

# Board of the Week 60

By Dick Chapman

Today's hand was played in the BBO Weekly Free Instant Tournament, one human with 3 robots. It's not real bridge, but I still do it once a week.

This article isn't particularly educational, but the deal was fun and I will show you how badly BBO bots can play. Stop here if you don't like bridge fun.

Hold these cards at matchpoints, all red, your deal:

♠AQJ1073 ♥A42 ♦5 ♣Q87

You open 1 spade, partner 3 hearts, self-alerted as an invitational jump shift with 6 or more hearts, 2 or fewer spades, 9-11 hcp. What is your call?

You have a fit, so bid game, right? 4 hearts it is.

|                          |                                |                      |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
|                          | ♠2<br>♥KJ9765<br>♦AJ102<br>♣J5 |                      |
| ♠<br>♥Q1083<br>♦9<br>♣K6 |                                | ♠<br>♥<br>♦37<br>♣A4 |
|                          | ♠AQJ1073<br>♥A42<br>♦5<br>♣Q87 |                      |

Bot Partner is declarer but I have to play it. East kicks off with the ace of clubs, then low to the king. I just know a third club is coming for a ruff, but I can discard a diamond from dummy and not worry too much. I am also considering ruffing with the heart jack and hope to win that trick then drop the hearts 2-2. But at trick 3, West switches to the diamond 9. Are you wondering why? If it looks like a singleton and quacks like a singleton, it is a singleton. From a defensive point of view (West's), which is more likely: East holding 2 clubs leading ace and low to get a ruff (declarer holding 3 but false carding the jack on the second club), or East holding the ace of diamonds and will give West a ruff to set the contract? I don't know, and I am pretty sure that West Bot doesn't know either. At any rate, it's a singleton. I won the diamond ace then played the heart 5. Oops, East discards a diamond. West Bot is over there with Q1083 of hearts. And started with a stiff diamond, I assume.

I won the ace, and for some reason West played the 8. I certainly don't see the wisdom of that card; BBO bots don't play trump suit preference! Next I led a low heart through the Q103, and my 6 won the trick. On this second trump, East bot discarded a spade (a very, very bad play as you will see). If the original 9 was a singleton, East would have 7 diamonds, so why not discard another diamond?

Next, because it's matchpoints and my heart 6 was allowed to hold, and I am still in dummy (why, why did East play the 8 on the first trump?), I decided to finesse spades as the best shot to maximize tricks. The queen held, great. I have diamond losers so I decided to make East ruff a third club while I discarded one of those losers. But lo! West had three clubs, not two, the club queen held, and a diamond loser disappeared.

Next, I played the ace of spades and dropped the king from East! Why, why did East discard a spade from K85 while holding seven diamonds with a stiff spade in dummy??? I discard the third diamond and still hold the fourth one. West has one small spade left, and still holds the trump Q10. I cashed the spade jack and discarded the fourth and final diamond from hand. The position now:

|                        |                       |                      |
|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
|                        | ♠<br>♥KJ97<br>♦<br>♣  |                      |
| ♠<br>♥Q10<br>♦<br>♣103 |                       | ♠<br>♥<br>♦Q864<br>♣ |
|                        | ♠1073<br>♥4<br>♦<br>♣ |                      |

I am in dummy with a heart; East has Q10 and I have KJ97. It's all over, 11 tricks, +650, and a cold top on the board (with unknown competition). 100% scores are rare in this weekly tournament, but I got one here.

The full hand:

|                                 |                                |                               |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
|                                 | ♠2<br>♥KJ9765<br>♦AJ102<br>♣J5 |                               |
| ♠964<br>♥Q1083<br>♦9<br>♣K10963 |                                | ♠K85<br>♥<br>♦KQ87643<br>♣A42 |
|                                 | ♠AQJ1073<br>♥A42<br>♦5<br>♣Q87 |                               |

A score of 620 should be common, as it makes 4 hearts or 4 spades. There are various defenses that should hold declarer to 10 tricks. Interestingly, the best double dummy score is 630 for 3NT making 4. Looking at all the cards, NS can win any lead (or the third club) finesse hearts and spades, lose a third spade to West, who will be out of clubs. Bridge is so much easier when you can see the cards.

