

Where'd I Go Wrong?

Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen!

Welcome to this - the 52nd session of Shark's Pointers Online!

52 - I guess this means we are finally playing with a "full deck!"

I hope you enjoyed these past 3 weeks in which I detailed the most significant hands of the recent NAOBC IMP Pairs that Jon Green and I were lucky enough to win last month. Before we begin today's discussion, I'd like to take a few minutes to gain some of your takeaways from the hands I shared over the past 3 weeks - and I would specifically like to know which hand or hands were your favorites of the ones I shared.

So, take yourself off mute and let's take the next few minutes to hear from you.

My favorite hand was the following...

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

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

3 ♠ by West

You may recall that the defense slipped a bit and instead of taking the first 5 tricks, they actually allowed me to make 3S through a rather spiffy series of plays culminating in a criss-cross squeeze! I won 6.8 IMPs on this hand for going down 1 in 3S as the opponents were cold for 4H. But the reason I loved this hand was that I never realized I could make 3S until I prepared this hand to share with you.

I think I should have figured it out at the table. I had all the clues I needed to work out the winning line. So today I am going to explore hands like this one in which I could have, in retrospect, scored at least 1 more trick. By reviewing these hands, perhaps we can see a pattern emerging and see some trends that could help us all avoid these kinds of errors - and improve our results.

Today's Shark's Pointers is called "Where'd I Go Wrong?". Let's start with this hand and by figuring out where and why I screwed up - maybe we can help you avoid a few of these kinds of errors from your game.

What inference did I miss with this hand?

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

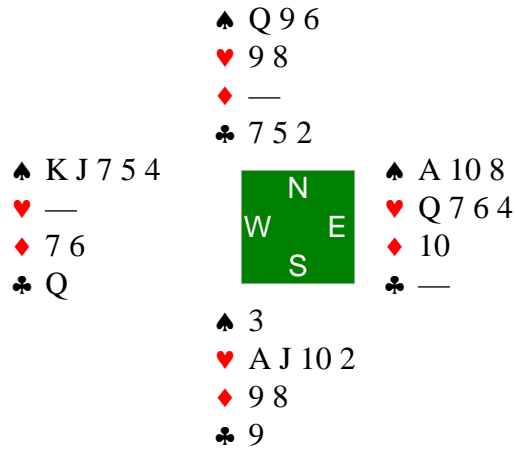
♠ 3	<div style="background-color: green; color: white; padding: 10px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>	♥ A K J 10 2
♥ A K J 10 2		♦ A 9 8 5
♦ A 9 8 5		♣ 9 6 4
♣ 9 6 4		

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

3 ♠ by West

The bidding was as shown. 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.

I should have played the K of spades from my hand and hook a spade to dummy. Now a heart ruff, ***cash the Q of clubs pitching a heart not a diamond*** - a spade back to dummy to squeeze South in hearts and diamonds. I'm not concerned about seeing the squeeze ending here. That is a totally separate issue. It's complex. Special coaching and years of experience will come into play in being able to see these endings. My concern is more about how a very experienced and accomplished player like myself embarked upon a line of play that careful analysis will reveal had virtually no chance of success. Let's take a look at the full deal again for a second....

Sharks Swim Close To The Surface - Part 2

NAOBC IMP Pairs
2nd Final 3/19/21

Board 4

West Deals
Both Vul

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

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

3 ♠ by West

After ruffing the K of heart shift, the first thing I should have done was reconstruct the play to help develop a model of the distribution of the opponents' hands. By the play so far, it appears that North started with KJ doubleton of diamonds and AKxxx of clubs. Similarly, South started with A985 of diamonds and xxx of clubs. In addition, South must certainly have started with AKJ of hearts. There is no way South is shifting to an unsupported K of hearts at this time, so South must have been planning to give partner a diamond ruff now and make it clear for a heart return.

If North had started with xx xxxx KJ AKxxx, he may very well have doubled 2S. The fact that he didn't double makes it clear that North must have been 3-3-2-5 or 4-2-2-5. Before deciding which, let's bounce back to the South hand for a second. South is marked with A98x of diamonds, xxx clubs and - assuming North started with fewer than 4 hearts - either AKJxx of hearts and a stiff spade, or AKJxxx of hearts and no spades. I think that given these two options, it is a virtual 100% certainty that South did not start with Void AKJxxx A98x xxx and passed when 2S-p-3S came to him. So this makes the actual distribution almost a lock. So, unless South started with a singleton Q, trying to ruff two diamonds in dummy will surely result in promoting the setting trick - a trump winner in the North hand. Playing K of spades after ruffing the heart has to be the only logical play. After that, it's just a matter of "Door #1 vs Door #2".

If one line of play cannot succeed, one must revert to a different option. Sloth is one of the so-called "7 Deadly Sins". Plain and simple, I was too lazy to take the time to work this out. Let's look at a couple of other "sins" I committed recently...

Where'd I Go Wrong?

West Deals
Both Vul

♠ Q 9 6 5
♥ Q
♦ Q J 3
♣ Q 10 6 5 3



♠ 4
♥ K 9 7
♦ A K 9 7 6 4
♣ K J 2

West	North	East	South
1 ♠	Pass	2 ♠	3 ♦
Pass	4 ♦	All pass	<i>Shark</i>

Opening Lead K of ♠

4 ♦ by South

Here's a hand that came up the other day while I was playing online on BBO. I like my partner's raise to 4D because she had a stiff heart and 4 spades. She would be happy if the opponents went to 4S, but she didn't want to make it easy for them to find a heart fit. West started with the K of spades, and continued the J to dummy's Q, East's Ace and I ruffed.

