1♦	Pass
3♦ (1)	Pass	3N	All pass

1 *10-12, 4+diamonds (and no 4card major, else bid it) ("limit raise")*

East was anticipating rebidding 1N, had partner responded 1-of-a-major, to show a balanced 15-16 hand. When West jumps to 3♦ he has sufficient to bid game. It's good that East has stops in all three side suits too.

South leads a fourth best ♣6 on which North plays ♣Q and East takes the king. NO! Instead East thinks. The lead has given declarer a guaranteed club trick. There are three spade winners, two in hearts and three or four in diamonds (depending on whether the diamond finesse, which can be repeated, is successful). That means there are nine or ten winners. But what can go wrong? Let's say the diamond finesse is wrong. North wins ♦K and plays a second club. With South holding five clubs declarer will lose one diamond and four clubs. The contract fails.

How can East avoid this fate? By thinking more about the club suit. If the club suit breaks 4-3 there's no problem as declarer can now only lose one diamond (at worst) and three clubs. But what if the clubs are 5-2? This is quite possible. From the Rule of Eleven, applicable whenever a defender makes a fourth best lead, declarer knows that North has only one card higher than ♣6 (11 – 6 = 5 and declarer has 4 of those cards in his hand or dummy's). That card is ♣Q. That places South with both ♣A and ♣10. Now if North plays back a second club declarer cannot even guess successfully whether to play ♣9 or ♣J.

The solution is to realise that, once North plays the queen of clubs, the king and the knave are equals and, between them, will always take a trick. Declarer can duck ♣Q. When a second club is played, one of these cards is played with impunity. There is always a club winner. When the club suit does break 5-2 the communication between North and South is broken. North is in no position to lead a third club (and, to re-state, if he could play a third round the suit is breaking kindly for declarer).

Stamford Bridge Club
Wednesday Workshop
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♠ 9 6 5 3 ♥ 8 6 4 ♦ A K Q 7 3 2 ♣ - VOID -	
♠ A 10 8 7 ♥ 10 3 ♦ 10 9 8 5 ♣ K 9 8	♠ Q 4 2 ♥ Q J 9 7 ♦ J ♣ J 10 7 4 2
♠ K J ♥ A K 5 2 ♦ 6 4 ♣ A Q 6 5 3	

Board 3 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
			1♣
Pass	1♦	Pass	1♥
Pass	3♦	Pass	3N
All pass			

When South bids 1♥ he shows an unbalanced hand in that the bid promises both 5+clubs and 4+hearts (or, occasionally 4441 shape with a singleton diamond). North has just nine high card points but these are working together so the hand is worth an invitational jump to 3♦ (usually defined as 10-12hcps with a six card, or longer, suit). South, with something useful (if not too robust) in spades, tries 3N which becomes the final contract.

Let's say West leads a spade. That's quite helpful for declarer as it guarantees a trick in the suit. Declarer will have seven top winners (one spade, two hearts, three diamonds and a club). The diamond suit offers the chance of making extra tricks. If the suit breaks 3-2 there are ten tricks (courtesy of six diamond winners) but what happens if the diamonds break 4-1? Now if declarer cashes the three top diamonds it's too late to recover. Declarer will have cut off his communication from his diamond winners as there is no entry in the North hand. To circumvent this problem declarer should duck the first round of diamonds. The defence may play on spades but the suit is distributed such that declarer can come to no harm. Declarer has made a safety play whereby he's guaranteed making the contract with one spade, two heart, five diamond and one club winners. Had the diamonds broken 3-2 he would have "squandered" a diamond trick in the interest of the contract's safety.

This is a hand you'd rather play at teams where the overriding objective is to make the contract. Playing matchpoints creates a difficulty as the strategy is to take as many tricks as possible in obvious contracts. A 3-2 break occurs 68% of the time. A 4-1 break 28%. Do we play safely knowing that two thirds of the time it's wrong to be so pessimistic? Decisions, decisions.

♠ 9 3 2 ♥ J 10 8 5 4 ♦ 3 2 ♣ K 7 6	
♠ 5 ♥ A K Q ♦ A K Q J 7 5 4 ♣ A 10	♠ A Q 10 6 4 ♥ - VOID - ♦ 10 9 8 ♣ Q J 8 5 2
♠ K J 8 7 ♥ 9 7 6 3 2 ♦ 6 ♣ 9 4 3	

Board 4 : Dealer West : All vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
2♦ (1)	Pass	2♥ (2)	Pass
3♦	Pass	4♦	Pass
4N(3)	Pass	5♣ (4)	Pass
5N(5)	Pass	6♣(6)	Pass
6♦	All pass		

1 *Any game force or a balanced 23-24* **2** *Relay* **3** *Roman Key Card Blackwood ("RKCB")* **4** *1 (or 4) of the 5 "aces"* **5** *Do you have any side suit kings?* **6** *No (response shows 0)*

This is a very solid contract and always has twelve tricks (one spade, three hearts, seven diamonds and a club). The question is what is the best way to make the overtrick. Superficially we could take a spade finesse of the queen and dispose of the club loser (♣10) or we could avoid that same loser by finessing in the club suit. But there is a better way and that's to combine our chances. We need to see that the spade suit offers promise of promoting a trick. If the suit breaks 4-3 we can ruff out the suit and the fifth spade becomes a winner. Whilst doing that we may already find ♠K falling in two or three rounds thereby making the queen a winner.

