


Sometimes more is Less - Norman's Notes No. 49

On Board 2, 6th February, East held zero points, and at one table faced the choice - when opponents' bidding allowed - of playing in a hopeless 1NT* contract, or allowing NS to play in a doubled, vulnerable part-score, making two or three overtricks. And yet.....

Dealer East. NS vulnerable.

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

East passes, South opens 1♥ and West doubles. So far, so easy, but what does North bid? A straightforward 3NT or 'pass'? The former is the boring but safe option (although diamonds could be a problem): the latter is more speculative (1♥*+3 gives a super +760, but 1♥*+2 only +560 against a likely +600/630 in 3NT). Unsurprisingly, three Norths settled for the no-trump game (also one South was in 3NT), scoring 9, 10 or 11 tricks. (Best defence and play allows 10).

Just one North passed West's double of 1♥ and that gave East a problem. Either 'pass', with NS almost certain to make their contract with overtricks, or bid 1NT holding a great heart suit! At the table East bid 1NT, and after two passes North doubled and all passed. Should West have bid 2♦?

A low heart was led and NS seem to have little difficulty in scoring four hearts and three club tricks, two further aces and at least one more diamond or spade trick. That's four light and -800. But South exited with his 5th heart to declarer's unreachable boss ten and scored only nine tricks, and -500 was an EW top!

Supposing that East passes 1♥*. There are four losers, one in each suit, and North-South's +560 is an unexpected top for East-West.