

2020-05-21

Board 1
North Deals
None Vul

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

4 ♠ is no problem. The issue is how you play the hand if you reach 6 ♠.

In fact 6 ♠ is solid and cannot be beaten... except by declarer. Win any lead and take the diamond finesse. If the ♦ Q wins then you can afford the safety play in spades....lead a low spade towards dummy's ♠ J 8 and play the 8 if North plays any lower spade. This protects against either defender holding all four outstanding trumps!

If North shows out on the first spade lead then rise with dummy's J which will be beaten by South's Q but thereby leaving you with a finesse against South's remaining 1076.


Note that if the diamond finesse loses then you cannot afford the safety play in trumps! That's why you take the diamond finesse BEFORE playing on trumps.

Saints and Sinners

Not one declarer made the 12 tricks on offer in this hand. **Kudos** to **Sheila** who entered dummy to lead ♠ J thus indicating that she was aware of a possible bad trump break She would have made the slam if South held all four outstanding trumps... leading low towards dummy's J8 caters for either North or South holding all four outstanding trumps! And **Kudos** also to **Michele** (of the one 'l') and partner **William**, who were the only pair to bid the small slam. A pity that they didn't bring the contract home!

Board 2
 East Deals
 N-S Vul

2020-05-21

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

E/W should reach 4 ♥ although some may play in 3 NT. This is another hand that requires a safety play in trumps. Win a trick at earliest opportunity and cash ♥ K. Get back to hand and now lead towards dummy's ♥ J 2. Again, this 'safety play' protects against either defender holding four trumps. Note that in the actual layout on this hand if you take a first round finesse in hearts you will subsequently lose a second trump and the contract will fail!


Note also, that after cashing ♥ K, when subsequently leading a second heart towards dummy's J2, if South shows out you rise with the J which will lose to North's Q but you will then have a finesse position against North's 108 sitting UNDER East's A9.

Saints and Sinners

Seven of nine pairs reached the heart game. One pair bid to 3 ♥ and one pair bid 3 NT. One pair made eleven tricks, two made nine and all others made ten tricks. Congratulations to **Mairead and Lilyf14** who found the safe line of playing a heart to dummy's K albeit that Mairead played a few too many side suit winners first and could have suffered an unnecessary ruff! And black marks to the Norths who having won a trick with the ♥ Q proceeded to give a gift back to declarer by cashing the ♠ A thereby establishing dummy's ♠ K as a winner and letting out the contract in the process!

Board 3
 South Deals
 E-W Vul

2020-05-21

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

N/S will probably reach 3 NT with South as declarer. West will likely lead a small spade. The danger on this hand lies with the possibility of West establishing and being able to cash three spade winners BEFORE declarer can cash nine tricks in the other suits. A simple, but perhaps not an obvious solution is to win the first spade in dummy with J or 10 and then take the safe route by finessing in diamonds BEFORE playing on clubs. Note that if the diamond finesse loses West cannot continue the spade attack without conceding an extra trick to declarer. If the diamond finesse wins then declarer should immediately revert to clubs thereby establishing nine tricks safely via 2 spades, 2 hearts, 2 diamonds and 3 clubs!

Note what happens if you play on clubs first...East will win and return a spade thus establishing 3 spade winners for West while he still hold the ♦ K as an entry. And declarer no longer has a safe route to 9 tricks!

Saints and Sinners

Only one **Sinner** here....**me**. I failed to give North an extra diamond, heart or spade thus depriving North the opportunity of responding in a suit thereby letting South bid NT. Hence no declarer got the opportunity to display their declarer prowess in playing 3 NT on a spade lead from West!

I note that two defenders made the slightly unorthodox lead of the ♥ 8 from a holding of ♥ QJ98 whereas two more experienced players fond the more natural lead of ♥ Q (or ♥ J) depending on your methods.

Board 4

West Deals

Both Vul

2020-05-21

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

Oh how easy it is to trip up on the simple things! N/S will probably reach 3 NT likely played by North on the lead of ♥ Q from East.

Declarer will survey dummy and quickly count to 9 tricks assuming that there is no club loser. The more experienced player will realise that the defense should not come to a club trick because declarer can play the suit 'safely' guarding against either player holding all four outstanding clubs. Simply cash either ♣ A or ♣ K (the hand with two of the top three honours). If either opponent shows out then declarer can take the marked finesse and score all five club tricks.

However a problem arises if declarer cashes ♣ Q on the first round of the suit! Now West cannot be prevented from scoring a trick with his ♣ J before declare can score dummy's fifth club.

