

## Jumping Off The Diving Board

Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen!

Welcome to this - our 44th session of Shark's Pointers Online!

Before we get started, I just want to ask how many are joining us for the first time? Great! And how many are here as a result of a referral from NYC's Honors Bridge Club founder Jeff Bayonne ? Welcome! Let me take a few minutes to allow each of you to introduce yourselves.

I think the toughest bidding decisions we have to make involve those hands in which our side and our opponents are both known to have a big fit. Should we bid on? Will it be insane to "jump off the diving board to find out if there is any water in the pool?" There are many times in which you are damned if you do - and damned if you don't. Today, we are going to examine a few of these situations to try to discover if we can find some good lessons - or pointers that will guide our decisions in these very difficult - and not uncommon situations.

Today's Shark's Pointers Online is entitled - "Jumping Off The Diving Board"!

Our first hand was played online just a couple weeks ago and features a current and former New Yorker. Jared Lilienstein, who still lives in New York, has won the NABC+ Mixed Teams and, as some of you may know, has finished 2nd on two separate fairly recent occasions in the GNT Championship Flight representing New York's ACBL District 24. Jared's frequent online partner, is a guy named Lee Rautenberg, who now lives in Florida. Lee and I first met during our very first week at MIT in the fall of 1968! He, and a fellow New Yorker, Mike Radin, lived in the same frat house and the three of us were very close friends a year before I even started playing bridge!

An interesting thing about Lee is that he is not only a superb bridge player - having finished 2nd overall in the prestigious 2003 Vanderbilt - but he is also a professional bowler!

Let's look at our first hand....

## Jumping Off The Diving Board

IMPs  
EW Vul

♠ —  
♥ J 10 6 5 4 3  
♦ K 8  
♣ Q 10 7 4 3

West	North	East	South
	<i>Lee</i>		<i>Jared</i>
1 ♦	2 NT	4 ♠	5 ♥
5 ♠	?		

Lee's 2 NT bid showed a distributional 2 suiter with clubs and hearts. By the time Lee's next turn came around the bidding was already at the 5 level! What would you do?

Well, Lee jumped off the diving board - and he was right!

Let's look at the full deal...

## Jumping Off The Diving Board

West Deals  
E-W Vul

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

West	North	East	South
	<i>Lee</i>		<i>Jared</i>
1 ♦	2 NT	4 ♠	5 ♥
5 ♠	6 ♥	Dbl	All pass

6 ♥× by South

Lee bid 6H - which was doubled but only lost 3 tricks - the A and K of ♣, and the A of ♦. -300 for a big imp gain, as 5 ♠ was cold!

Lee had 3 things in his favor.

- 1) The vulnerability. Not vul vs vul, you can take a lot of liberties - especially at IMPS. Even -800 isn't a huge loss compared to -650.
- 2) He had a spade void. Voids are huge in these situations - and are frequently undervalued.
- 3) One of the big worries about diving is that you might drive the opps to a cold slam that might never otherwise be bid. Lee assumed he had a diamond trick and assumed his partner had a heart winner - or their side had a slow club trick. He might have been wrong, but the odds were on his side and the one pair that did drive on to 6 ♠ went down 1.

Now I want to go back in time to share a hand from the 1989 Men's Pairs in Reno, Nevada. First a little background. My partner, the late, great Charlie Coon, had been a bridge club pro in NYC's Cavendish Club for several years. He and I earned the right to represent New England (D25) in the NAP, but he had a date to play in what was still a National Men's Pairs with New York superstar Mike Moss. So, I was stuck without a partner. As game time approached, I was frantically running up and down the halls asking folks if they played bridge! A couple minutes before game time, I accosted a nice guy who said he was a dentist who played a couple times a week. We agreed to play. We got along fine and even made it to the final day.

## Jumping Off The Diving Board

Matchpoints  
NS Vul  
South Dlr

♠ K Q 7 6 5  
♥ —  
♦ K 10 6 5  
♣ Q J 8 2

West	North	East	South
<i>Kamil</i>	<i>The Dentist</i>	<i>Gerard</i>	<i>The Shark</i>
Pass	1 ♠	Dbl	1 ♣
3 ♥			Pass

Things were going well when upper New York state stars Ron Gerard and Mike Kamil (who would go on to win the prestigious Vanderbilt Teams together the very next Spring) came to our table.

