29/06/2020 Hand of the Week 20: Missed opportunities?

Here are a couple for hands played in the recent YCBA Swiss Pairs event. First, playing East:

♠ Q 7
♥ 10 8 7 5 4 3 2
♦ 6
♣ 7 6 3

Martin opened 2♠, North bid 4♦, South responds 4NT, North showed 2 Aces and they end up in 6♦

The obvious lead is Q♠. This is unlikely to give anything away as we know partner holds 2 honours in the suit. If there any reason not to lead it? They have bid confidently to slam so are missing at most 1 Ace. North is expected to have a long, solid diamond suit. There are 4 spades missing, presumably North has at most a singleton. Is there a chance this could be thrown on side suit if we don't take the Ace now?

If not a spade then what? A trump lead is safe but unlikely to gain anything. Leading hearts or clubs could potentially finesse partner. The only real reason would be if Martin could realistically be void in hearts. He would then have to have a shape similar to 6-0-3-4. Is this a possibility?

Overall, I can't see a good reason not to lead partner's suit and leading anything else could well give something away.

The full deal:

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

So a club or heart lead will take it off. Discussing the hand afterwards Martin opined *"I've never made a Lightner Double but what a wonderful chance I had tonight. Brian Senior says: 'The one thing such a double will not ask for is the lead of a suit bid by the defence. If you cannot see an obvious lead try the suit in which you have the greatest length'... When will I get another chance?".*

When indeed.

However, doubling could well alert South to the fact that the slam is in jeopardy, and they could potentially convert to 6NT which is unbreakable. Missed chance? I'm not sure

Secondly:

West pre-empts, but we find our game in 4♥. Presumably the lead is a singleton. Hearts drop in 3 rounds with West having 3. Not wishing to waste time I tally up my tricks. 5 hearts, 5 clubs and the AK of spades- 12 tricks. One diamond will go on the 5th club but there is nowhere else for the second so I claim 12 and move on. But wait, a couple of declarers made 13!

Let's have another look. If the Q♠ drops double then I can play AK and cross to table to throw my 2nd diamonds on the J. The chances of getting a doubleton spade missing 8 cards is about 4%, so will happen about 1 time in 25. In fact, we have more chance here as we know how the spades break- West has 7 diamonds for the pre-empt, the singleton club lead and 3 hearts so 2-3-7-1. Knowing the suit is 6-2 we can do some simple maths and show that in this situation the Q will be doubleton 25% of the time, or 1 in 4!*

I'm sure you've already guessed the full hand:

Missed chance? Definitely!

*For the mathematically minded work out the chance of the doubleton *not* having the Queen, 7/8*6/7=42/56 or 75%
So the chance of the doubleton containing the Queen is 25%