Let's say North leads ♥J. We win in the West hand and play a spade to the ace and ruff a spade. Crucially, to overcome a trump suit blockage to reach dummy, we must ruff with one of our high (AKQJ) diamonds. We play a diamond to dummy and take a second spade ruff in the West hand (high ruff again). We now know we are safe. We haven't seen ♠K yet but know the spades *are* breaking 4-3. We draw the second trump by playing a low diamond to dummy and ruff another spade (high again). Now we have promoted ♠Q. We still have a small trump in the West hand to play and cross to dummy. We cash ♠Q and register our well-deserved overtrick.

Had North led a trump the play would have been more difficult. Now we can try to ruff out the king of spades but will only be able to ruff twice in the West hand. If ♠K hasn't fallen we'll cross to dummy (for the last time) to take a club finesse. That fails so the trump lead holds West to twelve tricks. That lead turns out to be a great lead.

You may have noticed that playing in no trumps is more profitable. There's no overtrick now but plus 1,440 beats the diamond scores of plus 1,370/1,390. Perhaps, though, you reached 7♦ and now you must play as above (and hope a trump isn't led).

	♠ AK9 ♥ A105 ♦ KQ3 ♣ A542	
♠ Q1086 ♥ 32 ♦ A98 ♣ K1087		♠ 7532 ♥ K8764 ♦ 54 ♣ J9
	♠ J4 ♥ QJ9 ♦ J10762 ♣ Q63	

Board 5 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
	2N(1)	Pass	3N

All pass

1 *19-20, balanced*

The obvious spot reached very quickly. East will probably lead a fourth best ♥6 (yes, East has an interior heart sequence but sequence leads are only made with cards of 10 9 ... or better). Declarer plays ♥Q from dummy which holds the trick. That happened so quickly that declarer didn't realise that he's about to book himself a negative score. What happens subsequently? Declarer counts his top winners – five, with two spades, two hearts (now) and a club. The source of the extra tricks is diamonds. Declarer plays a diamond to hand, playing ♦K. On this card East plays a count signal, ♦5, a card that is the start of showing his doubleton in high-low fashion. When North continues with an unblocking ♦Q East shows that doubleton with ♦4. West has been eagle-eyed and noticed partner's plays. He realises that partner has shown the doubleton so declarer has a third diamond. If he takes the second diamond, declarer can reach and enjoy three further diamonds. He ducks the second diamond and now the dummy is useless (West is sitting with useful black cards over dummy's holdings too). West has cut declarer's communication. Declarer may clear the third diamond and try to get to dummy in the heart suit. The defence is alert though. When a heart is played towards dummy East plays ♥K. With North starting with three hearts there's no small heart card with which dummy can be reached.

Declarer can overcome the communication problem by the simple expedient of winning the first heart with the ace! The combination of cards in dummy (shades of East's clubs on Board 2) means that declarer can always force an entry to table. He can play the diamonds and West can hold up the ace but declarer can now clear the suit knowing that ♥QJ will allow the diamonds to be cashed. When a heart is played towards dummy East has two unenviable choices. He ducks ♥K - declarer has an immediate entry; or he takes the king of hearts - the entry is created for the next play of a heart.

	♠ 764 ♥ 9754 ♦ J1074 ♣ Q3	
♠ A952 ♥ J863 ♦ AKQ9 ♣ 9		♠ KQJ103 ♥ K10 ♦ 82 ♣ AK65
	♠ 8 ♥ AQ2 ♦ 653 ♣ J108742	

Board 6 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
		1♠	Pass
2N(1)	Pass	3♣(2)	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♣(3)	Pass
4♦(3)	Pass	4N(4)	Pass
5♥(5)	Pass	6♠	All pass

1 *4+spades, game forcing ("Jacoby")* **2** *Natural* **3** *Ace-showing cue bid* **4** *RKCB* **5** *2 of the 5 "aces" without the queen of trumps*

A good auction using some modern tools – Jacoby, cue bids, RKCB – to reach a very good small slam. South leads a top-of-a-sequence ♣J. Declarer plays quickly. He takes the lead, draws three rounds of trumps, cashes three diamonds (throwing one club loser on the third) and ruffs a diamond to hand. Now he ruff the last club loser and plays a heart from the table. He guesses to play ♥10 (when North pays a low card) but that loses to the queen. South cashes the ace of hearts. East bemoans his bad luck.

