

Sharks Swim Close To The Surface

Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to this our 49th Session of Shark's Pointers Online.

I'm glad my previously scheduled doctor's appointment has been pushed back until the first week in June, so we could get together for this very special session.

Last week, I told you how I had miraculously qualified for the finals of the NAOBC IMP Pairs by getting 3 huge gifts on the last 7 boards. Well, as many of you know by now, my partner, Jonathan Green and I actually went for being the 89th qualifiers out of 100 - to win the entire event by 25 IMPs!

Winning these events are a rare and huge accomplishment for me. I have come very close in the past - in fact, my partner last week and I have somewhat of a "locust" partnership. I say that because 17 years ago, we came in 2nd Overall - missing by less than half a board. I hope it won't take us another 17 years to win another - I may not have that many years left!

Today, I am going to go thru the first final session of the IMP Pairs with you. I hope you will find this very educational - and may take away some important pointers that will help you whether you may be competing for a North American Championship, or a club game.

My plan is to take as much time as may be necessary to go thru the entire 48 boards of the 2-session IMP final. I'm going to try to get thru the first session today. I won't talk about relatively flat or uneventful boards, except to give you a running tally. If it turns out we won't have enough time today, we'll come back to it next week. Whether it may take 2, 3 or even 4 sessions to go thru these hands, I think it will be worthwhile. I'll be trying to give you some insight into what was going thru my mind on these hands - and to give you some ideas on how you might adapt some things from these hands to apply to your game - and improve your results.

So without further ado, let's look at Board 1, of the 1st final session of the NAOP IMP Finals....

Sharks Swim Close To The Surface

NAOBC IMP Pairs

1st Final 3/19/21

Board 1

North Deals

None Vul

♠ Q 10 9 5

♥ A 9 7 4

♦ Q 6

♣ Q 9 6



West	North	East	South
<i>The Shark</i>		<i>Jon Green</i>	
	1 ♦	Pass	1 NT
Dbl	2 ♦	3 ♥	4 ♦
Pass	5 ♦	Dbl	All pass

Opening Lead 6 of ♥

5 ♦ × by North

This was the very first board of the 2 session final. As we discussed last week, Jon Green and I had barely qualified, and we held a meager 2 IMP carryover going into the finals. I was relaxed and relieved, and I always feel confident at the start of any bridge competition. I think it was to my advantage to be 4th to speak on the first deal, as it gave me a few extra seconds to gather my composure. As you can see, I have a fairly crappy hand with a ton of losers and Q's are of uncertain at best value. My double of 1 NT may appear to be quite aggressive - especially at IMPs with a partner who has passed already, but when the opponents' auction is 1 of a minor - 1 no trump, your side usually will have at least 1 8 card major fit - and the Law of Total Tricks tells you to compete to the 2 level with 8 trumps. My double typically shows both majors after opps bid 1 of a minor followed by 1 NT, and it is imperative to get a bid in quickly non vulnerable at any form of scoring. Partner should know opps probably have half the deck, so he/ she shouldn't hang you.

After North rebid 2D, Jon bid 3H - really putting it to the opponents. South bid 4D, North raised to game and now Jon made a great double! Here was the complete deal....

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NAOBC IMP Pairs
1st Final 3/19/21

Board 1

North Deals
None Vul

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

West	North	East	South
<i>The Shark</i>		<i>Jon Green</i>	
	1 ♦	Pass	1 NT
Dbl	2 ♦	3 ♥	4 ♦
Pass	5 ♦	Dbl	All pass

5 ♦ × by North

Opening Lead 6 of ♥

I think South's 4D bid was terrible. He should bid 4C. Partner will expect some diamond tolerance and correct to 4D which will end the auction. This hand is another fine example of "I've got a secret" that was the subject of a previous Shark's Pointers Online. South has a secret 6 card club suit, and his 4D bid suggests at least 3 diamonds and probably shortness in hearts or spades.

Actually, the best lead is a trump as this would beat the contract at least 3 tricks, but as it was, Jon's well judged double and our setting this 2 resulted in a great start!

Result Down 2 +300 EW Win 7.4 IMPs

Board 2, the opps bid and made a cold game and we lost 3 IMPs.

I'm going to give you the North hand on Board 3, and ask "What would you do?"...

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NAOBC IMP Pairs

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Board 3

South Deals

EW Vul

♠ A J 7 6 4
♥ A 10 8
♦ 5 4
♣ K 5 3

West	North	East	South
<i>The Shark</i>		<i>Jon Green</i>	Pass
1 NT	?		

Your partner passes, and your RHO bids 1 NT. You are at favorable vulnerability at IMPs. What do you do?

I actually think it is clear to pass. Your spades are anemic, and with partner having passed, you know there is no game your way. Bidding with these kinds of hands can only help the opponents by either pinpointing missing high cards, or allowing them to take you for a number.

