

MOUNTNESSING BRIDGE CLUB

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

A grand hand...

Hand played on 17/03/2011
Board number 18, TEAMS OF FOUR
Dealer East
Vulnerability North / South
Submitted by Alaric Cundy

North ♠ A85 ♥ 98 ♦ AK65432 ♣ J		East ♠ J9 ♥ T6 ♦ Q987 ♣ K7542		The Bidding	
West ♠ KQT743 ♥ 32 ♦ T ♣ Q983	South ♠ 62 ♥ AKQJ754 ♦ J ♣ AT6	North 4NT ⁽²⁾ 7♥	East No No End	South 2♥ ⁽¹⁾ 5♣ ⁽³⁾	West 2♠ No

- (1) Strong, non-forcing, showing 8 playing tricks and a self-supporting suit
- (2) Roman Key Card Blackwood, with hearts as the agreed trump suit (last naturally bid suit)
- (3) Zero or three of the five key cards

It is a bit questionable as to whether the South hand actually satisfies an ACOL '8 playing trick opening', but before he had blinked South found himself playing in a Grand Slam.

The textbooks say that often the best defence against a suit grand slam is to lead a trump. Let's suppose that our West had read that textbook, and picked the ♥3. Dummy will follow, and East may well cover, and Declarer will win and consider his options. A diamond to the Ace and a small diamond back, ruffed high, followed by a small trump to Dummy's 9 looks like a good ploy. Declarer can ruff another small diamond, then cross to the ♠A and play Dummy's now established diamonds from the top to enable discards of the three losing black cards, for a score of +2210.

East can in fact foil this plan by careful thought before playing to trick 1: East must duck the trick. Now, when declarer tries to draw trumps ending in Dummy, East still has the ten available. Declarer can ruff one diamond in hand, then draw trumps, and cross to Dummy's Ace of Spades. However, the 4-1 Diamond break means that the suit is not established, but there are no entries to

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Dummy, so the contract will fail by two tricks.

The relatively good news for Declarer is the 'two tricks' bit of that comment – meaning that on the same defence and play even 6♥ would fail.

As it happens, West has an attractive alternative line of defence – by starting off with a top spade – and in practice that is how the defence to 7♥ started. The play above will not work because the Ace of Spades is knocked out too early, but the contract could in theory come home as two clubs can be trumped in Dummy and the spade loser will go on the second top diamond. However, there are entry problems back to hand and Declarer has to play off the two top diamonds early, discarding a spade on the second one. When West trumps the second round of diamonds, he has the opportunity to beat the contract by two tricks by returning the second trump, which stops Declarer from trumping the last club.

There is a safe play for 6♥ after a spade lead – take with the ace, play a club to the Ace and ruff a club, play the Ace of diamonds and then ruff a small diamond high, to allow the last club to be ruffed. Now Declarer plays the remaining top diamond from Dummy, discarding the spade. West can trump, but that is end of the story as by now Declarer only has trumps left.

There were some huge potential swings at stake on this board, and as things panned out, they were indeed pretty huge! 7♥ -1 versus 6♥ making was not a good return on the adventurous bidding – minus 17 IMPS in fact!