

## Sharks Swim Close To The Surface - Part 2

Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to this our 50th Session of Shark's Pointers Online! This is truly an impressive milestone and quite an achievement for us all! 50 online sessions! Wow! Thanks so much for Tim Hill for coming up with this great idea and providing the technical guidance and support for making it possible. And especially thanks to all of you who have faithfully joined us week after week from near and far. It's your participation that really makes these sessions special! The great news is that there does indeed appear to light at the end of the tunnel. The unprecedented speed in which a variety of safe and effective vaccines have been developed and are being rolled out now give us all a great amount of optimism that this terrible pandemic will indeed soon end.

Today's theme is once again - "Sharks Swim Close To The Surface". My goal today is to help you to stay focused - and to teach you how to swim back to the surface when you may occasionally submerge too deep, or on occasion reach too high, or get a little too cocky. so that you will find a way to get back quickly on a smooth and easy course. As you know, I frequently refer to my 2014 talk, "The Inner Game of Bridge" that I have shared with you all. In this talk, I emphasize that the key to achieving the state of "relaxed concentration" is to be able to keep distractions out of your mind and to stay focused. It is quintessential for success at bridge to stay on an even, steady keel from the start of the very first hand thru to the last card played on the very last hand. I like to use the analogy of a shark swimming just under the surface to help me to stay focused and try to maintain this state of mind.

I am going to share with you all the brilliant bids and plays that allowed me and my partner to overcome all of our blunders from the Finals of the NAOBC IMP Pairs Championship. I'm hoping you will be able to see some patterns that may emerge from some of our successes and develop some good habits . At the same time, I am hoping you will see some patterns that emerge from the hands where we made terrible mistakes. By seeing the errors of our ways, I hope you will realize that even players who have achieved quite a lot of success in this game over the years still will make huge mistakes from time to time. This truly should bolster your self-confidence, in my opinion, and hopefully when you or your partner may mess up, you'll be better poised to take it all in stride and move on quickly and quietly to the next hand. Also, you should realize that nobody is perfect - and you can be far, far from perfect and still win!

Without further ado, let's pick up from where we left off last week and take a look at Board 21 of the first 24 board final session of the 2021 Spring NAOBC Imp Pairs....

Sharks Swim Close To The Surface - Part 2

NAOBC IMP Pairs

1st Final 3/19/21

**Board 21**

North Deals

N-S Vul

♠ 8  
♥ 7 6 4 3  
♦ Q 7  
♣ J 6 5 4 3 2



West	North	East	South
<i>The Shark</i>	<i>Ron Gerard</i>	<i>Jon Green</i>	<i>Adam Wildalvsky</i>
?	Pass	1 ♠	Dbl

Last week, I walked you thru the first 20 boards of the 1st Final Session of the IMP Pairs, at this point we were having an excellent session - my guess was we were somewhere between plus 40 to plus 50 IMPs and for the next two boards we were pitted against a top pair and one of the leaders of the event - Adam Wildalvsky and Ron Gerard. Adam Wildalvsky and Ron Gerard have both won a significant number of highly prestigious North American Championships and both are truly great players. Every time I play against Ron Gerard, I think back to that incident at the 1989 Men's Pairs that I shared with you in a previous Shark's Pointers Online in which an impossible to make 5CX contract that was made at the table due to a misdefence was changed in committee to an impossible to make 4HX the other way! This ruling still haunts me, but this should have been the furthest thing from my mind at this point. My total focus had to be on these next two hands.

This was the hand I held on the first of two boards we would play against Ron and Adam, Ron dealt and passed. Jon opened 1S. We were not vulnerable against vulnerable. Adam doubled, and I started listening to my demons. I feared that North must have 5 or 6 spades, and would pass the double and we would go for a number. I didn't have anywhere near as good a suit as would be needed to bid. I fell from grace and entered the bidding with a preemptive 3C bid. This might have worked out - but it was not the correct bid. Partner could have been going for a bid number in 1Sx and could have had a good club fit - like KQx that he never would be able to bid. Regardless, this really is a terrible bid, not because of my paucity of high cards, but more because of the lack of texture to my suit. If I had nothing more than QJ10xxxx of clubs -and no other high cards - this would be a fine bid. We'll see a hand very similar to this later in our talk today that worked out great. As it turns out, as you will soon see, I got appropriately punished.