Well, having failed the first test, you blithely decide to enter the fray with a bold 2 ♠ bid. Your LHO makes a negative double. Partner passes, opener bids 3D, LHO bids 3 NT and it is your lead.

You lead the 6 of spades, and see this dummy...

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NAOBC IMP Pairs

1st Final 3/19/21

Board 3

South Deals

E-W Vul

♠ A J 7 6 4

♥ A 10 8

♦ 5 4

♣ K 5 3



♠ K Q 9 3

♥ J 9 7 3

♦ 8 6 3

♣ Q 2

West	North	East	South
<i>The Shark</i>		<i>Jon Green</i>	
			Pass
1 NT	2 ♠	Dbl	Pass
3 ♦	Pass	3 NT	All pass

3 NT by West

Opening Lead 6 of ♠

Declarer rises with the Spade K, partner plays the 8 and declarer the 5. Now declarer plays the 3 of hearts off dummy, partner plays the 2 and Declarer plays the K. You win the Ace, now what?

OK. To be fair, this was a trick question. You know partner started with 3 hearts, so declarer most likely has KQx. Here's another important Shark's Pointer.

When you don't know what to return, and ducking the trick is not likely to cost a trick, you should consider not winning the trick. Here you know declarer will have an easy way to go to dummy's 4th heart if he started with KQx. It doesn't seem likely our declarer will be leading to an unsupported Kxx into the overcaller. Duck and see if you can get more info.

OK, back to reality. Right or wrong, you won the Ace of hearts. Now what do you do? Since declarer didn't duck the opening lead to his 10, you assume partner may have this card and return a low spade. Here was the full deal...

Sharks Swim Close To The Surface

NAOBC IMP Pairs
 1st Final 3/19/21
Board 3
 South Deals
 E-W Vul

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

West	North	East	South
<i>The Shark</i>		<i>Jon Green</i>	Pass
1 NT	2 ♠	Dbl	Pass
3 ♦	Pass	3 NT	All pass

3 NT by West

Opening Lead 6 of ♠

Oh no, Mr. Bill! Declarer rose with dummy's Q and scored up 10 tricks!

+630 EW was worth 10.3 IMPs!

On Board 4, Jon showed great judgment in opening a marginal hand in 3rd seat, and we won another 4.1 IMPs.

Here was the deal...

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NAOBC IMP Pairs

1st Final 3/19/21

Board 4

West Deals

Both Vul

	♠ Q		
	♥ K J 8 2		
	♦ 10 7 3		
	♣ A 10 6 3 2		
♠ A J 9 5 3	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; width: 40px; height: 40px; border: 1px solid black;"> N W E S </div>	♠ K 8 7	
♥ 9 5		♥ 10 7 6 4	
♦ K 8 4		♦ A 9 6 2	
♣ Q 9 8		♣ K 4	
	♠ 10 6 4 2		
	♥ A Q 3		
	♦ Q J 5		
	♣ J 7 5		

West	North	East	South
<i>The Shark</i>		<i>Jon Green</i>	
Pass	Pass	1 ♦	Pass
1 ♠	All pass		

1 ♠ by West

I think North has a clear takeout double of 1S, but regardless, EW will compete to 2S, and the result will be the same.

The opps slipped a trick, and I make 4, winning 4.1 IMPs instead of 3.1 for making +140. Most of the East players passed in 3rd seat, and lost 0.9 IMPs when it was passed out.

Board 5 was normal. We bid to a cold 4H and made the obvious 11 tricks, winning 1.9 IMPs.

On Board 6, once again, I overbid, opps slipped on defense and Jon was spectacular!

Here was the hand...

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NAOBC IMP Pairs

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Board 6

East Deals

E-W Vul

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

West	North	East	South
<i>The Shark</i>		<i>Jon Green</i>	
1 ♠	Pass	1 ♦	Pass
2 ♥	Pass	2 ♣	Pass
3 ♠	Pass	3 ♦	Pass
		3 NT	All pass

3 NT by East

Actually both Jon and I overbid on this one. I don't like his opening an 11 count with a singleton spade vul atimps. My 2H bid was 4th suit FORCING TO GAME in our methods - clearly an overbid. 3D by me would have been more than sufficient.

Be that as we may, Jon was in 3 NT with the lead of the K of hearts. Jon won the A in dummy, and played a diamond. North won the A, and returned the J of hearts, which South allowed to hold the trick. Now South returned a cryptic 6 of clubs, on which South played an equally cryptic 9 of clubs, allowing South to win in dummy. South was a world class Canadian expert. My guess is he reasoned that partner should deduce from the bidding that East had no more than 4 clubs, so his 9 must suggest the 8 and probably the 7, but that is requiring a lot from partner to work out.