OK. So this looks easy. We just have to lose the Ace of hearts and the Ace of clubs. We've got plenty of tricks, 6 diamonds, 4 clubs, 1 heart. So, what's the problem. Let's draw trumps and knock out the Ace of clubs. Wait!

What if this is the complete deal? ...

Where'd I Go Wrong?

West Deals
Both Vul

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

West	North	East	South
	<i>Selen</i>		<i>Shark</i>
1 ♠	Pass	2 ♠	3 ♦
Pass	4 ♦	All pass	

Opening Lead K of ♠

4 ♦ by South

If I play A of diamonds and a diamond, and West shows out, I may have a serious problem. Now I can try a club to my K, but if West starts with Axx and ducks the first round I am down. I must draw the last trump now, and play another club which West must duck again. Now I have to lose 2 hearts in addition to the A of clubs and the spade I lost at trick 1 - down 1.

So I decided to try a different line...

Where'd I Go Wrong?

West Deals
Both Vul

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

West	North	East	South
	<i>Selen</i>		<i>Shark</i>
1 ♠	Pass	2 ♠	3 ♦
Pass	4 ♦	All pass	

Opening Lead K of ♠

4 ♦ by South

After ruffing the second spade, I played a heart right away! This was a little risky as opps might now get a club ruff after in with the Ace of hearts if clubs were 4-1, but there's not much I can do about that. If clubs are 3-2 (3x more likely than their being 4-1), we can ruff the spade return, ruff a heart, draw trumps and now drive out the Ace of clubs. Opps can hold off on the Ace of clubs, but I only need 2 club tricks in addition to 6 diamonds, 1 heart and 1 heart ruff.

Great! Right? Well....not exactly...

Here was the actual lie of the cards...

Where'd I Go Wrong?

West Deals
Both Vul

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

♠ 4	♠ 4	♠ 4
♥ K 9 7	♥ K 9 7	♥ K 9 7
♦ A K 9 7 6 4	♦ A K 9 7 6 4	♦ A K 9 7 6 4
♣ K J 2	♣ K J 2	♣ K J 2



EW 4♠; EW 4♥; NS 4♦; NS 3♣; NS 1N; Par -200; NS 5♦×-1

West	North	East	South <i>Shark</i>
1 ♠	Pass	2 ♠	3 ♦
Pass	4 ♦	All pass	

Opening Lead K of ♠

4 ♦ by South

With the 4-0 trump split, I was dead! The opps were able to tap me out and promote a setting trump trick in the East hand.

So what was my sin this time? Once again - the deadly sin of SLOTH!

I was too lazy to play one round of trumps before playing a heart. If both opps follow to the first round of trumps, then I am perfectly safe to give up a heart, ruff a heart, draw trumps, concede the A of clubs and claim. But if one opp shows out, I have to draw trumps and hope the A of clubs is doubleton - as was in the actual example.

Oh just one more thing. My partner wasn't very understanding or sympathetic when I went down. Her comments were "very creative!" - and 4D was cold!

Her deadly sin was WRATH - so I had to swallow my PRIDE!

OK time for one more quick example from recent play - or should I say misplay....

Where'd I Go Wrong?

North Deals
N-S Vul

♠ K J 6 4
♥ 10 9 3 2
♦ A J 9 5 4
♣ —



♠ Q 10 9 5 3 2
♥ J 5
♦ —
♣ Q 10 9 6 2

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

4 ♠× by South

Opening Lead A of ♥

The defense started with West leading the A and K of ♥, and then shifting to the 2 of ♦.

I followed with the 9 of ♦, West played the Q and I ruffed. Now I played a spade towards dummy's K and East's Ace.

Doesn't matter how I played from here. All roads now lead to down 1.

Here was the complete deal..

Where'd I Go Wrong?

North Deals
N-S Vul

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

West	North	East	South
	1 ♦	Pass	1 ♠
Dbl	2 ♠	4 ♥	4 ♠
Pass	Pass	Dbl	All pass

4 ♠× by South

Opening Lead A of ♥

I started with 1 diamond trick (the Ace) and 9 trump tricks on a cross ruff - provided that I don't lead any trumps. In fact, the opps set me by either leading a trump at trick 1, 2, or 3!

The play is simple. Win the A of diamonds and ruff a diamond. Ruff a club. Ruff a red card. Ruff a club. Ruff a diamond. Opps can never overruff and since the spade Ace is singleton they can't overruff and then limit my ability to ruff 4 clubs in dummy.

Once again, let's count our tricks. We have 4 club ruffs in dummy, the Ace of diamonds, and 5 trumps in hand - that totals 10. We score 10 tricks if and only if we don't limit our ability to ruff 4 clubs in dummy by playing a trump. So what was my sin - other than being Dumb, Dumb, Dumb! ?

Once again, I would have to attribute this to SLOTH! I hate that word. It seems so harsh. Yet the truth is that I really was too lazy - or perhaps too tired to count my tricks. This, I believe is one of the most common sins we as declarer's commit resulting in going down in cold contracts. Lazy mistakes can be caused by tiredness and distractions. It gets tougher to stay alert and stay focused as we grow older - and none of us is getting any younger.

So, my Shark's Pointer for today is to analyze your own game and discover what your "deadly sins" might be. My guess is that just like mine, you will find a common ingredient. Work on alleviating these "sins" and your results will improve immediately! See you next week!