

NORTH
WEST 26 Dealer
SOUTH

Bath Replays

13 Strong and shapely

Board 26. Tuesday March 29, 2007

How do you bid a strong distributional hand? I had to make a judgment when I picked up the West hand shown below. It was game all, and my partner was dealer.

	<p>♠ QJ1085</p> <p>♥ 1072</p> <p>♦ Q9</p> <p>♣ 975</p>	
<p>♠ A42</p> <p>♥ KQJ82</p> <p>♦ -</p> <p>♣ AKJ106</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"> NORTH WEST 26 Dealer SOUTH </div>	<p>♠ 73</p> <p>♥ A95</p> <p>♦ 10653</p> <p>♣ 8432</p>
	<p>♠ K96</p> <p>♥ 64</p> <p>♦ AKJ8742</p> <p>♣ Q</p>	

<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>
Pass	1♦	1♥	Pass
Pass	2♦	3♣	3♦
3♥	Pass	6♣	All pass

A review of the auction:

South's diamond opening is sound, but what should you do with that West hand? Many would opt to double first with support in three suits, or use some form of two-suited overcall. I opted for a simpler approach in an attempt to show both suits and get the power of the hand across. It's unlikely that the heart overcall would be passed out with a diamond void and spade shortage. North and East passed, and South was there with 2♦. I didn't want to jump in clubs in case partner's hand was truly awful and a part score was the limit; I can catch up later if necessary. North raised diamonds ... and East showed preference with 3♥.

It is the 3♥ bid that makes bidding the slam possible. If East had nothing, he would pass 3♦. The fact that he's made a free bid suggests some meagre working values opposite. I then decided it was time to do some catching up after faffing around and offer a choice of slam contracts. As you can see, 6♣ is an excellent contract. If the clubs are 2-2 you'll make seven (you can discard dummy's spades on the hearts), whereas the heart slam only has twelve tricks max.

What can we learn from this hand?

1. If you have a strong two-suited hand, it's not always best to double first. The opponents may bounce the auction and make it difficult for you to show the strength of the hand, and get your suits into the auction. The same applies if you use a two-suited overcall (the blunderbuss approach): you may never get across the strength and quality of your suits at an economical level.
2. East is under no obligation to express any form of preference unless he has something useful for partner, in this case the heart Ace.
3. Take-out doubles are best used on balanced hands with a shortage in the opener's suit, strong balanced hands and strong hands with a long suit.

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