I don't remember the first hand at all - except that we got all the matchpoints - 51 out of 51! This must have infuriated Ron Gerard when the 2nd hand was dealt....This was my partner's hand, and here was the actual bidding...

At this point, my partner asked "What is the meaning of the 3 ♥ bid?" Ron Gerard's lip curled as he sneered in a loud and angry voice, "IT'S BRIDGE!" My partner was quite offended by Ron's tone of voice and he called the director. In a few minutes a director came to the table and after hearing everything he explained to Ron that my partner was entitled to know their agreements. Ron's response really shocked me. He said, "GET ME A REAL DIRECTOR!!) Well after all this ruckus had settled down, the bidding continued as follows...

My new friend, the dentist, bid 4 ♣, Ron immediately bid 4 ♥, and now it was back to me...

## Jumping Off The Diving Board

Matchpoints  
NS Vul  
North Dlr

♠ K Q 7 6 5  
♥ —  
♦ K 10 6 5  
♣ Q J 8 2

West	North	East	South
<i>Kamil</i>	<i>The Dentist</i>	<i>Gerard</i>	<i>The Shark</i>
	Pass	Pass	1 ♣
Pass	1 ♠	Dbl	Pass
3 ♥	4 ♣	4 ♥	Dbl
Pass			

After processing all this, I looked at my hand, thought for a few seconds - not especially a long delay - and said "Double". Mike Kamil passed, and now my partner had to think. Should he "jump off the diving board?" Were we cold for a vulnerable game? Can 4 hearts actually make? After much thought, he decided our side had game and the opponents were at best going to have a cheap sacrifice, so in order to protect his K of ♦, he now bid 4 ♠.

## Jumping Off The Diving Board

Matchpoints  
NS Vul  
South Dir

♠ K Q 7 6 5  
♥ —  
♦ K 10 6 5  
♣ Q J 8 2

West	North	East	South
<i>Kamil</i>	<i>The Dentist</i>	<i>Gerard</i>	<i>The Shark</i>
			1 ♣
Pass	1 ♠	Dbl	Pass
3 ♥	4 ♣	4 ♥	Dbl
Pass	4 ♠	Dbl	5 ♣
Dbl	All pass		

Opening Lead 9 of ♦

5 ♣× by South

Immediately, Ron Gerard called for a director and said he wanted protection because of an alleged break in tempo. The director came and said to call him back if there was a problem.

Now Ron doubled. I bid 5 ♣, which Mike doubled, and this became the final contract.

Kamil led the 9 of ♦, and when the dummy hit, Ron Gerard exclaimed "Are you kidding me?". Looked like a pretty reasonable bid to me, but Ron's reaction was as if partner had nothing resembling his pull of the double.

Here was the full deal....

## Jumping Off The Diving Board

Matchpoints  
South Deals  
N-S Vul

	♠ K Q 7 6 5										
	♥ —										
	♦ K 10 6 5										
	♣ Q J 8 2										
♠ 8 2	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto; text-align: center; color: white;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 10 9 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ K J 9 7 3		♥ A 8 5 2									
♦ 9 2		♦ A 8 7 4 3									
♣ K 9 6 5		♣ —									
	♠ A 4										
	♥ Q 10 6 4										
	♦ Q J										
	♣ A 10 7 4 3										

West	North	East	South
<i>Kamil</i>	<i>The Dentist</i>	<i>Gerard</i>	<i>The Shark</i>
			1 ♣
Pass	1 ♠	Dbl	Pass
3 ♥	4 ♣	4 ♥	Dbl
Pass	4 ♠	Dbl	5 ♣
Dbl	All pass		

Opening Lead 9 of ♦

5 ♣× by South

Ron went up with the Ace of diamonds and returned a diamond, which I won in hand and returned a diamond. Now there was no defense. I won the diamond in hand and play a club towards dummy. West ducked, but then I was able to return to hand with a spade and play another club up. West rose and tapped dummy with a heart, but all I needed to do was lead the J of clubs to the Ace in my hand, cash the 10 of ♣ drawing West's last trump and use my small smade to get to dummy's 3 winners - the Q of ♠ and the K10 of ♦ to pitch my other 3 heart losers - making 5 ♣ X!

Back then, they didn't have Deep Finesse - let alone double dummy problem solvers. As it turns out 5Cx goes down with most any lead - including a diamond - but East has to hold off playing the Ace at trick one. Let's start over, and allow Ron Gerard to duck the opening lead.

