

Board of the Week 4

By Dick Chapman

There is no teaching value in today's board, but I hope you enjoy the story.

I have been playing bridge for 60 years (Aunt Millie told me I couldn't go to college unless I knew how to play). In all of these years, I have never seen a 7NT contract redoubled.

I was playing in a BBO casual game with Kathy Gates as partner. I picked up this nice hand:

D: W	♠AKQ
V: EW	♥Q75
	♦AK982
	♣A8

West passes and Kathy opened 3 hearts. I almost fell out of my chair. 4NT by me is easy enough. Kathy calls 5 hearts to show 2 key cards without the queen of trump. Count 'em up, friends: I can claim 13 tricks without seeing the opening lead or dummy's cards. 7NT by me, pass, pass, double. What? My right hand opponent has doubled this contract????

If partner misclicked, I'm going down, but so what? I won't get this chance for 60 more years. In for a penny, in for a pound: redouble. The diamond queen was led and I claimed. Here's the full deal:

	♠10	
	♥AKJ9842	
	♦103	
	♣1032	
♠J9653	D: W	♠8742
♥	V: EW	♥1063
♦QJ76		♦54
♣Q976		♣KJ54
	♠AKQ	
	♥Q75	
	♦AK982	
	♣A8	

The opponents rejected the claim and made me play every...single...trick. Sigh. But for 2280 points, I'll play it out.

East's double is my nominee for Worst Double in the History of Bridge. Maybe the double was for takeout, ha ha. But this is not the worst thing about the board. To give you an idea of the strength of field in casual BBO play, the board was played 16 times and not one other pair bid the grand. It's elementary for anyone using Roman Key Card methods because with the known AK-seventh in hearts, anyone can count to 13. The traveler is shown in the next column:

Contract	Score	+ IMPS	- IMPS
7NTxx	2280	16.1	
6NT+1	1020	2.8	
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6NT+1	1020	2.8	
6♥+1	1010	2.7	
6♥+1	1010	2.7	
6♥+1	1010	2.7	
6♥+1	1010	2.7	
6♥=	980	1.7	
6♥=	980	1.7	
3NT+4	520		8.1
4♥+3	510		8.4
5♥+2	510		8.4
4♥+3	510		8.4
4♥+3	510		8.4

It's usually wrong to double freely-bid slams (except for Lightner doubles when partner is on lead), but I did double 7NT one time. At the club, the auction went 3NT on my right, 7NT on my left, pass, pass, double by me. I'm on lead and hold the ace and king of diamonds. It was quickly down 2 and "Oops, sorry partner." It seems opener was playing gambling 3NT and responder wasn't. But a redoubled NT grand? Never. And never again, as this is a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

By the way, one frequently sees wild scores in casual BBO play, where some disgruntled or substance-altered person bids 7NT holding 6 points, doubles a contract on nothing and gives up 4 or 5 vulnerable overtricks, or does something equally foolish. This sort of behavior destroys the game because it makes a mockery of the traveler. One way to combat this is Butler scoring. In Butler, the top 10% and the bottom 10% of scores are ignored, a datum is computed from the remaining scores, and IMPs are determined by comparison to the datum. A wild score caused by deliberately bad play does not skew the IMPS at the other tables. To my knowledge, no one uses Butler, but it works pretty well.

Speaking of deliberately bad play, please note that in a competitive game, everyone must be trying to win, and intentional foolishness is subject to disciplinary action. The *Bridge Bulletin* "Ruling the Game" column addressed this some years ago, when a correspondent asked about a pair who had agreed before the game to never take a bid (every call was going to be a pass, "just to see what happens.") This sort of behavior is highly detrimental to the game. That said, note that it is permissible to take an occasional flyer for strategic purposes. As an example, you are having a bad game and shoot for a doubtful slam to try to get back in the rankings. It may be overly risky, but it's strategic and thus permitted.