

Achilles Heal Thyself!

North Deals
None Vul

| | | |
|---------------|--|--------------|
| ♠ 4 3 2 | ♠ A K Q 10 9 | ♠ 8 |
| ♥ J 9 7 5 4 2 | ♥ — | ♥ K Q 8 6 |
| ♦ 9 8 | ♦ Q 7 6 4 | ♦ A J 10 3 2 |
| ♣ 10 8 | ♣ K J 6 4 | ♣ 5 3 2 |
| | <div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin: 5px;"> W N E S </div> | |
| | ♠ J 7 6 5 | |
| | ♥ A 10 3 | |
| | ♦ K 5 | |
| | ♣ A Q 9 7 | |

| | | | |
|--------------|--------------------------------|------|----------------------------|
| West | North <i>Peter Weischel</i> | East | South <i>Bob Hamman</i> |
| | 1 ♠ | 2 ♦ | 3 ♥ |
| All pass | | | |
| 3 ♥ by South | | | |

Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen and welcome to this - the 33rd Session of "Shark's Pointers Online". I hope you all had a great Thanksgiving! Thanks for joining me this morning.

The other night I kibitzed a couple of hands where many time World Champions Bob Hamman and Peter Weischel played against a strong Swedish pair.

This was the first. Peter opened the North hand 1 ♠, East overcalled 2 ♦, and Bob bid 3 ♥ which he self-alerted as a 4 card limit raise or better in spades. Well, even the great ones falter, and Peter completely forgot their agreement and passed! Down 4 in 3 ♥, while 6 ♠ is making!

Here was the very next hand....

Achilles Heal Thyself!

South Deals
E-W Vul

| | | |
|-----------|---|-------------|
| ♠ A K J 7 | ♠ 5 4 3 | ♠ 10 9 2 |
| ♥ 3 2 | ♥ Q 9 7 | ♥ A |
| ♦ K Q J 9 | ♦ 7 5 2 | ♦ A 10 8 3 |
| ♣ Q 8 5 | ♣ A K 10 9 | ♣ J 7 6 3 2 |
| | <div style="display: inline-block; background-color: green; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin: 5px;"> N W E S </div> | |
| | ♠ Q 8 6 | |
| | ♥ K J 10 8 6 5 4 | |
| | ♦ 6 4 | |
| | ♣ 4 | |

| West | North <i>Weischel</i> | East | South <i>Hamman</i> |
|------|--------------------------|------|------------------------|
| | | | 3 ♥ |
| Dbl | 5 ♣ | Dbl | Pass |
| Pass | 5 ♥ | | |

This was the very next hand - and once again, Bob Hamman's only bid was 3 ♥!

Bob Hamman opened 3 ♥ in first seat at favorable, West doubled and Peter bid 5 ♣, which he self-alerted as a lead directional raise in hearts. East doubled, and Peter bid 5 ♥ when the auction came around to him. Now, I was counting the defenders' tricks against 5 ♥X - 3 ♠, 1 ♥, 2 ♦, 1 ♣.

Down 5 1100! against a thin 4 ♠ or 3 NT that happen to make because of a friendly location of the spade suit. Wow! Was this pair off to a great start! But something strange happened. East went into the tank over the 5 ♥ call. He thought and thought and thought. Finally, his partner wrote, "It's your bid!". Now, instead of doubling, East bid 6 ♣! What the heck just happened?

Weischel didn't take any chances and calmly passed when 6 ♣ came around to him. +200 instead of -1100 is a pretty good result.

So, what happened here? Why did our East player, immediately after getting a huge gift, decided to give it right back! What prompted him to lose his mind?

Hold that thought. Before we address what happened here, let's time a few minutes to go over some of the major points I have been stressing over the years.

Achilles Heal Thyself!

South Deals
E-W Vul

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

| | | | | |
|--|------|-----------------|------|---------------|
| | West | North | East | South |
| | | <i>Weischel</i> | | <i>Hamman</i> |
| | | | | 3 ♥ |
| | Dbl | 5 ♣ | Dbl | Pass |
| | Pass | 5 ♥ | 6 ♣ | All pass |

6 ♣ by East

I'm sure that during his long hesitation, the Swedish player had conjured up the following hand for his partner...

For many years, I have told you to watch out for the Fear Factor. Hamman and Weischel are such incredible players, that they scare the bejesus out of almost everyone. Recently, I told you how proud I was of one of my regular partners, Andrew Chesterton, when he scored up two successive 5 ♦ X contracts against this very pair.