Ron Gerard now bid 3 NT, and Jon led his fourth best spade. Here was the complete hand...

## Sharks Swim Close To The Surface - Part 2

NAOBC IMP Pairs

1st Final 3/19/21

**Board 21**

North Deals

N-S Vul

♠ 8	♠ A K Q 9 3	♠ J 10 6 5 4 2									
♥ 7 6 4 3	♥ 9 5 2	♥ A K 8									
♦ Q 7	♦ 10 5 2	♦ A 9 8									
♣ J 6 5 4 3 2	♣ Q 10	♣ 7									
	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black;"> <table style="border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center; width: 60px; height: 60px;"> <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> </div>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ 7										
	♥ Q J 10										
	♦ K J 6 4 3										
	♣ A K 9 8										

Opening Lead 5 of ♠

West	North	East	South
<i>The Shark</i>	<i>Ron Gerard</i>	<i>Jon Green</i>	<i>Adam Wildalvsky</i>
	Pass	1 ♠	Dbl
3 ♣	3 NT	All pass	

3 NT by North

Declarer won the spade lead in hand with the 9, and played a diamond to dummy's J and my queen. I shifted to a heart. Jon cleared hearts. Because of my misguided 3C bid, declarer had no trouble taking advantage of this info to take the marked finesse and get back to his hand with the club 10 - a risky play that he would never have made had I passed 1Sx like I should have. After cashing the Q of ♣, Declarer confidently led a diamond towards dummy, knowing Jon was marked with the A of diamonds for his opening bid. By playing this way, he was able to score 10 tricks.

We lost 5.1 IMPs. I don't know what we would have done had I passed 1Sx like I should have. Some declarer's actually went down in 3 NT after East started by leading 3 rounds of hearts.

Declarer won the third round of hearts in hand, and played a spade to hand, before leading a diamond towards dummy. Declarers now finessed the J, lost to the Q and the fourth round of hearts was cashed. The Ace of diamonds was the 5th trick for the defense.

Those players won 7.1 IMPs. I think Jon was a lot more likely to find the killing heart lead had I done the normal thing and passed 1S, so I give myself a 12.2 IMP charge on this one.

OK, after a big disaster like this, all you can do is suck it up and try to regain your focus. We still have a board to play against Ron and Adam - and this one, I'm sure, will prove to be a classic!....

## Sharks Swim Close To The Surface

NAOBC IMP Pairs

1st Final 3/19/21

### Board 22

East Deals

E-W Vul

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



West	North	East	South
<i>The Shark</i>	<i>Ron Gerard</i>	<i>Jon Green</i>	<i>Adam Wildalvsky</i>
		1 ♦	Pass
1 ♠	3 ♥	3 ♠	4 ♥
4 ♠	5 ♥	Pass	Pass
Dbl	All pass		

5 ♥× by North

Here was my hand. We were vulnerable, and our opponents were nonvulnerable. Jon dealt and opened 1D. Adam passed and I bid 1 ♠. Now Ron Gerard intervened with a jump to 3H, Jon bid 3S, Adam bid 4H and it was back to me. Here's what was going thru my mind. I only have 7 HCP, I didn't think it likely we were making 4, but I did have 5 spades and Jon's 3S bid suggested he held four card support. I liked my fitting Q of diamonds. I had a lot of club losers and my two small hearts didn't look promising for our defensive prospects. I had no idea who could make what. This looked like a Law of Total Tricks hand. It looked like opps had 10 hearts and we had 9 spades. Even if doubled and down 1, we might only be -200 versus -420. 4H might be going down and 4S might have no play. I really had no idea what was right, but I decided to bid what I hoped we could make and ventured forth with 4S.

I was somewhat relieved and pleased to hear 5H on my left. Ron Gerard surprised me with his 5H bid which was passed around to me. Once again, I had no idea if this was right or wrong, but because I only had 2 diamonds, I decided to chance a double. That's where the contract was played and this was the complete deal...