Bad luck? Not really. Declarer didn't give himself the best chance of making the contract. He should have made a more rigorous plan. He can count a potential four losers in his hand (two clubs and two hearts). With dummy holding a singleton club, the two club losers can be ruffed there. We're down to just two losers, in hearts. The diamond suit has a surplus winner (i.e. one hand has one more winner than the number of cards held in the other hand). The third diamond winner can be used to throw a heart loser. Now we have only one loser and the slam is assured. Well almost. We know what we'll do. We win the opening club lead, cash the second club and ruff a third round high (with ♠9). Now we play a trump to hand and ruff the fourth club high again (♠A). We get back to hand with dummy's last trump. We draw the third round of trumps and play the three winning diamonds.

Had declarer carelessly ruff the third club low North would have overruffed. The heart return would have meant a two-trick defeat.

♠ 9 6 3 ♥ K J 8 ♦ K 9 ♣ J 10 6 3 2 ♠ K 8 7 5 4 ♠ A 2 ♥ 7 6 2 ♥ 10 5 4 3 ♦ J 10 5 2 ♦ Q 8 7 6 ♣K ♣ 8 5 4 ♠ Q J 10 ♥ A Q 9 ♦ A 4 3 ♣ A Q 9 7	Board 7 : Dealer South : All vulnerable ***West*** ***North*** ***East*** ***South*** 2N(1) Pass 3N All pass **1** *19-20, balanced* West leads a fourth-best-from-a-broken-suit ♠5. East wins with the ace and returns his second spade. West wins and plays a third round, clearing the suit. Declarer can count seven top tricks (one spade, three hearts, two diamonds and a club). The only source of extra tricks is the club suit. Declarer can certainly make four or five clubs by taking one or more finesses against ♣K. Unfortunately he knows that if he takes this finesse and it loses to West, that hand will cash another two tricks to defeat the game (four spades and a club). West is the danger hand which means we must avoid at all costs giving that hand the lead. Declarer realises that, with six top tricks outside the club suit, he only needs three clubs to bring in his contract. Whilst he'll always make a fourth club he doesn't mind giving up one potential winner in the interest of safety. He knows that if West has the guarded king of clubs (i.e. it is supported by at least one other card) he is doomed. He can do nothing about that but what about protecting against West having the singleton ♣K? Yes, we'll play a club to … the ace. Success. The king falls. We've done all we can to keep West off lead and have been handsomely rewarded for our forethought.

♠ 9 8 5 4 2 ♥ 5 ♦ Q 8 7 3 2 ♣ 4 3 ♠ K J 6 ♠ Q 10 7 ♥ K J 9 7 ♥ A Q 4 3 2 ♦ K J 9 ♦ A 10 5 ♣ 10 9 6 ♣ J 2 ♠ A 3 ♥ 10 8 6 ♦ 6 4 ♣ A K Q 8 7 5	Board 8 : Dealer West : Love all ***West*** ***North*** ***East*** ***South*** 1N(1) Pass 2♦(2) 3♣ 3♥(3) Pass 4♥ All pass **1** *12-14* **2** *Transfer showing 5+hearts* **3** *Supporting with support* West follows the useful dictum of "supporting with support". Sometimes this "backfires" in that 3♥ won't make opposite a poor responding hand. In such circumstances, though, the opponents may have had a good, making contract out of which we've taken them. Here, of course, East has a good hand and the heart game is reached. North leads an obedient ♣4 and South can safely play three rounds of the suit, declarer ruffing the third in the East hand. Trumps can be drawn in three rounds and declarer now plays on spades. After ♠A has been taken declarer can play a third round after which West has lots of thoroughly useful information. At the start of the hand he knew that he had three clear losers (two clubs and a spade) and that the only other potential loser was in diamonds. The diamond suit (holding both the knave and the ten) affords declarer a chance of taking a finesse against ♦Q in either direction, i.e. a two-way finesse. That's a toss of a coin decision. But we can do better than that because of what the hand has revealed. The play has been an exercise in discovery. North has shown out on the third round of clubs. South has shown out on the third round of spades. North has one trump, South three. We know both opponents' distribution. We now know South has six clubs, three hearts and two spades. He thus has two diamonds to bring his total to thirteen cards. Similarly North has five spades, one heart and two clubs. That gives him five diamonds. We thought we'd have to guess how to play the diamonds. Now that we know North has five of them and South two, the odds are 5:2 that North has any specific diamond we care to nominate (OK, not those by East and West). That means that it's 5:2 that North has the queen of diamonds. We should finesse against North holding the diamond queen. North *does* have the diamond queen and we will make our game. We would have been very unlucky if South held that card in his doubleton. We would have failed and virtue would have been our sole consolation. We would have played the contract perfectly and failed.

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