There is another banana skin awaiting declarer, i.e. if East happens to holds all four outstanding clubs. Declarer will slip on the banana skin if he nonchalantly leads ♣ 2 on the first round winning the trick with dummy's ♣ A or ♣ K. But now, if West shows out declarer can play a club to his ♣ Q and then lead ♣ 10 from hand trapping East's ♣ J. However East can cause declarer to slip on the banana skin by covering with his ♣ J forcing declarer to win the third club with dummy's remaining honour but now declarer has to win the fourth round in hand with ♣ 10 or ♣ 9 leaving dummy's remaining club stranded!

Simple solution...lead the ♣ 10 or ♣ 9 on the first round!


Who said bridge was an easy game!

Saints and Sinners

Only two **Saints** on this hand...**May O'Sullivan** and **John Fahy** who both correctly led the ♣ 10 (9 would also do) to cater for **either** East or West having all four outstanding clubs. They were also the only declarers to make 10 tricks. And there were several **Sinners** who committed the ultimate crime of leading ♣ Q on first round of play of the club suit thus establishing a clear winner for Wet's ♣ J. I had the choice of putting the four outstanding clubs in either the East or West hand and felt that the bigger crime would be for declarer to lead ♣ Q with this holding.

Board 5
North Deals
N-S Vul

2020-05-21

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

If East leads a small diamond against 3 NT then declarer must resist the urge to win the opening lead if he wishes to make the contract!

Look what happens if North idly wins with ♦ Q or ♦ J at trick one.... Declarer will subsequently finesse a club into West who will return his second diamond and East will score four diamond tricks! Contract down one!

Now, let's suppose that declarer ducks the first diamond. West will return a diamond and North will cover with ♦ Q or ♦ J. East is now scuppered. He can win the second diamond but cannot continue the suit without conceding a diamond to North who will then safely finesse a club into West.

Is there a caveat...of course...there's nearly always a caveat! If East has only four diamonds then declarer must win a diamond at first opportunity otherwise the defenders will take four diamonds and a club!

How to tell whether East has four or five diamonds...listen to the bidding and observe the opening lead.... and guess right!

Lastly, note that if East starts with a diamond honour it probably favours declarer. If East started with five diamonds then West will be unable to return the suit (assuming East continues with a second diamond at trick two) when West gains the lead with ♣ K...which again illustrates why it is often best to lead a low card from this type of holding!

Saints and Sinners


Newinn2 was a combined **Saint** and **Sinner**. They found the correct lead of ♦ 5, declarer winning with ♦ J. Declarer subsequently finessed in clubs and West won with ♣ K and then returned ♦ 9 and when North followed with ♦ 2 East fell from grace by winning with ♦ A when the ♦ 10 would have secured the trick and three more diamonds could be cashed to defeat the contract. Instead the contract made! Concentration is a vital element of bridge for both declarers and defenders. Not surprisingly experienced players **Enda & Sean Glynn** found the right defense against **John Fahy** who missed the opportunity to turn the tables on them and be a **Saint** by ducking the opening lead! And there were several other **Sinners** who started the defense with a diamond honour thus killing the opportunity to score four diamond tricks.

2020-05-21

Board 6

East Deals

E-W Vul

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

E/W should get to 4 ♠. The defense will probably cash two top hearts and continue with a third round of the suit.

Having lost two tricks declarer should be conscious of the fact that he can only afford to lose one trump trick. Solution...another simple 'safety play'...lead a spade towards dummy's ♠ A8 and when South follows low then play dummy's ♠ 8. This play guarantees only one loser in the trump suit. If North follows with a trump then there are only two outstanding trumps which will fall under ♠ A K...

But look what happens if declarer rises with dummy's ♠ A on the first round....he must subsequently lose two trumps tricks to South. Down one!

Clearly declarer will rise with dummy's ♠ A if South shows out on the first round and can then pick up North's four trumps for one loser.

That's one of the nice features of some, but not all, 'safety plays'... they work irrespective of which opponent holds the outstanding length.

Most 'safety play's can be worked out at the table although after a while many will spring to mind automatically when you see certain suit combinations.

Stay safe...and play safe!


Saints and Sinners

Not one Saint...**all Sinners**. No declarer made the ten tricks available on this hand...not a single one found the play of leading a small spade from hand and simply covering South's card!

And one E/W pair paid the price for playing in 3 NT instead of a spade contract. 3 NT was defeated by three tricks!

Board 7
 South Deals
 Both Vul

2020-05-21

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

N/S may reach 3 ♠ (shouldn't get to 4 ♠). Declarer should win at first opportunity and lead a small spade towards dummy's ♠ Q...which will lose to East's ♠ K. Regain the lead at first opportunity and cash ♠ A. DO NOT PLAY a third spade. Now proceed to ruff hearts in hand using North's clubs as entries. Declarer should eventually clock up 9 tricks.