## Jumping Off The Diving Board

Matchpoints

	♠ K Q 7 6 5										
	♥ —										
	♦ K 10 6										
	♣ Q J 8 2										
♠ 8 2	<table border="1" style="background-color: #008000; color: white; width: 40px; height: 40px; text-align: center; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 10 9 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ K J 9 7 3		♥ A 8 5 2									
♦ 2		♦ A 7 4 3									
♣ K 9 6 5		♣ —									
	♠ A 4										
	♥ Q 10 6 4										
	♦ J										
	♣ A 10 7 4 3										

West	North	East	South
<i>Kamil</i>	<i>The Dentist</i>	<i>Gerard</i>	<i>The Shark</i>
			1 ♣
Pass	1 ♠	Dbl	Pass
3 ♥	4 ♣	4 ♥	Dbl
Pass	4 ♠	Dbl	5 ♣
Dbl	All pass		

Opening Lead 9 of ♦

5 ♣× by South

OK, We've won the opening lead in hand. Now what?

What if we play A, K, Q of ♠ - pitching our ♦ J. ?

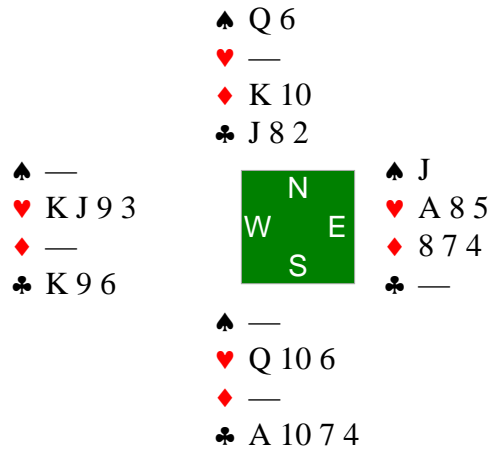
West should ruff with the 5 of ♣. Now, for the sake of argument, let's return a diamond to the K, A, and ruff. Now, South can ruff a heart, and play a high diamond - pitching a heart, but West can ruff and sit back with K9 of trumps waiting for the setting trick.

So 5CX can't make with best defense!



## Jumping Off The Diving Board

Matchpoints



West	North	East	South
<i>Kamil</i>	<i>The Dentist</i>	<i>Gerard</i>	<i>The Shark</i>
Pass	1 ♠	Dbl	1 ♣
3 ♥	4 ♣	4 ♥	Pass
All pass			Dbl

Opening Lead Q of ♣

4 ♥× by West

What about 4HX?

EW have 5 hearts in the West hand, 1 diamond and 3 club ruffs in dummy.

There's probably a way for NS to misdefend to allow this contract to make.

How about Q of clubs lead, ruffed in dummy, and now A and a diamond, won by South, who now plays A and a spade to partner's Q of spades, and a small spade to dummy's J forcing South to ruff and West to overruff?

This defense would get us to this position...

Now a club ruff with dummy's 5, diamond ruff with the 3, club ruff with the 8, diamond ruff with the J, club ruff with A, spade ruff with the K.

South could defeat this by playing a heart when in with either the Ace of ♠ or with a diamond - and there is no rule that says that North has to lead the Q of clubs.

## Jumping Off The Diving Board

Matchpoints  
South Deals  
N-S Vul

♠ 8 2	♠ K Q 7 6 5	♠ J 10 9 3
♥ K J 9 7 3	♥ —	♥ A 8 5 2
♦ 9 2	♦ K 10 6 5	♦ A 8 7 4 3
♣ K 9 6 5	♣ Q J 8 2	♣ —
	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin: 0 5px;">             W   N              S   E           </div>	
	♠ A 4	
	♥ Q 10 6 4	
	♦ Q J	
	♣ A 10 7 4 3	

West	North	East	South
<i>Kamil</i>	<i>The Dentist</i>	<i>Gerard</i>	<i>The Shark</i>
Pass	1 ♠	Dbl	1 ♣
3 ♥	4 ♣	4 ♥	Pass
Pass	4 ♠	Dbl	5 ♣
Dbl	All pass		

Opening Lead 9 of ♦

5 ♣× by South

After we scored up +750, Ron Gerard called the director back and said his side had been injured. The director looked at the hand and said the result stood.

So now, Ron requested a committee and late that night the committee met and ruled that the score be changed from +750 our way to +590 for EW!

