

Board of the Week 17

By Dick Chapman

Today's hand doesn't have a lot of educational value but it was fun to bid and play, so I'll share. You hold

♠A ♥AQ872 ♦Q6 ♣A5432

Imps, all vulnerable. Partner opens 1 club in second seat. One spade by RHO, 2 hearts by you, pass, 2NT by partner, pass. Your call? Give it some thought before you read further.

(Waiting)

Ok, did you make a call? Read on.

Partner has one or more spade stoppers and some values, else you would be hearing support for hearts or a rebid of a minor. Some number of no trump looks good. But do you like no trump with a singleton in the enemy suit? I do not.

My call was 4 clubs, asking key cards in clubs. My thinking was I could stop in 4NT if the response was unfavorable. But partner graciously held the cards for a call of 4 no trump (two key cards and the club queen), exactly what I needed. Six clubs. Not 6 no trump. Flip the board and play it from the South side:

	♠A ♥AQ872 ♦Q6 ♣A5432	
♠Q ♥ ♦ ♣	D: E V: B	♠ ♥ ♦ ♣
	♠K105 ♥65 ♦AJ10 ♣KQJ76	

West leads the spade queen. Win this and draw trump with the KQ. Discard a diamond on the spade king. Now what? Think before you read further.

You could take a ruffing finesse in diamonds but that is a practice finesse that exposes the heart suit. If both red kings are in East you are going down. It's much better to take a heart finesse. Let's say it loses. Win any return and cash two red aces then cross ruff to make 12 tricks: 2 spades, 1 heart, 1 diamond, 2 natural trump tricks, 3 heart ruffs in hand, 1 spade and 2 diamond ruffs in dummy.

The full hand:

	♠A ♥AQ872 ♦Q6 ♣A5432	
♠QJ632 ♥K94 ♦K42 ♣109	D: E V: B	♠9874 ♥J103 ♦98753 ♣8
	♠K105 ♥65 ♦AJ10 ♣KQJ76	

The heart finesse works today, so you make 13 tricks (played the same as above but no heart loser).

Sharp readers will observe 6 no trump will make from the south side, because (a) West can't attack diamonds (b) the heart king is onside and (c) the hearts are breaking 3-3. One pair in a typically weak BBO casual game field got to the no trump slam and played it to make (scoring 4 heart tricks), but look how much luck you need. If you had x-ray vision, would you bid 6NT? Nope, you would bid 7 clubs ☺.

One final question. What do you think of West's overcall of 1 spade? With a bad suit, a bad hand, and vulnerable color, I'm passing.

Bidding minor suit slams is sort of fun, I guess because they seem to be rare. But when they work, it's lots of imps (or matchpoints).

See you at the club, where the bridge is always fun, whether you have minor slams or Yarboroughs. What do you have at the club that you don't have in a casual BBO game? Friends. Come play on Friday night, where you can enjoy great food along with those friends.