It seems clear to me that the reason the Swedish player made what in retrospect was totally nuts was that he was obviously intimidated by Weischel and Hamman - despite their providing on the very previous deal just how very human they really are. When he sees what this Swedish expert did on the second deal, Andrew should feel especially proud that he didn't allow fear to affect his bidding and play against these great players!

Achilles Heal Thyself!

Matchpoints
East Deals
N-S Vul



♠ A
♥ K 7 6 5 4
♦ K Q 9 3 2
♣ K Q

| <i>West</i> | <i>North</i> | <i>East</i> | <i>South</i> |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| | | Pass | 1 ♥ |
| Pass | 1 ♠ | Pass | 2 ♦ |
| Pass | 2 ♥ | Pass | ? |

The two hands I have shown stirred the thought process that helped generate today's topic.

I'm sure you have all heard of the quotation, "Physician, Heal Thyself" that some have interpreted as an admonition to address one's one shortcomings before being critical of others. You've also heard of the famous mythological Greek warrior Achilles. In Homer's Iliad he is described as the son of a mortal father and a Goddess. Achilles' only weakness was in his heel - the one area his mother had held on to tightly as she dipped him as an infant into the River Styx to try to make him immortal.

Today, we are combining these two phrases to create today's somewhat obscure Shark's Pointers Online topic - "Achilles Heel Thyself!"

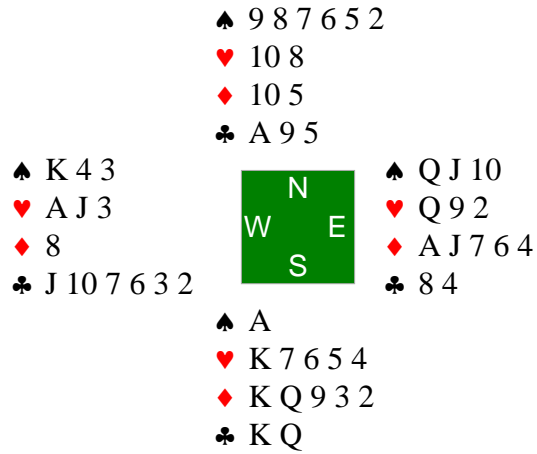
Let's look at several examples of Achilles Heels from my own game, so that I may hopefully avoid embarrassing any of my partners while helping me to "Heel Myself"

I am a chronic overbidder. You have heard me time and again state that when I die, my partners will say, "He finally passed!" Here's a good example...

I do have 17 HCP, but my hand was many flaws. My long suits are weak, I have a misfit with partner's spades, and my high cards are concentrated in my short suits. Partner could have bid 3 ♥ which would have been nonforcing and invitational, or 2 NT. All of these should have pointed to my passing. But, I have this Achilles Heel of overbidding and boy, did I overbid this time!

Achilles Heal Thyself!

Matchpoints
 East Deals
 N-S Vul



| <i>West</i> | <i>North</i> | <i>East</i> | <i>South</i> |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| | | Pass | 1 ♥ |
| Pass | 1 ♠ | Pass | 2 ♦ |
| Pass | 2 ♥ | Pass | 4 ♥ |
| All pass | | | |

4 ♥ by South

Following my rule of thumb to "bid what I hope to make", I bid 4 ♥! What a crazy bid! Somehow, the defense pitched 2 tricks to allow me to go down only 1. I scored 47% on the board. Had they defended better, I would have only scored 11%, and if I had passed and made 9 tricks, I would have scored somewhere between 90% and 95%!

The next hand I had to decide between an aggressive action and a conservative action...

Achilles Heal Thyself

IMPs
South Deals
None Vul



♠ 9 5 4
♥ 9
♦ A K 10 7 6 5
♣ 10 5 4

| <i>West</i> | <i>North</i> | <i>East</i> | <i>South</i> |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| | | | 2 ♦ |
| Pass | 2 NT | Pass | 3 ♥ |
| Dbf | Pass | Pass | 4 ♦ |
| Pass | 5 ♦ | Dbf | All pass |

5 ♦ × by South

After I opened 2D as dealer, partner asked me to further describe my hand by her 2 NT bid.