## Sharks Swim Close To The Surface

NAOBC IMP Pairs

1st Final 3/19/21

### Board 22

East Deals

E-W Vul

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

EW 4♠; EW 4♦; NS 2♥; NS 1♣; Par -500: NS 5♥×-3

West	North	East	South
<i>The Shark</i>	<i>Ron Gerard</i>	<i>Jon Green</i>	<i>Adam Wildalvsky</i>
		1♦	Pass
1♠	3♥	3♠	4♥
4♠	5♥	Pass	Pass
Dbl	All pass		

5♥× by North

If there are two things that I can attribute our win in the IMP Pairs to -they would be #1 - a lot of good luck - and #2 our consistently tough defense. This hand was no exception on both counts!

Jon started with AK and the 4 of diamonds - signaling for a club shift. Declarer was afraid I would be able to overruff with the 8 and still score the K of hearts so, he ruffed high - promoting Jon's singleton K. Now he played a spade from dummy, and while I never expected declarer to have started with stiff Q, it was clear to rise with my Ace. I won, and following Jon's signal, I return a club. How often will you see a trump promotion with stiff K opposite as little as 6 x!

We sure stripped this one clean. As you can see, this was a very friendly hand for us and we were indeed cold for 4S, so I made a very lucky decision there to even get us to this situation. Par, as you can see from the double dummy analysis, was achieved on this board.

+500 was worth only 3.7 IMPs, but +100 for letting them play 4H would have cost us 5 IMPs. Getting a trump promotion with stiff K opposite the 8 3 doubleton was extra special!

OK, now for the all important last round of this session...

## Sharks Swim Close To The Surface

NAOBC IMP Pairs

1st Final 3/19/21

**Board 23**

West Deals

Both Vul

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



West	North	East	South
<i>The Shark</i>		<i>Jon Green</i>	
Pass	1 ♣	Pass	1 ♠
Pass	1 NT	Pass	2 NT
Pass	3 NT	Pass	Pass
?			

Opening Lead 10 of ♠

There are times when you need to sit in your seat - like when I held that pathetic Jxxxxx club suit, and there are others when you really need to take charge if you want to avoid a lousy result. This was clearly the latter. The opponents' auction suggested they were borderline for high card points - probably somewhere around a combined 24 or 25 HCP. I held 8, which meant partner probably had about 6 or 7. It sounds like he has a bunch of clubs and probably 4 hearts. He'll likely have only one or two spades, but a spade lead will be much better for us than either a heart or a club. It's possible he might lead a diamond, but a heart or a club are probably going to be the lead. It's tough to double a freely bid game, but looking at my hand, it seemed likely, partner would lead a heart - or worse yet a club! Nobody was vul. On this slow auction, nobody is going to redouble, and even if they might make it -750 vs -600 is 4 IMPs and not that big a deal, but +200 our way versus -600 represents 13 IMPs and that certainly is huge. So, I took a chance and doubled - which ended the auction.

As it turned out, my double worked out better than I could ever have imagined!...

## Sharks Swim Close To The Surface

NAOBC IMP Pairs

1st Final 3/19/21

**Board 23**

West Deals

Both Vul

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

West	North	East	South
<i>The Shark</i>		<i>Jon Green</i>	
Pass	1 ♣	Pass	1 ♠
Pass	1 NT	Pass	2 NT
Pass	3 NT	Pass	Pass
?			

Opening Lead 10 of ♠

Declarer ducked the spade lead to his J, and hoping to find the 10 with the 9, returned a spade at trick 2. I took dummy's Q with my Ace and returned a low diamond. Jon won the Q and returned a diamond, to which I ducked with the 10 in order to keep communications open.

Declarer must have been quite tired, as he now pulled the wrong card, and DUCKED! We would have beaten the contract at least 1 trick at this point, but after the mistake by declarer, we were able to now cash two diamonds, and I shifted to my stiff club to keep my partner from getting endplayed. Now we had the contract set 2 tricks, if declarer played perfectly. But declarer erred again by rising with his Ace, crossing to dummy's K of hearts and cashing his Q of spades - making the disastrous pitch of a club! When the smoke cleared, we were +800 and won 14.4 IMPs! In my section, I was the only player to double 3 NT. Setting this 1 trick, which was guaranteed by the spade lead, would have netted us 8.6 IMPs. Without the assistance of the lead directional double, 3 NT made 24 times - in all but once case on the lead of a club - losing 5.3 IMPs. Now, perhaps the most important of all - the very last board...

