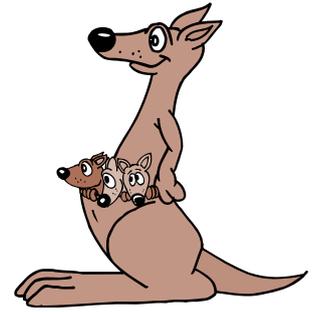


HAND FROM DOWN UNDER

by Tim Bourke



Dealer South. Both vul.

	♠ 8 7 6		
	♥ K 9 7 4		
	♦ K 5 3		
	♣ A J 5		
♠ K Q J 10 5 3		♠ 9 4 2	
♥ Q 10 8 5 2		♥ 6	
♦		♦ Q J 8	
♣ 10 7		♣ Q 9 8 6 4 2	
	♠ A		
	♥ A J 3		
	♦ A 10 9 7 6 4 2		
	♣ K 3		
West	North	East	South
			1♦
2♦	Double	2♠	3♠
Pass	5♦	Pass	6♦
Pass	Pass	Pass	

After West made a Michaels cue bid, showing length in the major suits, North doubled to show some values. East's preference for spades gave South a problem and his choice of three spades indicated a powerful diamond-based hand. When North showed diamond support with his leap to five diamonds, South had an easy raise to slam.

West led the king of spades to declarer's bare ace. All seemed routine for declarer until West discarded a spade on the ace of trumps. Declarer saw that his main chance of making the contract was to find West with the queen of clubs. However, he noted that there was an extra chance if East began with exactly three spades and one heart, not unlikely in view of his bidding: then East could be stripped of his major suit cards and put on lead when he would only have clubs left in his hand - then it wouldn't matter who had the queen of clubs.

Putting this plan into action, declarer drew a second round of trumps with dummy's king and ruffed a spade in hand. Crossing back to dummy with a heart to the king a further spade was ruffed. This was followed by the crucial move of unblocking the king of clubs to ensure three tricks in the suit if East had begun with 3-1 in the majors.

Declarer continued with the heart ace and East was fixed! If he ruffed with his winning trump he would then have to play a club into dummy's ace-jack tenace, thereby providing a parking place for South's heart loser. When he threw a club instead he was put on lead with a trump for the same outcome.

There is a new event on the way - Play 4Fun with an Expert.

Taking place on June 26th at Merseyside Bridge Centre and with NO entry fee, NO T.D., and with prizes allotted at random it does not matter how you do as long as you enjoy yourself. There are plenty of entries already and we will even find an 'Expert' for you, so you just need two friends as well as yourself to make up a team. Further details on the County website or from Dave Keen who is the organiser.

Northern Easter Festival *by David Stevenson and Paddy Murphy*

Over the Easter weekend, the Northern Festival was held in York and eventually the two teams that were to finish first and second were pitted against each other; containing three of the North-West's best female players, Liz Commins and Tracy Capal against Catherine Draper.

Both Liz and Tracy like to sit N/S but Liz always insists, so Tracy was very surprised when Liz agreed to sit E/W. The reason? The rather dishy [so I am told] Hugh McGann was sitting N/S and she wanted to play against him!

Now Paddy takes up the story:

<i>Game All Dealer South</i>		♠ 10 7	
		♥ K Q 7 6 5 3	
		♦ K 10 5	
		♣ 9 3	
♠ A 6 3			♠ Q 5 4
♥ A J 10 8 4 2			♥ 9
♦ Q 8			♦ A 9 7 6
♣ A Q			♣ K J 8 7 2
		♠ K J 9 8 2	
		♥	
		♦ J 4 3 2	
		♣ 10 6 5 4	

The bidding at our table was one heart from West, a forcing no-trump from East and a two club rebid by West which showed 16+ points. East relayed with two diamonds, West jumped to three hearts and East's three no-trump call ended the auction. I decided that North had hearts and a spade lead might well give away a trick, so the choice was between the minors. A club would require a lot from partner so I tried a diamond. East rose with the queen which was covered by the king and ace. Declarer now returned the nine of diamonds to North's ten. North appreciated the need for a spade switch and so played back the ten, covered by the queen and king. East ducked in dummy and eventually took the third round of the suit with dummy's ace. With no entry to hand after unblocking clubs, declarer had to cash the ace and overtake the queen, and cashed the jack, developing a club loser. Next came a heart towards dummy and when I discarded the heart was ducked, but the defence could cash the remainder of the tricks for four off. The bidding at the other table was one heart - two clubs - three hearts - three no-trumps and on a spade lead declarer had a much easier time and made 9 tricks. Deep Finesse will tell you that three no-trumps should always make (duck the diamond king, win the ace of spades without contributing the queen unblock the clubs and play diamonds in such a way as to prevent North from obtaining the lead. South gets endplayed and declarer gets 5 clubs, 2 diamonds and 2 aces), but this is hard to see at trick one.

