

MOUNTNESSING BRIDGE CLUB

Meets every Thursday at 7.25 for 7.30
at Mountnessing Village Hall, Roman Road, Mountnessing, Essex, England, CM15 0UG

“2020” Comments on “The Christmas Slam” Submission by Theo Todman: [Click here](#) Commentary by Alaric Cundy

Firstly, it is worth reminding readers that anybody can download the ‘Bridge Solver’ analytical tool for free, and use it to analyse different Declarer plays and / or defences, on any hand of their choosing – such as this one! To access ‘Bridge Solver Online’ go to this link: <https://mirgo2.co.uk/bridgesolver/upload.htm> It is also available to download as an App for Android devices or Chromebooks or as a Windows desktop App here: <https://mirgo2.co.uk/bridgesolver/index.php?section=1> This tool is embedded into the Bridgewebs website and it is used by the ‘Play it Again’ facility.

Firstly, (nearly) full marks to Theo for thinking through the challenges of this hand; pity he thought of the winning line a few hours late!

This example is a really excellent example to analyse with *Bridge Solver*. Hours of endless fun looking at all sorts of scenarios! Read on.....

Bridge Solver confirms that 6S can be made by East on any opening lead, though surely every South in the room would choose a top Club in practice? *Bridge Solver* also confirms that 6D can be made – and rather more easily – but only if the partnership somehow conspires to have it played from the East hand! Either contract can be defeated if played by West on an opening heart lead, but in practice, presuming that South bid some number of Clubs, many North’s may lazily lead partners suit, and then give Declarer winning lines. In fact, though 6D by West can be beaten, more likely than not at Club Bridge standard that it would come home.

Back to the contract in question – 6S by East. *Bridge Solver* does flag up an important point of detail in the play that Theo implied, but didn’t emphasise at the critical trick. He correctly reasoned that, and played for, a 4-1 trump break, with a shortage in the South hand. The potential issue is that the potentially critical 9 of trumps is out, so a bit of care is needed.

The winning line is, as Theo concluded, to win the opening Club lead in Dummy and then the critical play is a small trump from Dummy. As Theo points out, if North rises with the King, it is all over for the defence; whatever North leads, Declarer or Dummy can win:

- if a trump is returned, win in Dummy with the Ace, lead the remaining trump, and play two top trumps from hand to draw the outstanding trumps, then enjoy Dummy’s lovely Diamonds. [Given we’re talking Christmas Party, if both opponents were by now, shall we say, unfit to drive, then Declarer might try to claim four trumps, 7 diamonds, two more Aces, for an overtrick – but probably not...]
- if a heart is returned, Declarer must rise with the Ace, then spade to the Ace, one back, draw trumps, and as above
- if a Diamond is returned, Declarer must win in hand with the Jack, then as previously.
- If a Club is returned, Declarer will be tested a bit – it must be ruffed with Dummy’s Ace, and the small trump led. But now Declarer must remember that he had concluded that the trumps were 4-1 – in which case North now holds 9xx, so Declarer must play the 8 of spades from hand, rather than a top one.

Bridge Solver also points out that there is a more far-fetched, but equally successful alternative line of play. Declarer can start playing Dummy’s Diamonds at trick 2! Say he chooses a Diamond to the Jack at trick 2; now it must be a top spade, ducked in Dummy.

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If North chooses to win the trick:

- and return, say, a second Club, Dummy ruffs – with either trump! Say the small one is used. Now, the Ace of Trumps is cashed, Heart to the Ace, draw trumps, back to the Diamonds, and claim.
- perhaps North would decide to cut off Dummy's Diamonds by leading one when in with the King of Spades. Win in Dummy – and lead a 3rd diamond!!!! If North discards, then so does Declarer; If North ruffs, Declarer over-ruffs – but now North's trumps have been shortened, so Declarer can draw trumps, finishing in Dummy, and run the rest of the diamonds.

Maybe North ducks the first round of trumps? There are so many permutations, but Declarer can out-smart anything that North tries. Have a play with this hand on *Bridge Solver*, and it can keep you amused for at least half an hour!

There is one entirely different aspect of this hand to look at. Supposing that North / South had a rush of wine to the brain and tried a 7C sacrifice? One good thing to say about that scenario is that both the Declarer play and Defence are relatively straightforward, but when it turns out that eight tricks are the limit on the hand (-1100), North and South will probably want another glass or two to console themselves!