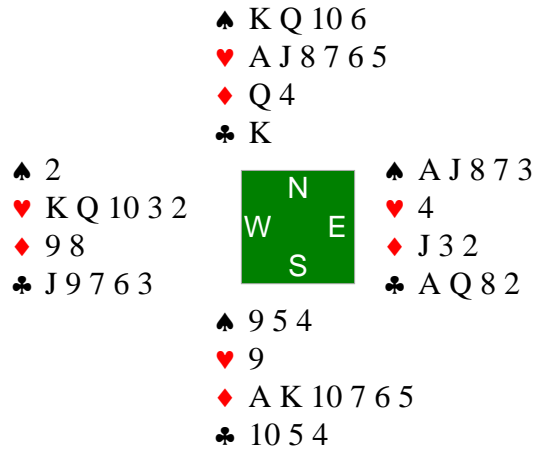
Our agreement with nonvulnerable weak two bids are as follows:

- 3 ♣ = any 5 card suit
- 3 ♦ = a minimum with a 6 card suit
- 3 ♥ = average strength weak 2 with a 6 card suit
- 3 ♠ = maximum with a 6 card suit
- 3 NT = AKJxxx (Would open 1 of suit non vul with AKQxxx)

So, playing this system, what would your rebid be? I think it is close between 3 ♦ and 3 ♥. With my aggressive tendency, of course I chose to bid 3 ♥ and that proved disastrous as we got to 5 ♦ which was promptly doubled and we went down 2 tricks. This was the full deal...

Achilles Heal Thyself

IMPs
 South Deals
 None Vul



| <i>West</i> | <i>North</i> | <i>East</i> | <i>South</i> |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| | | | 2 ♦ |
| Pass | 2 NT | Pass | 3 ♥ |
| Dbl | Pass | Pass | 4 ♦ |
| Pass | 5 ♦ | Dbl | All pass |

5 ♦ × by South

My partner on this occasion is very aggressive also, so in close decisions like this, I should start making it a rule to choose the more conservative option. 3 ♥ also is potentially problematic as it would require we play at the 4 level if we wanted to stay clear of NT.

Let's look at my third Achilles Heel - I frequently double for a one trick set - without a trump trick. Here's a recent example...

Achilles Heal Thyself

IMPs

East Deals

N-S Vul

♠ 10 6 5 4 2
 ♥ A J 9 8 3 2
 ♦ —
 ♣ A 3



♠ J 9 3
 ♥ K 6
 ♦ A 9 8 5
 ♣ Q 8 7 2

Opening Lead Q of ♦

| <i>West</i> | <i>North</i> | <i>East</i> | <i>South</i> |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| | | 1 NT | Pass |
| Pass | 2 ♣ | 2 ♦ | 2 ♠ |
| 3 ♦ | 4 ♠ | All pass | |

4 ♠ by South

East opens the bidding with a weak NT showing 12-14 HCP, and your partner balances with 2 ♣ which you alert as it shows the majors (♥ + ♠). Now East bids 2 ♦, 10 HCP, 3 spades to the J, and a fitting Kx of hearts. You certainly have all your values. Now West competes with 3 ♦, and your partner closes out the auction with his 4 ♠ bid. The Q of ♦ is led, so you pitch your small club loser from dummy as you win in hand with the A. Now you play K of ♥, and a heart to dummy's Ace - East's Q dropping on the second round. What is your plan?

Sure looks like the hand is cold if spades are 3-2, so you play a spade from dummy to your 9 and West's Ace. A diamond is continued which you ruff in dummy. Your play?

I suppose you will play a second spade from dummy hoping the suit will split 3-2, but when you play a second spade, East rises with the Q as West shows out!. East returns the K of ♠, and taps dummy with the K of diamonds, forcing you to ruff with dummy's last trump. The defenders still have a spade and a diamond to cash - down 2!

But here's what happened at my table...

Achilles Heal Thyself

IMPs

East Deals

N-S Vul

| | | |
|---------------|---|-------------|
| ♠ 10 6 5 4 2 | | ♠ K Q 8 7 |
| ♥ A J 9 8 3 2 | | ♥ Q 4 |
| ♦ — | | ♦ K 7 4 3 2 |
| ♣ A 3 | | ♣ K J |
| ♠ A | <div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black;"> N W E S </div> | ♠ J 9 3 |
| ♥ 10 7 5 | | ♥ K 6 |
| ♦ Q J 10 6 | | ♦ A 9 8 5 |
| ♣ 10 9 6 5 4 | | ♣ Q 8 7 2 |

Opening Lead Q of ♦

| <i>West</i> | <i>North</i> | <i>East</i> | <i>South</i> |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| | | 1 NT | Pass |
| Pass | 2 ♣ | 2 ♦ | 2 ♠ |
| 3 ♦ | 4 ♠ | Dbl | All pass |

4 ♠× by South

My double of 4 ♠ was the absolutely worst kind of double one could make. This double actually provides a roadmap to the opponents as to the only way to make the hand.