Deep Finesse will tell you that NS can make 4C, and EW can make 3H from the West side - and only 2H from the East hand.

But this occurred in 1989 - before Deep Finesse existed. This was probably the worst committee ruling I have ever seen!

When our top turned into a bottom, instead of finishing 10th overall in the event, we dropped into obscurity. Meanwhile, Charlie Coon and Mike Moss won the whole event!

## Jumping Off The Diving Board

I'm not sure if the North hand should have pulled the double or not. It looks like double dummy it was not the correct bid. But there were some very interesting parallels between this hand and the 2 earlier hands we have seen.

One of the keys is the presence of intermediates - especially in the opponents' suits that would factor into increasing defensive prospects.

In the first hand, one of the important considerations was whether or not diving in 6♥ might force the opps into 6♠ that might be cold. Because of the apparent diamond trick and because of the Q10 of clubs, there was a good chance of beating 6♠ even if there was not a heart trick.

In this hand, Mike Kamil had the K9xx of clubs and that 9 was going to be promoted if the first round of diamonds was ducked.

Similarly, even though my Q1064 of trumps wasn't worth a single trick due to the location of the J, and due to my partner's K109x of diamonds, there was sufficient inference to suggest that doubling 4H was indeed the correct decision.

Look for these subtleties when having to make tough high level decisions in the future!

Let's close with a hand that still haunts me in which I jumped off the diving board only to find out that there was no water in the pool....

It occurred during the semifinals of the Grand National Teams in Las Vegas in July 2019. This was the very first hand of the final 15 boards. My team - Pat McDevitt, Adam Grossack, Frank Merblum, Dean Panagopoulos, and Steve Gladyszak was down 15 IMP to the local D17 team (Roger Lee, Dan Korbel, Geoff Hampson, Haig Tchamitch, Sheri Weinstock and Fred Gittleman)....

## Jumping Off The Diving Board

IMPs

♠ Q 10 6  
 ♥ 10 9 7 6  
 ♦ A K 10 9 7 6  
 ♣ —

West	North	East	South
<i>Roger Lee</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Dan Korbel</i>	<i>Pat</i>
	1 ♦	Pass	1 ♥
Dbl	2 ♥	3 ♠	4 ♥
4 ♠	5 ♣	Dbl	Pass
Pass	5 ♦	Dbl	5 ♥
Dbl	All pass		

Opening Lead A of ♣

5 ♥× by South

This was my hand as dealer. Seems too strong to open a weak two bid, so I counted my losers and saw approximately 7 losers and 2 Quick Tricks - the minimum requirements for an opening bid using losing trick count evaluation - so I opened the bidding 1D. The auction proceeded with a pass on my left by Dan Korbel, 1H by my partner, Pat McDevitt, and Roger Lee said Double. I bid 2H to show 4 card support, and the auction proceeded 3S on my right 4H by Pat, and 4S by Roger back to me.

What should I do? Looked like we had no more than 1 black loser, and if a heart finesse was needed it would be onside. But what about the opponents? If the spade J was behind me, they might be cold for 4S! It sure looked like 5S was going down with a club lead, however, so I jumped off the diving board and made the lead directional bid of 5C.

That proved to be catastrophic! Here was the full deal....

## Jumping Off The Diving Board

IMPs  
North Deals  
None Vul

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

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

West	North	East	South
<i>Roger Lee</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Dan Korbel</i>	<i>Pat</i>
Dbl	1 ♦	Pass	1 ♥
4 ♠	2 ♥	3 ♠	4 ♥
Pass	5 ♣	Dbl	5 ♥
	Pass	Dbl	All pass

Opening Lead A of ♣

5 ♥× by South

As you can see, 4S is going down easily. 3 rounds of diamonds, ruff with the K, will promote a second trump trick for our side, and we still have to score a heart - down 2. 5DX will actually make on a non trump lead, but we ended up in 5HX which was a disaster! Pat ruffed the club lead and led a spade towards his K. This lost to the Ace and another club was led. Pat misquessed and pitched on this. When the spoke cleared, he was down 3 against a 4 ♠ contract that had no play, and our chances of winning the GNT disappeared.

The only thing this hand has to do with New York is that the victors went on to win their next match in the Finals against the squad from NY District 24 - Joe Grue, Gillian Miniter, John Hurd, Kent Mignocchi, and Joel Wooldridge.

Hope you all enjoyed today's talk and will join us next week!