There are times to draw ALL trumps and times not to do so. This is a time not to do so. On this occasion it would be a poor return to use two of our losing trumps to ensnare a single winning trump held by the defense! We get a much better return by playing as indicated above!

Saints and Sinners

One pair of **Saints (mariekil & drumcro)** for a perfect auction of 1 ♠ - 3 ♠ and for then scoring nine tricks and bagging for themselves a whopping +6.88 imps. Five N/S pairs bid the spade game and failed by a trick. One N/S pair bid 4 ♠ and went two down. And two N/S pairs ended up in 3 NT-1 and 4 NT-4 respectively.

Board 8
West Deals
None Vul

2020-05-21

♠ Q J 10 9

♥ J 10 9 4

♦ 5 4

♣ J 4 3

♠ A K 5 4

♥ A K 6 5

♦ 3 2

♣ Q 6 5



♠ 3 2

♥ 3 2

♦ K J 10 9 8 7 6

♣ A 2

♠ 8 7 6

♥ Q 8 7

♦ A Q

♣ K 10 9 8 7

E/W will probably reach 3 NT. North will likely lead ♠ Q. Upon gaining the lead declarer will lead a diamond hoping for a favourable lie of the outstanding cards in the suit, i.e. South to hold a singleton ♦ A.

South should win the trick economically and then find the killing defense...put the ♣ K on the table (virtually if not physically!). This special play will kill dummy's diamond suit (no access!) unless declarer has 3 diamonds in which case you cannot prevent declarer from scoring five diamond winners! If the ♣ K wins the trick then continue with another club to kill the potential entry to dummy's diamonds.

This play is known as **The Merrimac Coup** and occurs where a player (usually a defender) sacrifices a high card in order to eliminate a vital entry from an opponent's hand (usually a dummy). It was named after American steam ship Merrimac, which was sunk during the Spanish–American War in 1898 in Santiago de Cuba in an attempt to bottle up the Spanish fleet.

Careful subsequent defending should see declarer restricted to six tricks! A fair return for sacrificing your ♣ K.

Saints and Sinners

Four **Defender Sinners** (all sitting in the South seat), who shall remain nameless, who let out 3 NT by failing to find the switch to ♣ K after winning the first diamond. And one **Declarer Sinner**, who received the same defense at trick three (low spade return after South won with the ♦ Q) but failed to rise with her remaining spade honour and play a second diamond thereby establishing the remaining diamonds as winners whilst still having the ♣ A in dummy to access them!

Board 9
North Deals
E-W Vul

2020-05-21

♠ 9 8 7 6
♥ 8 5
♦ J 10 9 6
♣ 9 8 7

♠ 4 3 2
♥ 7 6
♦ A K Q 3 2
♣ 4 3 2



♠ A K 5
♥ A K 4 2
♦ 8 7
♣ A K Q J

♠ Q J 10
♥ Q J 10 9 3
♦ 5 4
♣ 10 6 5

Good players always play with the odds! So, know the odds and use them to your advantage. E/W will probably reach 6 NT. If South leads ♥ Q declarer should take stock... He can count 11 top tricks with a possibility of two extra diamonds which could amount to a total of 13 tricks!

However declarer should be familiar with the odds (percentages) re suit distributions...a 3-3 break of six outstanding cards in a suit ranks at only 36%. An odd number of outstanding cards tends to break evenly whereas an even number of outstanding cards in a suit will tend to NOT break evenly!

In this example declarer would be best advised to DUCK a diamond and NOT to try and cash the suit from the top which on this occasion would restrict declarer to 3 diamond tricks. Ducking a diamond will give declarer 4 tricks and 12 in total.

Obviously, if E./W reach 6 ♦ then diamonds should be cashed from the top.

Saints and Sinners

Three **Saints** who bid to the reasonable 6 NT but then one fell from grace and became a **Sinner** for not finding the duck of the first round of diamonds to bring home twelve tricks. Of the other two declarers in 6 NT, one managed to make all thirteen tricks because North fell asleep when declarer let the ♦ 7 run into North who presumably lost concentration and followed with the ♦ 6 instead of winning the trick with the ♦ J (or 10 or 9)!

And poor marks to the six E/W partnerships who failed to bid the very good slam. Nine high-card points 9, and a super diamond suit, opposite a hand showing 23-24 hcp is good for a small slam. Maybe some partnerships had a difficulty in showing a balanced hand with 23-24 hcp.

And note the IMP scoring. The two successful declarers in 6 NT scored +11.75 and +12 IMPs respectively whereas the declarer who failed to make the slam lost -14 IMPs...that's a swing of 26 IMPs...