After winning the first ♦ in hand, and playing K and A of ♥, our declarer played the 2 of ♠ to his 9 and West's Ace. It was now clear to declarer that I held the missing trumps, so he just kept playing top hearts from dummy. I had no defense. I could only score my two high spades. Instead of being + 200 for 4S undoubled down 2, our score was -790 for 4 ♠X making 4.

I effectively shot myself in the foot- or more precisely in my Achilles Heel!

So these are some of my Achilles Heels. I certainly have more. Let's wrap up today's talk with a hand that is an excellent example of a very common Achilles Heel that we highlighted recently...

Achilles Heal Thyself

IMPs
 South Deals
 None Vul

♠ A J 7
 ♥ 8
 ♦ A K 10 9 2
 ♣ K J 7 3



♠ 9 8 6 4
 ♥ A K 7
 ♦ 7 5
 ♣ A Q 4 2

| <i>West</i> | <i>North</i> | <i>East</i> | <i>South</i> |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| | | | 1 ♣ |
| Pass | 2 ♦ | Pass | 2 ♠ |
| Pass | 3 ♣ | Pass | 3 NT |
| Pass | 4 ♣ | Pass | 4 ♥ |
| Pass | 4 ♠ | Pass | 5 ♣ |
| Pass | 6 ♣ | All pass | |

Opening Lead 10 of ♣

6 ♣ by South

North-South had a nice auction to get to 6 ♣. North's 2 ♦ bid was natural showing at least a King more than a game force. South checked back to see if there might be a 4-4 spade fit, and when North showed club support, South signed off in 3 NT with hearts doubly stopped. North made another try with 4 ♣, and South now cue bid 4 ♥, North cue bid 4 ♠, and South signed off in 5 ♣, which North raised to 6.

North won the K of clubs in dummy and played the A and K of diamonds. West followed with the 3 and 4 (playing standard count and attitude) and East following with the 6 and Q. What is your plan?

Achilles Heal Thyself

IMPs
South Deals
None Vul

| | | |
|--------------|---|----------------|
| ♠ A J 7 | | ♠ K Q |
| ♥ 8 | | ♥ Q J 10 9 4 2 |
| ♦ A K 10 9 2 | | ♦ Q 6 |
| ♣ K J 7 3 | | ♣ 9 6 5 |
| ♠ 10 5 3 2 | <div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black;"> N W E S </div> | |
| ♥ 6 5 3 | | |
| ♦ J 8 4 3 | | |
| ♣ 10 8 | | |
| ♠ 9 8 6 4 | | |
| ♥ A K 7 | | |
| ♦ 7 5 | | |
| ♣ A Q 4 2 | | |

| <i>West</i> | <i>North</i> | <i>East</i> | <i>South</i> |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| | | | 1 ♣ |
| Pass | 2 ♦ | Pass | 2 ♠ |
| Pass | 3 ♣ | Pass | 3 NT |
| Pass | 4 ♣ | Pass | 4 ♥ |
| Pass | 4 ♠ | Pass | 5 ♣ |
| Pass | 6 ♣ | All pass | |

Opening Lead 10 of ♣

6 ♣ by South

Here was the full hand...

If North had counted tricks, it would have been obvious that the 10 9 of diamonds could drive out the J, and North would be guaranteed 4 diamond tricks, 1 spade, 2 hearts, and 4 top clubs. If clubs split 3-2, an extra club trick could be developed after drawing 3 rounds of trumps. So 12 tricks would be easy on this hand, just by playing 2 more rounds of trumps ending in dummy and leading the 10 of diamonds, pitching a spade from hand. If a spade is returned, declarer would go up with the Ace, pitch 2 more spades on the 9 of diamonds and the fifth diamond. A of hearts, K of hearts pitching a spade from dummy, heart ruff and spade ruff. This is a classic example of "Counting Tricks and Removing Trump" - last week's Shark's Pointers topic.

Easy peasy, but declarer went down.

The two hands I showed at the beginning illustrate a very common Achilles Heel and an antidote-the Fear Factor - and a recognition that even the best players in the world make mistakes. As we celebrate this great holiday season and begin to think about our New Years resolutions, let's resolve to identify our own most common and recurrent Achilles Heels and begin to find ways to avoid and alleviate repeating them again and again. I hope you had a great Thanksgiving! See you next week!