

Board of the Week 56

By Dick Chapman

I have learned a new lesson and, after discussion with partner, thought I would pass it on to you. Experts can stop here. To be honest, experts may not read my little column anyway. This is all about the auction, so here's your hand (East):

		♠	
		♥	
		♦	
		♣	
♠		V: EW	♠AKQ83
♥		D: W	♥Q865
♦			♦A92
♣			♣4
		♠	
		♥	
		♦	
		♣	
West	North	East	South
1♣	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♥	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♦	Pass	6♥	All pass

The question I pose is, which (if any) of East's bids was wrong?

West has shown a strong hand, but not a 2 club opener, with more clubs than hearts...a classic reverse. 5 diamonds is 3 key cards. Do you have an answer to the question yet?

While you think, here's a little Brubeck to enjoy: "Blue Rondo à la Turk" from the classic album "Time Out." I still have the LP (but alas, nothing on which to play it). I heard the quartet in Fayetteville in the spring of 1964 and even remember who I was with at the time.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FqPC-BkylxA>

Read on for the answer:

You are going to 6 hearts, right? But you have not communicated to partner that you have all the key cards. Would you bid 6 hearts with this holding?

♠KQJ108 ♥Q865 ♦A9 ♣KJ

Of course you would, and it is going to make even missing a key card. But the lesson here is this: you have shut your partner out of the auction. Yes, you are going to make the slam, but...you are giving up any shot at 6NT or a grand slam in hearts or no trump.

So, how do you communicate to partner all the key cards are present? It's quite easy when you think about it.

You simply ask for kings. The important thing to remember is that asking for kings has two purposes. First, it help you decide whether you have the grand. Here, it doesn't look possible regardless of the answer to the question. The second reason you ask for kings is to say "we have all the key cards." Partner might want to bid the grand. After you ask, partner bids specific kings (or number of kings if that is your method) and you still stop at 6 hearts. But along the way you have made a very important statement to partner.

Most of the time, you make your statement, partner accepts your decision to play 6 hearts, and it makes (or occasionally doesn't make). But every once in a while, you get this layout:

		♠J76	
		♥J72	
		♦KJ654	
		♣103	
♠10		V: EW	♠AKQ83
♥AK94		D: W	♥Q865
♦Q7			♦A92
♣AKQJ72			♣4
		♠9542	
		♥103	
		♦1083	
		♣9865	

Now sit West for a moment. When you hear 5NT from partner, you respond 6 clubs to show the club king, and partner bids 6 hearts. What is your call? Pass?

No. You should bid 7NT. You have all the key cards (because partner told you that) and a huge source of tricks in the club suit.

The board was played at the club 12 times, five of which were in 6NT, four in 6 hearts, one in 6 clubs, and one in 3NT, all making 13 tricks. One pair in 6 spades made 12 tricks. No one bid a grand. Of course I don't know the auctions, but if East correctly shows all the key cards via a king ask, West can take it from there.

You don't get grand slam chances often. Bid your hand fully so that partner has a say in the matter.

See you at the table.