The six declarers who failed to bid the slam scored a **loss** of -1.12 or -1.88 IMPs depending on the number of tricks they made in 3 NT.

Board 10
 East Deals
 Both Vul

2020-05-21

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

Hopefully E/W find their spade fit! Clearly ten tricks are on top in 4 ♠. The question is can you do better? Yes... a **dummy reversal** cum-cross-ruff can produce TWELVE tricks.

Win any lead and cash ♥ A and then ruff a heart...return to the West hand (via a diamond) and ruff another heart but note carefully what discard South makes. If he discards a diamond then return to hand via another diamond and ruff a third heart. Now cash ♣ K and follow with a club to West's ♣ A and ruff a fourth heart. Now ruff a club in the West hand and ruff the last heart. Now ruff the fourth club in the West hand.

Alternatively...win any lead and cash ♥ A and ♦ A K and then play two top clubs ending in the East hand and ruff a club with one of dummy's trumps. Now ruff a heart in hand and ruff your remaining club in dummy. The East hand will have four top trumps and a losing diamond.

When executing cross-ruffs it is often vital to cash side suit winners early in the play in case the opponents are subsequently able to ruff them!

Also, be sure that your trump holding (in both hands) is suitable for cross ruffing. You want to avoid a situation where a defender can overruff and play a trump thus reducing your combined trumps winners.

Saints and Sinners

One E/W pair (**Deirdre O'Halloran** and partner) bid and made 6 ♠ and scored +13 IMPs for their efforts. The reason for bidding the slam lies with the fact that Deirdre made a light opening of 1 ♠ with the East hand. West now had difficulty in staying out of a slam while presumably Deirdre was getting worried as to where her light opening might propel her! The play was no problem to her. All other E/W pairs ended up with a negative IMP score! Only one other declarer (**Enda Glynn**) also made 12 tricks and hence lost only -.12 IMPs on the board. All other E/W pairs lost 1.12 or 2.12 IMPs depending on how many tricks they made.

But there was only one BIG winner on this hand. I didn't expect (nor intend) anyone to bid the small slam but if you do then you need to be able to play the cards. And that was the case here. Well done **Dee**.

Board 11
 South Deals
 None Vul

2020-05-21

♠ A 10 9 8 6	♠ K 4 3	♠ Q J 7 5									
♥ A K 3	♥ 8 7	♥ 6 5 4 2									
♦ 7	♦ J 10 8 6	♦ K 5 4 2									
♣ K 7 6 5	♣ A Q J 10	♣ 3									
<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: 0 auto; text-align: center; border-collapse: collapse;"> <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>				N		W		E		S	
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♠ 2											
♥ Q J 10 9											
♦ A Q 9 3											
♣ 9 8 4 2											

E/W should get to 2/3 ♠ This is another cross-ruff situation. Win at first opportunity and play a small club from hand. Do not take a spade finesse if South return a spade after winning the club (note not possible here). now play to ruff clubs in the hand with the shorter trump holding. If the hand winning the first club does not switch to a trump then do not subsequently take the trump finesse which would permit the defense to play two rounds of trumps thus reducing your cross-ruff options!

Saints and Sinners

Aggressive bidding by three E/W pairs saw them reach the heady heights of 4 ♠ where they paid for the **sin of overbidding**. Two E.W pairs (**Deirdre & partner**, and **ifouriron & fikretyuce** our two subs for the night) stayed below game and yet managed to score ten tricks despite having a loser in each suit! Sounds like two **Sinners** in the N/S stream. Three E.W **Saints (Sean & Enda, Michele & William, Sheila & Marie)** who stopped in 2♠ and made precisely nine tricks.

But perhaps the real **Saint** on this hand is **Marion Donlon** who found a good takeout double on the second round of bidding having previously passed as dealer. This encouraged her partner to steal the auction with a bid of 3 ♣ which made, on the nose! Perhaps East might have bid 3 ♠ but then we wouldn't have had this nice little finale to the analysis of this hand! Well done **Marion!**

Board 12
West Deals
N-S Vul

2020-05-21

♠ K J 8
♥ K 4 3
♦ K J 6 5
♣ K 5 2

♠ 7 6
♥ 7 5 2
♦ 10 9 8 7
♣ Q 10 9 6



♠ A 5 4 3
♥ J 10 9 8
♦ Q 4
♣ A 8 7

♠ Q 10 9 2
♥ A Q 6
♦ A 3 2
♣ J 4 3

N/S may have a combined 27 hcp but 3 NT is far from certain. North is likely to be declarer and will probably face the lead of ♥ J. Declare can count 8 tricks...3 spade, 3 hearts and 2 diamonds. The vital ninth trick could come from diamonds or clubs.