BBO robots aren't that good, in case you haven't noticed. Especially on defense. They never forget the count, but their signals are unreliable and their overall methods are pretty weak. If you were in a bridge desert and these bots were all you had, you would play them. Thankfully, we have LRDBC competition to keep us happy. See you at the club.

Wait, there's more! Read on for another hand and a few questions.

BBO "Just play bridge" solitaire is even less real than the weekly tournament. Check this hand and auction I had recently:

|                  | ♠3<br>♥KJ32<br>♦AKQJ1072<br>♣K |                  |      |
|------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|------|
| ♠<br>♥<br>♦<br>♣ |                                | ♠<br>♥<br>♦<br>♣ |      |
|                  | ♠AK<br>♥AQ754<br>♦853<br>♣A85  |                  |      |
| North            | East                           | South            | West |
| 1♦               | Pass                           | 1♥               | Pass |
| 3♠*              | Pass                           | 4NT              | Pass |
| 5♥*              | Pass                           | 5NT              | Pass |
| 6♣*              | Pass                           | 6♦*              | Pass |
| 6♥               | All pass                       |                  |      |

\*3 spades (alertable) is a splinter in support of hearts. Other non-alertable calls: 5 hearts is 2 without the queen, 6 clubs is that specific king.

Do you remember what 6 diamonds is? I described this in a couple of previous articles. It says "bid the grand slam if you have the king of this suit." So why did North Bot stop at 6 hearts? What would you do? I will get back to this question in a moment.

Here we are in 6 hearts and I get the 4 of diamonds. The bot doesn't hear me screaming at the contract, and then I began to see a problem. Why did West Bot lead a diamond? I know now...I'm about to get ruffed. Sure enough, East Bot plays the heart 10. I won the club return and breezed to easy 12 tricks.

Here's that question again: As North Human, would you bid 7 hearts? The answer is no. The solid long diamond says "beware of a ruff" and North can bid a safe 7 diamonds. Besides, it's 150 honors that way. Just kidding about the honors points, but I'm not kidding about the final contract.

Wait! Is 7 diamonds the right contract? Again the answer is no. North: partner asked for kings thus promising all the key cards. You have 9 tricks in your

hand (7 diamonds and 2 round kings) and partner opened and is making a slam try. The correct bid is not 7 diamonds. It's 7NT. Bid it with great confidence, as it's going to make. Would partner make a slam try not holding the queen of hearts? Even if yes, you have 7NT made here.

Now a second question. As East, if the contract was 7 hearts, what is your call? Double. This is a Lightner double asking for an unusual lead, generally the suit first bid by dummy. Without the double, West might make the "normal" lead against a grand slam, which would be a trump.

Wait! Is a double correct? They might run to a making NT! North, you would run, wouldn't you? Of course you would, as you can surmise a diamond void in East. So maybe East should not double. You might very well get a diamond lead anyway (as was the case in the actual contract of 6 hearts). So: whether to double to get a lead, at the risk of a runout, is one the great puzzles of our game.

The full hand shows you that the best contract is 10 NT (you have the first sixteen tricks):

|                                |                                |                                 |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
|                                | ♠3<br>♥KJ32<br>♦AKQJ1072<br>♣K |                                 |
| ♠QJ1064<br>♥6<br>♦964<br>♣J962 |                                | ♠98752<br>♥1098<br>♦<br>♣Q10743 |
|                                | ♠AK<br>♥AQ754<br>♦853<br>♣A85  |                                 |

A third question is whether BBO "cheats" by causing the auction to stop at 6 hearts. Or does BBO Standard not include a response to my 6 diamonds? I don't think it's a cheat, because a cheat would bid the laydown 7 diamonds or 7NT.

It's still not "bridge." In the "Just Play Bridge" forum, South Human is almost always the declarer, and weak BBO bots are defending.

You want real bridge? Come to the Curtis Finch Bridge House and find lots of it, with your LRDBC friends and guests. You can't cuss them like you cuss the bots, but you will have a lot more fun. And your friends play better than those @!\$#\*@ bots.