At any rate, here's how the play progressed. After winning the club Q in dummy, Jon returned a diamond and proceeded to run all his diamonds coming down to this ending....

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NAOBC IMP Pairs

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Board 6

East Deals

E-W Vul

<p>♠ K J 10 7 2 ♥ A 9 6 5 ♦ 7 5 2 ♣ Q</p>	<p>♠ A Q 8 6 4 ♥ J 4 ♦ A Q ♣ J 10 6 3</p>	<div style="text-align: center; border: 2px solid green; padding: 5px; width: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> N W E S </div>	<p>♠ 5 ♥ 8 3 2 ♦ K J 10 9 8 ♣ A K 5 2</p>
	<p>♠ 9 3 ♥ K Q 10 7 ♦ 6 4 3 ♣ 9 8 7 4</p>		

West	North	East	South
<i>The Shark</i>		<i>Jon Green</i>	
1 ♠	Pass	1 ♦	Pass
2 ♥	Pass	2 ♣	Pass
3 ♠	Pass	3 ♦	Pass
		3 NT	All pass

3 NT by East

Actually, to be completely honest, both Jon and I overbid on this one. I don't like his opening an 11 count with a singleton spade vul atimps. My 2H bid was 4th suit FORCING TO GAME in our methods - clearly an overbid. 3D by me would have been more than sufficient.

Be that as we may, Jon was in 3 NT with the lead of the K of hearts. Jon won the A in dummy, and played a diamond. North won the A, and returned the J of hearts, which South allowed to hold the trick. Now South returned a cryptic 6 of clubs, on which South played an equally cryptic 9 of clubs, allowing South to win in dummy. South was a world class Canadian expert - Boris Baran. My guess is he reasoned that partner should deduce from the bidding that East had no more than 4 clubs, so his 9 must suggest the 8 and probably the 7, but that is requiring a lot from partner to work out.

At any rate, here's how the play progressed. After winning the club Q in dummy, Jon returned a diamond and proceeded to run all his diamonds coming down to this ending....

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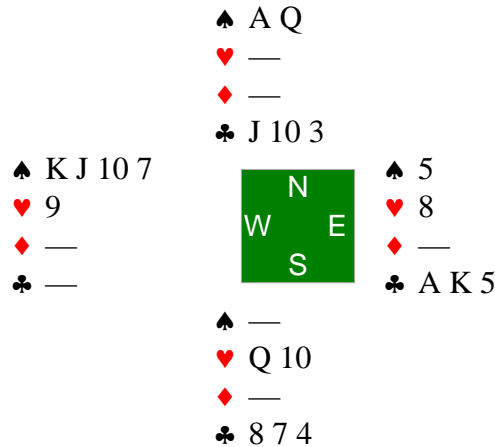
NAOBC IMP Pairs

1st Final 3/19/21

Board 6

East Deals

E-W Vul



West	North	East	South
<i>The Shark</i>		<i>Jon Green</i>	
		1 ♦	Pass
1 ♠	Pass	2 ♣	Pass
2 ♥	Pass	3 ♦	Pass
3 ♠	Pass	3 NT	All pass

3 NT by East

Now, Jon led the A of clubs, and North fell from grace by playing the 3. Jon then continued with K and a clubs, endplaying North to lead away from his A of spades.

NS can prevail if North reads South's 9 of clubs on the first play of the suit as showing 98xx or 987x, but North has to unblock both this J of clubs and his 10 to set this contract.

+600 was worth 9.7 IMPs for EW. -100 would have been 5.2 IMPs for NS - a 14.9 IMP swing!

Board 7 we bid to a lucky but ice-cold 3 NT contract, winning 4.7 IMPs.

Board 8, Jon and I were on the same page thanks to an aggressive takeout double by me - followed up by a great lead by Jon....

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NAOBC IMP Pairs

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Board 8

West Deals

None Vul

♠ J 5 3	♠ A 10 7 6 2	♠ K 9 8						
♥ Q J 9 8 2	♥ —	♥ 10 7 6 3						
♦ K 10 9 8	♦ A 6 3	♦ Q 7 4						
♣ 4	♣ K J 8 5 2	♣ A 6 3						
	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid black;"> <table style="border-collapse: collapse; margin: 0;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 5px;">W</td><td style="padding: 2px 5px;">N</td><td style="padding: 2px 5px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 5px;"></td><td style="padding: 2px 5px;">S</td><td style="padding: 2px 5px;"></td></tr> </table> </div>	W	N	E		S		
W	N	E						
	S							
	♠ Q 4							
	♥ A K 5 4							
	♦ J 5 2							
	♣ Q 10 9 7							

West	North	East	South
<i>The Shark</i>		<i>Jon Green</i>	
Pass	1 ♠	Pass	2 ♣
Dbl	3 ♣	Pass	3 NT
Pass	4 ♠	All pass	

4 ♠ by North

Note that the lead of a heart will allow declarer to pitch his two diamonds and lose only 1 club and 2 spades, by way of a club ruff.