The holding in the club suit is one where declarer should avoid, if at all possible, initiating the play of this suit. Look what could happen if declarer leads a club from either hand!

So, perhaps we should pursue diamonds for the 9th trick. But how should we tackle this combination? To many it seems obvious to cash ♦ A and then finesse the ♦ J on the second round...and if we needed 4 tricks then that's the best line.

BUT, we only need 3 tricks and in that case there is a better line... Cash the K and A, **in that order, and then lead towards dummy's J6.**

Clearly we will win at least three tricks when the suit breaks 3-3 BUT as we already know a 3-3 break only occurs 36 times in 100. We should take extra protection against East holding precisely Qx. It doesn't matter what the distribution is if West holds the Q but it does matter if East holds the Q. Playing the suit in the aforementioned way takes care of situations (like this one) where East holds Qx. If we finessed the J then we have no way of making a third trick when the suit breaks 4-2 as it does here.

And if East holds 4 diamonds including the Q, well then we cannot legitimately make three tricks in the suit.


Saints and Sinners

Eight N/S pairs bid to 3 NT. Three **Sinners** took the finesse of the ♦ J at an early stage in the play and duly went down. The other five declarers made the contract, two with an overtrick. In two instances the defenders in the West seat fatally discarded a diamond(s) thus establishing a third trick in the suit for declarer even when they took the losing finesse of ♦ J into East's doubleton ♦ Q. **Marion Donlon** has some claim the mantle of a **Saint** when a careless East allowed themselves to be thrown on lead with the fourth spade (♠ A) and then having to lead a club away from their Ace into North's ♣ Kx. A nice end-play!

Only one declarer (**Marie Killilea**) played a diamond to their K, ignoring the finesse of the ♦ J, and then made a third trick when the ♦ A felled East's doubleton ♦ Q thereby promoting declarer's ♦ J to a winner. But that play only came AFTER East generously cashed their two black aces early in the play!

Board 13
North Deals
Both Vul

2020-05-21

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

N/S might reach 6 ♦ and if so then it becomes a case of how can declarer guarantee the contract?

Clearly there are no major suit losers and on the led of the first diamond from the South hand it becomes apparent that there is a trump loser.

So, how can declarer avoid a club loser? Obviously if declarer guesses correctly and finesses the right way then that solves the problem!

But why go for a 50% chance when there is a clear-cut 100% option.

Win the opening lead. Cash major suit winners ending in the South hand. Now lead a diamond and when West shows out win with ♦ A and then throw East on lead with a second diamond. East is now 'End-played'. He must either give declare a 'ruff and discard' (throw ♣ 3 from the North hand and ruff in the South hand) or lead a club which solves the issue re locating the ♣ Q. All roads lead to victory for declarer.

Unusually, it is also a situation where if West follows with a low diamond then finessing will also produce 12 tricks. If East wins with ♦ K then he is also end-played!!!

Saints and Sinners

This is one of my favourite hands from this set of boards. And **Saints** and **Sinners** abound! Four **Bidding Saints...Bridie Redahan & Nora Hanratty**, and **Marion Donlon & play2day**, both of whom bid to the impregnable 6 ♦ But then both declarers fell from grace, one landing safely when she luckily guessed correctly re the location of the ♣ Q and ended up making the slam whereas the other declarer got a bumpy landing when she misguessed the location of the ♣ Q and the slam failed. Although one pair scored a whopping 12 IMPs for bidding and making 6 NT they get no kudos for being in a contract that requires a lucky guess to succeed whereas 6 ♦ is a certainty to make once played as outlined above. Win any lead, cash ♦ A, eliminate the major suits and then through East on lead with a diamond and they will have to give a **ruff and discard** or **lead a club**, either of which gives declarer the 12th trick and the contract. No lucky guesses involved!

Board 14
 East Deals
 None Vul

2020-05-21

♠ K J 5 3 2
 ♥ A Q 6 4
 ♦ A 2
 ♣ J 3

♠ 7
 ♥ 10 8 7
 ♦ K Q 10 9 7
 ♣ K 10 9 4



♠ A Q 10 9 8
 ♥ 3 2
 ♦ 4 3
 ♣ Q 8 6 2

♠ 6 4
 ♥ K J 9 5
 ♦ J 8 6 5
 ♣ A 7 5

N/S will likely end up in a heart part-score after North shows 5 ♠/4 ♥.

East will do best to lead a trump...and lead another trump after gaining the lead with a spade.