Sharks Swim Close To The Surface - Part 2

NAOBC IMP Pairs  
1st Final 3/19/21

**Board 24**

West Deals  
None Vul

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

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

Opening Lead 8 of ♦

4 ♠ by West

I opened the bidding 1S. After partner's forcing 1 NT and South's preemptive 3D bid, I was licking my chops as I doubled. Partner pulled my X to 4S - showing a limit raise with 3 trumps. I got the lead of the 8 of D. I rose with dummy's J, which South correctly ducked and I overtook with my Q. Now I had to think. Should I finesse the 10 of spades at trick 2? The odds of North holding the J are clearly greater than 50-50, but was it worth going "ALL IN". The odds of a 3-2 spade split were about 68% in the absence of any bidding. The problem was that if the 10 should lose to the J, I would be down -losing a diamond ruff a club and a heart. This was certainly too risky, so even though my instincts told me that North started with Jxxx, I rose with the Ace. Now, I played a club. I think this was a good play. My thinking was that with the preempt on my right, it was more likely that the Ace of clubs was in the hand with the singleton diamond. By playing a club now, it was my hope that I might get the opponents to break hearts for me - or I might be able to shorten my trump holding and score up the game even if trumps were 4-1. Drawing trumps might put me in a position where I could lose 2 heart tricks.

Unfortunately, this didn't quite work out as I had planned. South rose with the Ace and gave his partner a diamond ruff. Back came the Q of clubs, which I ruffed. I now played a trump to the Q, and was somewhat relieved to see that indeed trumps did split 4-1, so the diamond ruff didn't cost a trump trick - I already lost that when I didn't take the first round finesse!

So, I have lost 2 tricks and I have to lose at least 1 heart. Seems like hearts may very well be splitting 4-2, but they might be 3-3. North is very likely to hold at least one heart honor, in which case two finesses will get me my 10th trick. Problem is, if I guess wrong, I am down.

So I drew the last trump, and I would like you all to take a few minutes to think about this end position...



## Sharks Swim Close To The Surface - Part 2

♠ —  
♥ K 10 9  
♦ 6  
♣ 10 5



♠ 9  
♥ A 6 5 2  
♦ A  
♣ —

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

Opening Lead 8 of ♦

4 ♠ by South

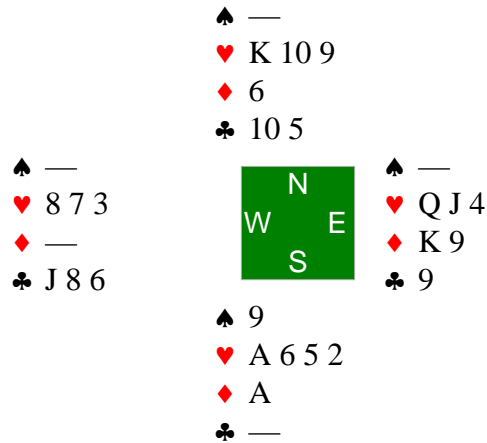
As you know, I was actually sitting West, but I have rotated the hands for your convenience, with me as declarer sitting South.

We have lost 2 tricks, and I can lose 1 more trick. I have 4 winners in this six card ending - one trump, the AK of hearts, and the A of diamonds.

Now, bear with me as I am going to share with you 3 hypothetical and very plausible endings.

Let's look at each one at a time...

## Sharks Swim Close To The Surface - Part 2



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

Opening Lead 8 of ♦

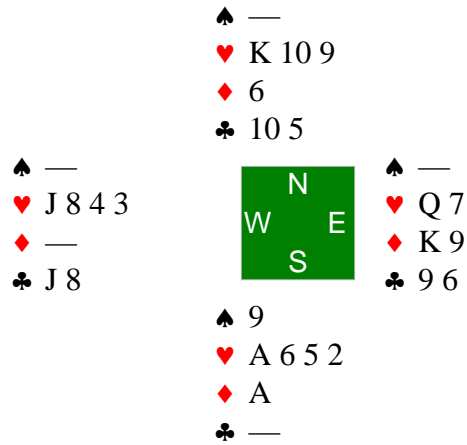
4 ♠ by South

In this ending we will have hearts 3-3 with both honors with East. As you can see, whether or not the heart honors are split, or both in the West hand or both in the East hand, so long as the suit splits 3-3, I can just play 3 rounds of hearts and I am cold.

If I make the arguably better than 75% play of finessing hearts twice - and this is the layout - I am going down.

