

Board of the Week 24

By Dick Chapman

As readers and friends know, with one exception I much prefer face to face play over online bridge. The exception is the club's mentor-mentee game, which works better online because of the opportunity for post-game analysis.

But I do like the weekly free 8-board no-masterpoint solitaire tournament on BBO. This is sort of a rigged event, because the cards are stacked in your direction. You know to push the bidding. It's matchpoints, but you still strain to bid games and slams.

Here's the Board of the Week. Both sides vulnerable, you are dealer and hold

♠AKQ107 ♥K ♦42 ♣K10862

Easy 1 spade. Robot partner 4 clubs, a game forcing spade raise with club shortness. Knowing your partner won't be mad at you for overbidding, and knowing that overbidding pays, what is your call?

Mine was 4NT, RKC for spades. Partner calls 4 hearts (2 key cards without the trump queen). What next?

Of course I bid 6 spades. Missing a key card, would I do this in a club game? I refuse to answer that question. But here you are on the lead of the diamond king. Take it from here.

	♠J642 ♥AJ74 ♦AJ53 ♣9		
♠ ♥ ♦K ♣	V: B D: S	♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	
	♠AKQ107 ♥K ♦4 ♣K10862		
South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	4♣*	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♥	Pass
6♠	All pass		

You have 8 winners on top, 9 if the club king lives. You need 3 or 4 more, which is no hill for a stepper.

Win the diamond ace and unblock the heart king. You are going to be cross-ruffing, and if spades aren't 2-2 in the enemy hands you are going down. So, make them that way. Ace of spades, then over to the jack. Yes! Luck #1, the spades indeed are 2-2. Now the ace of hearts and discard the losing diamond. Club toward the king and Luck #2, East rises with the ace. Aren't these robots nice?

Ruff the diamond return, then ruff a club, ruff a diamond, ruff a club (everyone follows, Luck #3), and ruff the good jack of diamonds. You are out of trump but by ruffing the winner you are in back in hand with the king and a small club. The club king brings down the jack (the queen already has fallen) and the established fifth club (the 10) is the slam-making trick. Here's the full deal:

	♠J642 ♥AJ74 ♦AJ53 ♣9	
♠93 ♥Q532 ♦KQ6 ♣J753	V: B D: S	♠85 ♥10986 ♦10987 ♣AQ4
	♠AKQ107 ♥K ♦4 ♣K10862	

You scored 2 natural trumps, 2 hearts, 1 diamond, 5 ruffs (2 in dummy, 3 in hand), and 2 clubs at the end.

I have lessons on both cross-ruffing and setting up long suits. This hand brings both techniques into action. Newer and intermediate players may see this board again.

In a lesson the contract will be 4 spades. I will leave it to the experts to bid the hand in a random deal event. Real bridge, in other words. But I admit to enjoying the play, and the 1430 brought in 96% of the matchpoints. Four pairs bid slam but one was down 1 and another was down 2. The remaining 11 pairs were in 4 spades making 4, 5, or 6.

I refuse to play random deals with BBO robots because they can't defend well. Or I can't read their plays. Or something. But the weekly 8 board tournament is fun for a change of pace. You declare almost every hand.

See you at the club. I can't promise good cards there, but I can certainly promise good friendships. ☺