But Jon listened to the bidding, and realized that I would have no more than 2 clubs, so he started with A and a low club asking for a diamond back. I ruffed the second trick, shifted to a diamond and we set the hand 2 tricks - winning an additional 5.6 IMPs. If Jon had led a heart, we would have lost 6.2 IMPS - an 11.8 IMP swing on the opening lead!

Board 9 was a joke. 1st seat, holding Ax xxx J87xx Axx, at favorable vulnerability, our opponent chose to open the bidding 1D! He found his partner with KQJ87xx AQ Axx x, who not unreasonably drove the bidding to 5S down 1.

We were just given another 9 IMPs instead of losing at least 4.2.

Board 10 requires some explanation...

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NAOBC IMP Pairs

1st Final 3/19/21

Board 10

East Deals

Both Vul

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

West	North	East	South
<i>The Shark</i>		<i>Jon Green</i>	
		Pass	1 NT
Dbl	Pass	2 ♦	Pass
2 ♠	Pass	3 ♠	All pass

3 ♠ by West

Once again, I overbid, misplayed the hand, and still managed to go plus. North led a low heart, and I could have made the hand legitimately had I either won the Q in hand and immediately returned the Q of diamonds, or returned the J, smothering South's 10. Instead I shortened dummy's trump holding, by ruffing a club, and careful defense could have defeated me. Fortunately for our side, the defense slipped up a bit and I managed to score 9 tricks.

The actual play was club ruff, diamond of dummy. South flew Ace and played A and a spade. After cashing 2 more spade tricks, North returned a club. I won the Ace of clubs and now played the J of hearts. If North had ducked the J, I would have gone down 1, but when he covered, dummy's other 2 hearts were high and I was +140 for another 5.2 IMPs our way.

Boards 11 and 12 were relatively flat. Halfway thru the 1st final session, we were up 54.8 IMPs!

We were plus 59.4 on 10 of these boards, and only lost 4.6 IMPs on the other 2.

At this point, I made the mistake I have often wrote to you about. Rather than staying on an even keel, and swimming steadily along the surface, like a true shark, I started reading the bridge columns about our exciting come from behind victory in this online North American Championship! My allowing my mind to drift, completely shook my concentration on Board 13.

Sharks Swim Close To The Surface

NAOBC IMP Pairs

1st Final 3/19/21

Board 13

North Deals

Both Vul

	♠ 10 9 5 2		
	♥ K 3		
	♦ 9 5		
	♣ K Q J 10 7		
♠ A Q 4	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> N W E S </div>	♠ K J 8 7	
♥ 9 5		♥ A Q J 10 8	
♦ K Q 10 4 3		♦ A J 8	
♣ A 8 6		♣ 5	
	♠ 6 3		
	♥ 7 6 4 2		
	♦ 7 6 2		
	♣ 9 4 3 2		
West	North	East	South
<i>The Shark</i>	<i>Christal Henner</i>	<i>Jon Green</i>	<i>Uday Ivatury</i>
	Pass	1 ♥	Pass
3 NT	Pass	4 ♥	All pass
	4 ♥ by East		

I made my first mistake by allowing myself to get distracted chitchatting with my opponents. Uday Ivatury was just featured as the ACBL Honorary Member of the Year. and Selen and I competed against him and Christal at the USBF Mixed Team Trials in 2019.

Jon opened 1 ♥ in second seat, and I had an automatic 2/1 GF 2 ♦ bid. But I started fantasizing about giving away information that might direct a club lead against 3 NT, so I decided to make a "genius bid" by showing a strong NT - bidding 3 NT. The problem - and I realized this the moment I clicked the bid - was that in our system 3 NT after 1 of a major shows a 5 trump raise with less than 10 HCP and some outside defense. I advised my opponents of my gaffe, and really had nothing I could bid over partner's 4H. I just had to pass and hope we didn't miss a slam - or went down in 4H with 3 NT being cold.

As you can see, we should easily get to at least 6D. On the lie of the cards, 7D, 7H, 7S, and even 7 NT are all cold! Plus 710 cost us 9.5 IMPs - and I had a Southwest moment. I really wanted to get away!

I saw our win slipping away, and steeled myself to stay focussed for the rest of the way - especially the very next board. The next several boards were pretty flat. Then we played against the pair in the proverbial *penultimate* round that would eventually finish 2nd in the event- Ron Gerard and Adam Wildalvsky. Let's pause at this point, as this would be a great spot to start next week's 50th Shark's Pointers Online.