

## Sometimes more is Less - Norman's Notes No. 48

23 HCP, including three aces, opposite a partner with a six-card suit and an ace (in another suit) spells 'possible slam'. And indeed one was available on Board 21 at Bury Club on 12th December. But none of the eight pairs bid one of the two makeable slams - 6♣ or 6NT; all settled for 3NT. I'll leave readers to consider whether there was a sensible slam auction available.

Dealer North, NS vulnerable.

♠ A K 5

♥ Q 6

♦ A K 6 2

♣ A K 10 8

♠ 6 3

♥ A 10 9


♦ 5 3

♣ J 9 7 5 3 2

In practice, NS needed to make 12 tricks to obtain a reasonable score on the board. Two did not manage that, but five made 13 tricks, usually after a friendly/foolish heart lead by East who held both missing honours in that suit. (And helped by inaccurate discarding). But how should declarer play, assuming a non-heart lead?

Unless East holds the three outstanding clubs, there are 11 top tricks, and a 12th must come from hearts. The best chance - 75% - is that East has at least one honour in the suit. And with possible entry problems, declarer should tackle hearts immediately, i.e. before running clubs. The opening lead is won and ♥Q is led and run (if not covered). If West wins with ♥K a second heart finesse is taken\*\*. If East covers ♥Q, then of course declarer plays the ace and concedes a trick to the knave. In practice all should have been well, but as noted above, two declarers failed to score a 12th trick.

The full hands:

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

*\*\* But declarer would have an awkward decision. If both declarer's stops in spades or diamonds have been knocked out, is it worth risking the second heart finesse, and possibly losing several more tricks, or settle cautiously for 11?*