Let's look at a second scenario...

## Sharks Swim Close To The Surface - Part 2



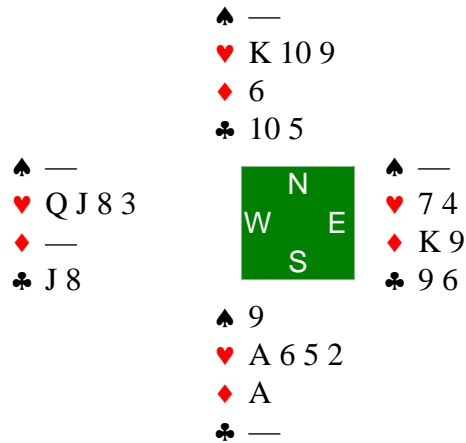
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1 ♠
Pass	1 NT	3 ♦	Dbl
Pass	4 ♠	All pass	

Opening Lead 8 of ♦

4 ♠ by South

In this ending, the heart honors are split, but the hearts split 4-2. I can make my contract by finessing hearts twice, but if I play my two top hearts and then play a third round, West will score 2 heart tricks. And finally there might be this end position...

## Sharks Swim Close To The Surface - Part 2



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

Opening Lead 8 of ♦

4 ♠ by South

Now hearts are 4-2 with the QJ onside.

This scenario is similar to the last. I make the hand if I play a low heart and insert the 9 or 10 if West ducks. Once again, however, if West plays low on the first round and I play two top hearts and West plays low, I am down.

Wait!! There's a 100% line so long as West has the J of clubs and at least 3 hearts as seems obvious by the play.

Do you see it? Don't play until you see it. Go thru each of the scenarios and confirm this play will indeed work. Let's go back to the end position you are faced with not seeing any of the opponents' cards....

## Sharks Swim Close To The Surface - Part 2

♠ —  
♥ K 10 9  
♦ 6  
♣ 10 5



♠ 9  
♥ A 6 5 2  
♦ A  
♣ —

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

Opening Lead 8 of ♦

4 ♠ by South

The solution is to go back to my S-H-A-R-K mnemonic.

### S-H-A-R-K

The elements of a successful squeeze

- S** - See the ending
- H**- Hold onto all your threats
- A** - Always play **A**ll your winners
- R** - Rectify the count
- K** - Keep "**K**ommunications" open

This has all the earmarks of a classic squeeze position. Duck a heart, by playing low to dummy's 9. Win the return - either with the diamond Ace, or by ruffing a club. Now cash your other winner - and South will be squeezed

The hand is cold anytime West in this diagrammed end position has the J of club which seems certain, and at least 3 hearts, which again seems almost certain.

Here was the entire hand...Yes indeed!

Sharks Swim Close To The Surface - Part 2

NAOBC IMP Pairs 1st Final 3/19/21

**Board 24**

South Deals

None Vul

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

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

Opening Lead 8 of ♦

4 ♠ by South

This play will work under any scenario in which the hand that started with 1 diamond started with at least 3 hearts - and the strongly implied missing club honor.

Having worked all this out, I nevertheless went down! You'll never guess what happened!

As it turns out, and after seeing the winning line, I got ahead of myself and ***I played my last trump before ducking the heart!*** A club came back and I was down in another of those "ice cold contracts" that I have discussed with you in the past.

What happened? How could I lose concentration like this. There's no way to explain something like this. It happens to all of us from time to time - we just never want it to happen at a crucial time in a major event. Well, it was the last board. I'm not extremely old, but I'm not sure not as young as I used to be - and I was tired.

To be candid, I believe there might have been another force at work here. I was actually quietly gloating to myself after that great 800 result on Board 23! My thinking was that I just made up for that disastrous 3 NT bid I made on Board 13. I forgot that **REAL SHARKS** never get too high or too low, and allow neither great results nor terrible results to affect concentration. With 24 boards to play in a couple of hours, I needed to get a little rest and get refocused! This gaffe cost 10.4 IMPs, and my braincramp on Board 13, cost at least 12.2 IMPs. Regardless, we still had a great score - +54.52 IMPs! Starting the day 89th out of 100 qualifiers, we were now in 5th place overall - including all carryovers - only 7.4 IMPs behind the leaders - Ron Gerard and Adam Wildalsky! Let's now look at the important 2nd Final Session hands.