Declarer has no source of tricks other than ruffs in his hand and dummy. A trump lead and continuation at first opportunity will significantly reduce that line as a source of tricks.

It was the bidding that should have alerted East to the effective trump lead.... Well done to those that found it at the table.

Saints and Sinners

Only 3 N/S pairs found their heart fit. So, kudos to them for that. Unfortunately two of the three found the play a bit challenging and duly went two or three light.

One pair, **Peggy Fay & idoella**, are perhaps deserving of a **Saintly** crowning for reaching the par contract of 3 ♥. This duly made partially due to the fact that the defense was less than sterling! Also, declarer might have been wiser not to draw three rounds of trumps early in the play.

Board 15
 South Deals
 N-S Vul

2020-05-21

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

E/W will surely reach 4 ♠ with their 5-5 trumps fit....BUT...will declarer know how to handle it!

North will likely lead 3 rounds of clubs declarer ruffing the 3rd round in dummy. The contract hangs on the ability of declarer to hold trump losers to one!

Most unsuspecting declarer's will cash the ♠ A and then realise that they now have two trump losers in addition to the 2 clubs tricks already cashed by the defense. The contract is now 1 down.

The first thing that declarers should realise is that missing ♠ KJ9 means there is a guaranteed loser in the trumps suit and the question is simply can you restrict the trump losses to one?

The answer is a resounding YES! Stop and think. Look at the layout of the spade holdings between the two hands and then visualise EITHER defender holding the remaining three trumps, KJ9.

If you do that mental exercise (or take out a pack of cards and lay out the suit on the kitchen table) then you should quickly appreciate that as long as you lead a small spade towards dummy's Q876 you can restrict the defense to a single trick in the suit.

These **Safety Plays** are not secret mysteries. They are there for all to see with just a little thought required before you make the play!


Saints and Sinners

Seven of nine E/W pairs bid the spade game. None made the 'safety play' of leading a small spade towards dummy's Qxxx, so, **Sinners all**. Only one declarer made ten tricks and that was because he led the ♠ Q from dummy and got lucky because the three outstanding trumps were in the South hand. If they had been with North then he was going down and everyone else would be making the contract!

Leading small towards dummy's Qxxx caters for **either** North or South holding all three outstanding trumps and leads to a single trump loser.

Board 16
West Deals
E-W Vul

2020-05-21

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

This is another quite common situation. Most N/S pairs will reach 4 ♥. West will likely lead ♣ Q and a quick scan of dummy will reveal at least 3 losers....a club, a diamond, and a trump unless we get lucky and the ♥ QJ are doubleton and fall under the ♥ AK. But that is most unlikely.

So, is there a possibility of losing TWO trumps tricks? Well, obviously if West holds ♥ QJ9x then we cannot avoid two trumps losers.

But are there any other possibilities that might cause us to lose two trumps? Yes, there is if declarer is careless. In this example if declarer plays a heart to North's ♥ A and then carelessly plays the ♥ K when East follows to the second trump with the ♥ 8 then declarer will indeed lose two trumps. It is a simple 'Safety play' to cover East's ♥ 8 with the ♥ 10 instead of the ♥ K which would be careless and costly. Yes, we must lose one trump trick but this safety play ensures we don't lose two.

Note it does not help East to insert the ♥ Q (or ♥ J). declarer will win the trick with ♥ K and then re-enter dummy to lead a third heart through East's ♥ J8, again restricting East to a single trump trick.

Saints and Sinners

Seven of nine N/S pairs bid the heart game; the other two languished in a part score. But no **Sainthoods** awarded for bidding the game. In terms of the play, one **Sinner** status awarded to a declarer who took a first round finesse of the ♥ 10. This could have lost to a singleton Q or J and with another heart loser still to come to the other defender who was now holding Q/J98.

A definite **Sinner** status also to the defender in the East seat who split his heart honours on the second play of the suit from dummy, thus depriving declarer of the **losing option** play! East knows he has a trump trick coming... it can never be right to play Q or J on the second round. Leave it to declarer to find the right play. Don't make it easy for him/her!

Full **Sainthood** status to **Liam Faherty** and **Drumcro**, both of whom unflinchingly covered East's ♥ 8 with the ♥ 10 on the second round of the heart suit thus holding their trumps losses to one trick!

Board 17
North Deals
None Vul

2020-05-21

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

♠ 3	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ 3
N					
W E					
S					
♥ K J 8		♥ K J 8			
♦ Q J 9 8		♦ Q J 9 8			
♣ A K Q 7 4		♣ A K Q 7 4			

E/W may reach 4 ♠ although it is possible that N/S could find a sacrifice in 5 ♦. But the sacrifice could be challenging.

