

20/07/2020 Hand of the Week 23: Sacrificing at the 8 level?!

A hand from the club EBU session from Tuesday 7th July.

W	med029
♠	Q104
♥	Q6
♦	K43
♣	KJ874

North opens 1♥, Partner doubles and South jumps to 4♥. Partner could be distributional but it is likely that South has pre-empted with a long heart suit and few points. With a stronger hand South would find another bid, so it is likely that Partner has 15+ points. It looks likely we have game, but how to find it?

Assuming South has minimum 6 hearts, then partner is likely to have at most 1, so will have some holding in the other suits. With a 5-5 distribution I would have expected a CRO bid so the shape is likely 5-4-3-1, with a singleton heart at most.

One option is to bid spades and hope partner converts to a minor, but there is a danger it could be mis-interpreted as a 5 card suit and you could end up in a 3-3 fit. On the night I bid 4♠, but on reflection a Double probably would have been better, allowing partner to pass for penalties or bid their suit.

As it was 4♠ was passed out. The full hand:

D	4	N	HXPatM	W	N	E	S
		♠	73	P	1♥	X	4♥
		♥	AKJ53	4♠	P	P	P
		♦	J1095				
		♣	Q9				
W	med029			E	Erika Pick		
♠	Q104			♠	AKJ65		
♥	Q6			♥			
♦	K43			♦	AQ87		
♣	KJ874			♣	A632		
		S	hxrexajm				
		♠	982				
		♥	1098742				
		♦	62				
		♣	105				
				4♠ W		NS: 0 EW: 0	

Played at 9 tables, 1 pair found the slam, 4 were in 4♠, and 1 NS were left in 4♥. I think the 4♥ bid is sufficiently disruptive as it prevents EW finding the slam.

After my 4♠ bid East struggles to go on. Erika has all the controls so the options are pass or go straight to slam but with the weak club suit this looks risky. One option would be to bid 5♠ as a sort of slam invite- 'bid 6 if you are maximum partner'

Had I doubled, Erika will take out into 4♠ and I am unlikely to go on, as I am unsure of partner's strength. The pair that found the slam did so because West opened 1♣, other struggled to cope with the interference. As it happens if 4♥X were to be passed out it goes 3 off for -800, which would be a good result as only 1 pair found the slam.

Of some interest is the fact that EW can actually make 7♠, as the club suit breaks favourably giving 5 spades, 5 clubs and 3 hearts. In fact the 'best' contract turns out to be 8♥X-7! The vulnerable grand slam is worth 2210, whereas -7X vulnerable is 'only' 2100!

Bidding to the 8 level is not legal and this is currently covered specifically under Law 38. A quick search on the internet suggests that this has always been the case:

In the 1920 Whist Club of New York Auction Laws, Law 30 states "A bid is made by specifying any number from one (1) to seven (7) inclusive, together with the name of a suit or No Trump."

This exact wording was carried into the first set of Contract Laws promulgated by the Whist Club in 1927 (which displaced earlier Laws for Contract issued by the Knickerbocker Club and R.F. Foster)

<https://bridgewinners.com/article/view/has-bidding-to-the-8-level-ever-been-considered-in-bridge/>

After interference, consider 'bidding to the fit' in partners opening suit if you have a very weak hand, as a pre-empt can prevent you opponents finding their best contract!