Sharks Swims Close To The Surface - Part 2

NAOBC IMP Pairs  
2nd Final 3/19/21

**Board 1**

North Deals  
None Vul

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

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

4 ♠ × by East

It didn't take me very long getting my side overboard! On the very first board, I faced a difficult decision after partner freely competed to 2S and South bid 3D. In retrospect, X by me, followed by a bid of 3S when North pulls to 3H and partner passes would have been more prudent and more descriptive. Had I started with a singleton heart and one more club, then a bid of 4S would have been more justifiable.

As it was, the defense slipped a trick in 4Sx. Jon played it very well, running the 10 of clubs and ducking the second round to force the Ace, and we luckily only were down 1 doubled to lose a mere 0.7 IMPs.

We dodged a bullet!

On the 2nd board, I am going to show you Jon Green's hand, and as you how you would bid it...

Sharks Swim Close To The Surface - Part 2

NAOBC IMP Pairs  
2nd Final 3/19/21

**Board 2**

East Deals  
N-S Vul



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

West	North	East	South
<i>The Shark</i>		<i>Jon Green</i>	
		1 ♥	Pass
2 ♣	Pass	2 ♦	Pass
2 NT	Pass	?	

You're sitting East at favorable vulnerability and after you open 1 ♥, and the opps are silent, your partner bids a game forcing 2 ♣. I'm going to force you to rebid 2 ♦. (3 ♦ would be a splinter in support of clubs) - and now partner makes a forcing 2 NT bid.

What would you do?

Here's the entire deal and the actual bidding and result...



## Sharks Swim Close To The Surface - Part 2

NAOBC IMP Pairs  
2nd Final 3/19/21

**Board 2**

East Deals  
N-S Vul

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

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

Jon's actual choice, 3 ♥. was fine on this hand. 4H is a fine contract. If declaring 6H, a trump lead will set us. A few pairs bid and made the slam, and an equal number went down in it. +480 was another small loss. (0.8 IMPs) Personally, I like 3D, as we still haven't shown 5 diamonds. I'm planning to next bid 4H. It's a very interesting hand, and I appreciate your feedback.

The key on this hand is that my partner and I each hold 11 HCP. Although a slam is possible with a lucky lie of the cards and a friendly opening lead, with a combined holding of only 22 HCP, it is a losing strategy to bid such a thin slam. Down 1 in 6 ♥ would represent an 11 IMP loss!

As you well know, I am a very aggressive bidder. But I follow a simple rule of thumb when it comes to bidding slams. If our combined high card points total significantly fewer than the 32 recommended for a slam, I will generally only bid a slam if I am quite confident of it's success. At this stage of the competition, where we are so close to the top, Board 2 of the final session is far too early to be going "all in"!

On board 3, opponents were cold for 10 tricks in a notrump game that the entire field bid and made. Every pair made 10, 11, or even 12 tricks. I found the best lead for our side and we won 1.3 IMPs. No biggie, but we finally had a plus score and were beginning to start a string of good results. Our next board was our first big gain of the 2nd Final Session....

Sharks Swim Close To The Surface - Part 2

NAOBC IMP Pairs  
2nd Final 3/19/21

**Board 4**

West Deals  
Both Vul

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

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

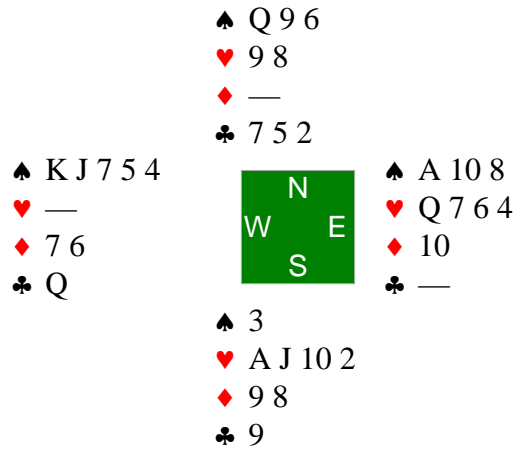
West	North	East	South
<i>The Shark</i>		<i>Jon Green</i>	
2 ♠	Pass	3 ♠	All pass

3 ♠ by West

As dealer, I opened 2S, North passed, and Jon raised to 3S. South had a difficult decision. As I have often said, if the opponents are given a 50-50 choice - they will go wrong 90% of the time! 3S down 1 earned for us 6.8 IMPs. 4H is actually cold! South can ruff both his diamond losers in dummy after cashing two clubs. East will be able to overruff the second diamond ruff, but that will ensure NS have 2 clubs, 2 diamonds, and a total of 6 hearts. -620 would have cost us 3.8 IMPs.