So, back to East as declarer in 4 ♠... If South lead a club honour (A, K or Q) then the contract can make through an interesting sequence of plays. Let's say that South switches to a diamond at trick two. Declarer wins in dummy and continues with a club from dummy discarding his losing diamond from hand. South is on lead again and has few options other than playing another diamond. Declarer ruffs in hand and plays two round of trumps (NOT three!) ending in dummy, drawing all the opponents trumps in the process. Declarer leads another club and discards a losing heart from hand whilst also establishing the last club in dummy as a winners. Dummy can subsequently be accessed via a trump to cash the winning club whilst discarding the ♥ Q from hand.

Note that a heart switch by South at any stage hands declarer his tenth trick

So, can the contract be defeated? Yes, but it requires South to avoid a club lead and to open the defense with a diamond lead. North must win the defense's sole diamond trick and then switch to a heart. Now the defense are a tempo ahead of declarer. Declarer cannot duck a second club to South whilst discarding a small hearts because now South will be able to cash ♥ K to go with two clubs and a diamond.

So, top marks to any South who led a diamond instead of a top club. And black marks to any declarer who received a top club lead and still didn't make the game contract!

Saints and Sinners

At eight of nine tables the final contract was played in spades. At one table N/S bid one too many and ended in 5 ♠-2. Another table rested n 3 ♠. One N/S pair (**Marie Killil;ea & drumcro**) are deserving of **Saintly** status for bidding to a contract of 4 ♦ (undoubled!) and went two light but scored +2.62 IMPs for their efforts! Even if doubled it would still be a good score against the making 4 ♠. At the remaining six tables the contract was 4 ♠. At four tables the contract was successful whereas at the other two the contract was unsuccessful. The four successful declarers adopted a line similar to that outlined above and duly used dummy's clubs to discard losers (diamond/hearts) from hand. **Saints**, all four... **Deirdre, Rhona, Sean, Michele**. Well done. Unsuccessful declarers pursued a line of trying to ruff out South's club honours. Not a success. Nor was the heart finesse likely to succeed after South's takeout-double.

Board 18
 East Deals
 N-S Vul

2020-05-21

♠ 8 7
 ♥ K Q J 7 2
 ♦ A K 3
 ♣ 4 3 2

♠ Q J 10 9
 ♥ 9 5
 ♦ 9 8 5 4
 ♣ K J 6



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

♠ A K
 ♥ A 10 8 6 4
 ♦ Q J 2
 ♣ A Q 9

Hopefully some N/S pairs negotiated the bidding to arrive in 6 ♥ which can make rather than 6 NT which should NOT make!

Declarer starts with eleven tricks...2 spades, 5 hearts, 3 diamonds...and ♣ A. Yes, a simple club finesse could produce the 12th trick ...but that offers only a 50% chance of success!

Why settle for a 50% shot when you have a 100% guaranteed line of success.

The key to making 6 ♥ lies in appreciating the significance of South's club holding combined with the ability to eliminate the spade and diamonds from the N/S hands whilst also removing the defenders trumps.

So, win the opening lead. draw two rounds of trumps, Cash your diamond and spade winners taking care to end in the North hand. Now lead a club and simply cover any card that East plays. West is now end-played and must either return a club in to your remaining tenace or give you a ruff and discard which will enable you to discard a potentially losing club from one hand whilst ruffing in the other.

Note that you need to have either the 9 or 10 in addition to the AQ for this to work. Indeed it will also work if you have AJ10 instead of AQ10 or AQ9. Note that there is no guarantee of success if your holding is AJ9. In this latter instance West might hold KQ10 which would see you lose two tricks in the suit!

Saints and Sinners

The first **Sinner** award goes to the N/S pair who bid to 6 NT...duly going one off. All remaining eight N/S pairs bid to the stone-cold 6 ♥. Sadly, **Sinner** status has to be conferred not only on the four declarers who failed to make the contract but also on one successful declarer who made the contract through a mis-defense by the opponents. But the declarer should never have found themselves in that position in the first place! .

Saintly status is bestowed on the following declarers who bid and made the slam in the appropriate fashion and without any assistance from the defense. Well done to our three **Saints - Brian Place** (playing with daughter **Fiona**), **May O'Sullivan**, **Liam Faherty**. **Sinners** include one declarer who bid the slam but made it through a mis-defense as well as three declarers who bid the slam but failed to find the secure route to bringing the contract home.

