

Essex Contract Bridge Association

The Warboys Trophy 2019 Season

Report on Session held 13 March 2019

The second session of this year's Warboys produced some challenging deals. This selection covers points of: slam bidding, competitive bidding and play analysis. If you only have time to read about one deal, make it Board 24!

Board 5

Bd: 5	♠ 10		
Vul: N/S	♥ A743		
Dir: North	♦ AKQ108		
	♣ 653		
♠ K96		N	♠ Q8752
♥ 5			♥ J82
♦ 9652		W 5 E	♦ 74
♣ J9874			♣ KQ10
		S	
13	♠ AJ43		
4HCP 8	♥ KQ1096		
15	♦ J3		
	♣ A2		

A cursory glance informs that 7H is an excellent contract. It's just a question of how to get there. That only four pairs in the A event and only one in the B got to 6H and none reached the grand, suggests it is not straightforward.

A normal auction start would be 1D-1H though East may insert 1S. Given a free run NS may proceed:

1D-1H-3H-3S-4D-5C-5D-5NT-6H-7H

The jump to 3H is arguably an underbid. With so much trick-taking potential North should have no qualms about accepting slam tries. After North emphasises his Diamond suit South can reasonably resort to the "5NT Grand Slam Force". Whatever system of responses are used (here 6H shows one top honour) South can bid the grand confidently.

IF North takes a rosy view of his hand, he may rebid 3S over 1H; many pairs play this as an "Economical Jump Cue" agreeing partner's suit and showing a very strong hand. After this South can bid 7H without too much worry.

Matters may get more complicated if East overcalls 1S and then East raises to 2S whether South bids 2H or makes a negative double. (This is a classic situation where partnerships need to know if a free bid of 2H is forcing or just constructive and what a negative double followed by a bid means.)

Let's suppose the auction is simple: 1D-1s-2H-2s- North may be more motivated to bid 3S now as 3H may be read as just competitive and not so strong. After 3S South will be grand slam hunting again. Any pair not reaching at least 6H here needs to book their slam bidding in for a major overhaul.

Board 13

Bd: 13	♠ 874		
Vul: All	♥ J72		
Dir: North	♦ J103		
	♣ QJ97		
♠ Q2	N	♠ J103	
♥ AKQ10	W 13 E	♥ 6543	
♦ 85		♦ K972	
♣ A8543	S	♣ K10	
5	♠ AK965		
15HCP	♥ 98		
7	♦ AQ64		
13	♣ 62		

Third to speak, South will open a normal 1S, giving West a bit of a problem. Overcalling at the two-level on a flimsy 5 card suit does not usually work out well and a take-out double will leave West in an even more difficult position if East responds 2D. So, the best compromise is probably 1Nt. It may not be classical, there being no certain guard in Spades, but it is a bid that should attract the least problems and leaves scope for East to explore if he is moved to do so.

East will usually pass 1Nt, though may go on if the overcall has 18hcp in its scope. If North raises to 2S East will need to evaluate carefully. Assuming he has no game ambitions he has a choice between passing, with what is after all a defensive hand, or doubling for penalties. Double may well be the right tactic at match-pointed pairs as -110 will be poor anyway and +100 may not be great. However, at teams or Butler Pairs, as here, the risk/benefit ratio is substantially against doubling. As it happens 2S is one down without too much trouble and EW can make 140 in Hearts. So, by not doubling the worst that can happen is you lose 1imp against par. In practice this outcome may vary slightly as you are comparing against Bridge players not par robots. If 2S happens to make then doubling shovels a load of imp to NS. So, the sensible action for East is Pass.

Board 16

Bd: 16	♠ 98653		
Vul: E/W	♥ --		
Dir: West	♦ KQJ103		
	♣ KQ5		
♠ AKQJ10	N	♠ 74	
♥ 10872	W 16 E	♥ 9654	
♦ 6		♦ 8754	
♣ A86	S	♣ 1092	
11	♠ 2		
14HCP 0	♥ AKQJ3		
15	♦ A92		
	♣ J743		

A very comfortable 1S opening for West and North will have to decide whether to bid 2D. Sitting North I decided to pass as I thought that would make the auction more manageable if partner gets active, though I have sympathy for 2D bidders. The South hand is quite strong so may opt for Double rather than 2H; again, either may work out alright. Indeed, my partner bid 2H and I elected, reluctantly, to pass this. We gained a few lucky imp. After a Double by South, North may try 3D and South should probably just bid 4H. With Trumps 4-4 this is a straightforward, if very fortunate, make. Perhaps passing 2H is a bit feeble but any move North makes sounds like a constructive effort with at least tolerance for Hearts. South may elect to raise 3D a level even though North passed initially over 1S; not unreasonable with so many potential tricks. North will be happy to push on to 5D. On a Spade lead declarer can ruff in dummy, cash three Hearts discarding all his Clubs then cross-ruff his way to eleven tricks. A trump lead removes one of his Spade ruffs and he will need to cash four Heart tricks straight away, again discarding all his Clubs. As it happens declarer can also get home by playing on Clubs early and only ruffing one Spade in dummy but he will still need three Heart tricks.

In the event 5D was only bid and made once, in the B section. 4H was bid once in both sections and failed both times.

Board 24

Bd: 24	♠ 10	
Vul: None	♥ A109742	
Dir: West	♦ K972	
	♣ 42	
♠ AQ3	N	♠ 852
♥ J85	W 24 E	♥ K3
♦ 54		♦ AQJ106
♣ KQ1095	S	♣ J76
7	♠ KJ9764	
12HCP11	♥ Q6	
10	♦ 83	
	♣ A83	

Probably the most interesting hand of the night.

A likely auction end-point will be 3Nt by either East or West. How the play goes may depend on whether North has shown his 6-card Heart suit somewhere in the bidding and what the NS carding agreements are.

Let's say West opens 1Nt and gets raised to 3Nt. Whether or not North has bid Hearts he is likely to lead the Ten. Pairs who play a Ten lead as guaranteeing an "internal sequence" will have the advantage. South will know that North has led from a suit headed by AT9 or AJT; in either case it is correct for South to withhold the Queen when declarer plays low from dummy. This will encourage West to use up his Heart stop while South still has one card in the suit to play when he is in with the Ace of Clubs. West will need to be inspired to avoid this trap by refusing to win the first Heart. If, by some miracle, West plays the King from dummy South should unblock the Queen.

When the weak no-trump is not operating, West will open 1C and North will likely make a weak jump overcall: 2H. After some fishing around, 3Nt by East is probable and the lead of the Heart Queen creates a similar problem for declarer. As nine tricks cannot be accrued without contribution from both minor suits, declarer needs to look ahead. If he wins the King of Hearts he needs to find North with both the King of Diamonds and the Ace of Clubs in order to avoid a Heart lead through the vulnerable Jack. This all seems very unlikely given the weak jump overcall, South is almost certain to have one of the missing minor suit honours. However, if South has the Ace of Clubs, with or without the King of Diamonds, declarer can improve his chances significantly by refusing to take the King of Hearts at trick one. This has the effect of potentially breaking the defence's communications. Now no matter how the defence proceeds the favourable lie of the Ace of Clubs (it doesn't matter about the King of Diamonds now) will enable East to secure his nine tricks and eventually a tenth from the Spade suit. 3Nt was successful in three of four attempts in the A section but never attempted in the B section.

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