As the defense proceeded, I actually could have made 3S double dummy! Let me explain. The defense started with 2 high clubs followed by the K of D, J, covered by the Q, and A of diamonds. Now a diamond ruff immediately sets the hand, but South tried to cash the K of hearts. I ruffed this and this was the position...

## Sharks Swim Close To The Surface - Part 2



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

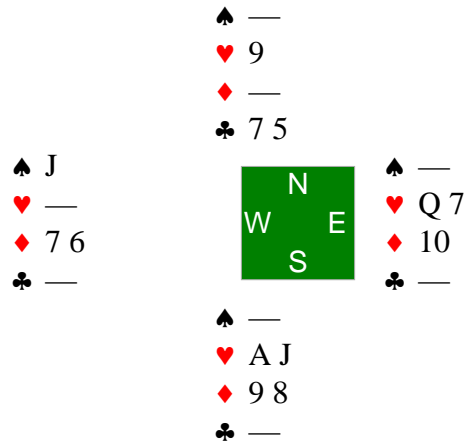
3 ♠ by West

In practice, I cashed the Q of clubs pitching the 10 of diamonds and ruffed a diamond in dummy, with North pitching a heart. I now ruffed a heart to hand and ruffed my last diamond. I cashed the A of trumps, but couldn't avoid losing a trick to North's Q of spades - down 1.

This was a great result - but once again, absolutely no reason to gloat. In fact, I had misplayed the hand and a strong case can be made that I should have made the hand given this opportunity.

This really has become a fascinating hand given the fact that the opps didn't take the 1st 5 tricks. I can play the K of spades from my hand and hook a spade to dummy. If it loses, we are no worse off than we would have been had they gotten their diamond ruff, but if it wins we can actually make the hand. Now a heart ruff, *cash the Q of clubs pitching a heart not a diamond* - a spade back to dummy and this is the end position....

## Sharks Swim Close To The Surface - Part 2



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

3 ♠ by West

You guessed it - yet another squeeze! Squeezes come up so frequently! This is why I have put so much time and effort in trying to communicate the essential features of a squeeze - starting with my earliest Shark's Pointers Friday chats before the morning duplicate 6 or 7 years ago.

South has to play on dummy's Ace of spades.

If she pitches a heart, declarer can ruff out the last heart and get back to dummy with a diamond to win the last trick with the established heart Queen. If she instead pitches a diamond, now declarer will cash dummy's 10 of diamonds - carefully following with the 6 from hand, ruff a heart and score the last trick with the proverbial "beer card" - the 7 of diamonds!

This rather spiffy squeeze ending in which you can score the extra trick in opposite hands depending upon the defense is called a "criss-cross squeeze".

OK, back to the IMP Pairs finals.

On board 5, our opps were a bit unlucky. We could actually make 3 NT our way due to a very lucky lie of the cards, but only pair bid it. Most, like us were defeating a club partial 3 tricks undoubled vulnerable. Our +300 only netted us 2.2 IMPs.

On board 6, I played 1 NT making 1 with a little help from the defense. Most players were going down. +90 was worth 4.5 IMPs. Here was board 7....

## Sharks Swim Close To The Surface - Part 2

NAOBC IMP Pairs

2nd Final 3/19/21

**Board 7**

South Deals

Both Vul

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

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

Opening Lead 8 of ♦

5 ♣ by West

I made a very bold overcall on this hand due to the texture of my suit. This worked out great as we had no trouble getting to game. At trick 1, I false carded with the K of ♦ under South's Ace, and he shifted to a trump, allowing me to actually make an over trick.

+620 was worth 7.3 IMPs!

The next couple of boards were fairly routine. We set 3H a trick to win 0.1 IMP on Board 8. On board 9, we made an overtrick in a cold 3 NT game, losing 1.1 IMPs.

This is a good place to pause. We'll pick up with Board 10 next week....