Board 19
 South Deals
 E-W Vul

2020-05-21

♠ 6 4 2
 ♥ 7 3 2
 ♦ K Q 10 9 8
 ♣ Q 3

♠ K 7 5
 ♥ A K 8 5
 ♦ 6 5
 ♣ 9 8 7 5



♠ Q 8 3
 ♥ 10 6 4
 ♦ A 7 4
 ♣ K J 6 2

♠ A J 10 9
 ♥ Q J 9
 ♦ J 3 2
 ♣ A 10 4

This hand will likely be played in 1 NT by N/S, perhaps with South as declarer. If West leads a low heart declarer will win the trick and lead a diamond to dummy. East will do best to duck and to also duck the second round of diamonds thus restricting declarer to two diamond tricks.

The question is what can declarer do to counter this defense by E/W. The answer is that declarer can do a lot...

Upon winning the first diamond trick in the North hand declarer should now play a spade towards his hand, finessing the J (or 10 or 9) if East plays low. This will lose to West's ♠ K. Win at the net opportunity and play a second diamond towards dummy which East must once again duck. Now repeat the spade finesse. This will give declarer three spade tricks combined with a heart and two diamonds. Add in the ♣ A and declarer will amass at least seven tricks.

Note that if declarer has to play spade from his hand he will lose two tricks and the defense will likely score a total of seven tricks leaving declarer a trick short. A tight battle. How did you fare?

Saints and Sinners

In the **Sinners** corner are any East players who won the first or second diamond thereby giving declarer access to two extra tricks in dummy! Well done to **Saint Michele, Mairead Rabbitt, lilyf14**. But the latter two subsequently committed a **sin** by switching to a spade rather than returning a heart after winning with ♦ A.

And a **Sinner** status to the West player, who together with partner, had cooperated in an effective defense until West led ♠ K from (Kx) into declarer's ♠ AJ at trick eleven, East's ♠ Q having scored a trick earlier in the play. West had a safe exit in a small heart to leave declarer on lead at trick twelve with ♠ AJ with West sitting over him with ♠ Kx. Could West have known that declarer had ♠ AJ in this end game?...Yes, counting PARTNER'S points would have indicated that partner had already shown up with 10 points (♠ Q, ♦ A, ♣ KJ). With 7 hcp already visible in dummy and West holding ten it meant that declarer had to have any outstanding high cards. Declarer had to have the ♠ AJ. West should exit on ♥ 5 at trick 11 and wait to win the last trick with ♠ K. A pity, having defended well to that point in the play!

Board 20
West Deals
Both Vul

2020-05-21

♠ Q 10 6 5

♥ Q 7 6

♦ 8 7 6 5

♣ 8 6

♠ A K J 2

♥ 4 3 2

♦ K 10 4

♣ K 5 3



♠ 4 3

♥ K 10 9 8

♦ A J 3

♣ A J 4 2

♠ 9 8 7

♥ A J 5

♦ Q 9 2

♣ Q 10 9 7

E/W will probably arrive in 3 NT with West as declarer. If Stayman was used then North might avoid the otherwise natural spade lead. In this case North might lead a ♦ 7 (2nd highest from four small cards).

Declarer will assess his combined assets and will consider his options! On a diamond lead declarer can count 7 tricks (2 spades, 3 diamonds, and 2 clubs) and needs two more to make his contract.

What are the options? Well, it seems to be a case of choose your finesse. There are finesse positions in spades, clubs, and hearts! There is even the possibility of scoring two extra tricks in the club suit...successfully finesse the J and hope that the suit breaks 3-3. Not much chance of that methinks!...a successful finesse of the J carries a 50% chance but the 3-3 break offers only a 36% chance making the likelihood of the club suit producing the two extra tricks a mere 18%...Not good odds.

A successful finesse in spades is a 50% shot but will only produce one extra trick.

What about the heart suit. As it turns out this is your best shot for two extra tricks and offers a high 75 chance of success. Forget about the Ace...all you require is that North holds either the Q or J....that's all!. Simply play a heart from the West hand and if North plays low then finesse the 10 (or 9 or 8). Regain the lead at first opportunity and repeat the play by again finessing the 10, 9 or 8. Hopefully South wins the second round of the suit with the Ace which means that you can finesse for a third time and should then have two heart winners.

The only time that this will not work is where South holds the Q and J which, statistically speaking, will only occur 25 times in 100!

Saints and Sinners

I was not surprised to see my regular Thursday partner, **Enda Glynn**, find the right play in the heart suit and duly score ten tricks! **ifouriron** also played on hearts, in the appropriate manner, and also made his contract, So, two **Saints**. Unfortunately they were outnumbered by several **Sinners** who ignored the heart suit until it was too late, having already taken losing finesses in the black suits. The heart suit should be broached at first opportunity! The only declarers to make 3 NT were the two who attempted to create tricks from the heart suit... and they reaped the reward for their efforts and scored +11 IMPs each!