David concludes : My only regret was that I could not be sitting next to Catherine when she scored and said, "minus 400" to which Hugh would have added, "minus 600". At the end we were all very happy at beating this excellent team, which also included the top class female Fiona Brown.

The only real problem Liz and I had over the weekend was two ladies from Scotland and two from England. We played them three times, each pair once in the Swiss Pairs and also all four once in the Swiss Teams. These were the only three matches we lost, though big losses and small wins meant that we did not do very well in the pairs!

Congratulations to the winners of the Swiss Teams, David Stevenson, Liz Commins and Paddy Murphy with Tracy Capal of Manchester. [Catherine Draper and Fiona Brown won the Swiss Pairs].

The Merseyside Bridge League restarts at the beginning of September. All teams, especially new ones, will be welcomed with open arms. Please contact the League Secretary Earl O'Keeffe for more information : earlokeeffe@yahoo.co.uk

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All of the club contacts are available on the County website

Calendar

All events here are correct at time of publishing but you are advised to take the precaution of checking with the organisers in all cases.

June

5th	Liverpool Open teams	LBC
6th	Worldwide simultaneous pairs	MBC & BBC
12th	Jim Davies Swiss Teams	Heswall BC
19th	County AGM - please attend if you can	MBC
24th	Bill Hughes simultaneous pairs	Deva BC
26th	Play with an Expert (fun teams)	MBC

July

22nd	Chester City cup	Deva BC
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August

2nd	Northern Bridge League round 1	
30th	Northern Bridge League round 2	

September

4th & 11th	MBL Swiss teams (2 sessions)	MBC
13th	Northern Bridge League round 3	

Decisions, decisions!

by Paul Roberts (with comments from the Editor)

Playing teams against reasonable opponents (*it was Barry and I, so a compliment*), dealer at vulnerable against non-vulnerable you pick up:

♠ K 7 6 ♥ A K 10 9 5 4 ♦ A 4 ♣ 8 7 An opening bid of one heart seems automatic.

With the opponents silent throughout, partner responds two spades.

Your agreement is that this is a 16 + hand, with:

- A self supporting spade suit or
- Primary support for your heart suit, and a good spade suit (e.g. at least A Q x) or
- A good spade suit with secondary support for hearts.

Decision 1: Do you respond three hearts or three spades? There's a good case for either, but I chose three hearts to show where my values are.

Partner now cue bids four clubs (first or second round control) and a four diamond cue bid now from me seems just about automatic. Partner now jumps to six hearts.

Decision 2: Do you pass, or bid the heart grand slam (or even try six spades)? I really don't know what is going on here, and couldn't be sufficiently sure we didn't have a heart, club or spade loser, so I passed.

Partner's hand was: ♠ A Q 9 8 4 2 ♥ Q J 2 ♦ void ♣ A K J 5 so the heart Grand Slam is laydown, unless left-hand opponent has all four missing spades and leads one for a ruff.

Partner chose to jump to six hearts because he knows I have wasted values in diamonds, he can't be sure how good my hearts are, and is worried about the Spade King (*perhaps he might have bid five clubs to still show interest and hear about your spade holding?*).

If I had bid three spades it's a bit easier for him, but the spade grand slam - whilst still very good - is a poorer contract than seven hearts.

If partner had bid four hearts after my four diamond call would that have been 100% forcing (*no*)? What happens if he bids four spades over four diamonds?

As it happens, if he asks with four no-trumps after the four diamond cue bid he then hears that I've got all the missing key cards, and could now ask about the Spade King. However, if I had only shown 2 key cards he doesn't know whether the missing key card is the Diamond Ace (no problem) or a heart honour.

Is this a good hand for "Exclusion Blackwood"!

This hand appeared during the North Wales green-pointed weekend held at the beginning of April. The organisers had changed the format from the usual 2-day teams event, found a new venue (the Ramada in Wrexham) and advertised it well. What a success and congratulations to them for arranging a great weekend. The pairs on Saturday had a waiting list and the teams on Sunday was as busy. I hear that they are hoping to find space for a few extra tables next year at this excellent venue (a good playing area and complimentary tea/coffee and water throughout), so get your booking in early. Despite Paul's problems on the hand above, his team finished the event in second place behind the Lancashire/Manchester combo of Alan Whittam, Paul Evans, Neil Thomas and Sue Richmond.