.

We had two slam hands last night, and I thought it might be interesting look to closely at one of these, board 12.

```
              ♠ 107
              ♥ AKJ96
              ♦ AJ1032
              ♣ 7
♠ 543                        ♠ QJ982
♥ 107432                     ♥ 85
♦ 9                          ♦ Q6
♣ K842                       ♣ 9653
              ♠ AK6
              ♥ Q
              ♦ K8754
              ♣ AQJ10
```

In the auction, North opens One Heart, the Diamond fit is discovered, and South learns that North has two aces. Sometimes South also hears that North has one King. That guarantees two Spade tricks and three in Hearts. The Diamonds should provide four tricks, if not five, and the Clubs will produce three tricks once the King has gone. Six Diamonds is a really good bet, and Six No Trumps will be pretty good too.

In fact Six Diamonds makes an overtrick as soon as the trumps come in without loss, giving a score of 55%, while Six No Trumps makes easily for 80%. But should one consider bidding a grand slam? If South knows that partner is 5-5 in the red suits, and has two Aces and a King, then Seven Diamonds will make if the trumps come in without loss, provided either that Hearts produce four tricks (as here) or the club finesse (or ruffing finesse) works.

What then of Seven No Trumps? This appears to require either the Hearts to yield five tricks or the ♣ K to be on-side, and so is quite a good contract. But as one can see, West has Hearts covered and the ♣ K is wrong. How might one play Seven No Trumps, as South, on a Diamond lead for example?

You win in hand, unblock ♥ Q, cross to ♦ A, and cash ♥ A, K throwing Diamonds and discovering the bad Heart break.

```
              ♠ 107
              ♥ J9
              ♦ J103
              ♣ 7
♠ 543                        ♠ QJ982
♥ 107                        ♥ -
♦ -                          ♦ -
♣ K84                        ♣ 965
              ♠ AK6
              ♥ -
              ♦ 8
              ♣ AQJ10
```

We have reached this stage, and need to find our thirteenth trick. The Club finesse is one option. This is slightly better than a 50% chance, since East is known to have eight black cards to East's six. A marginally better line wins if East has ♣ K (as with the straight finesse), or if it is singleton with West:- South takes ♥ J and ♣ A, and cashes two rounds of Diamonds, throwing clubs from hand.

```
              ♠ 107
              ♥ 9
              ♦ 3
              ♣ -
  ♠ ?                   ♠ ?
  ♥ 10                  ♥ -
  ♦ -                   ♦ -
  ♣ ?                   ♣ K ?
              ♠ AK6
              ♥ -
              ♦ -
              ♣ Q
```

If East has ♣ K we will have reached a position like this, and ♦ 3 from North will bring about a double squeeze. East must keep ♣ K, and so must unguard the Spades. South can then throw ♣ Q. Then West has to keep ♥ 10 and so must also unguard spades. This enables South to take the last three tricks with ♠ A, K, 6.

That's quite pretty, but it doesn't work with the actual layout of the cards. Here's an alternative line worth considering. Having reached the point on the previous page where the bad Heart break was revealed we could cash ♠ A, K, and then take ♦ J, 10 and ♥ J, throwing clubs from hand.

```
              ♠ -
              ♥ 9
              ♦ 3
              ♣ 7
  ♠ ?                   ♠ ?
  ♥ 10                  ♥ -
  ♦ -                   ♦ -
  ♣ ?                   ♣ ?
              ♠ 6
              ♥ -
              ♦ -
              ♣ AQ
```

We now play cash Dummy's last Diamond and watch what happens. If there is nothing interesting we discard our ♠ 6 and fall back on the Club finesse. But with the actual lie of the cards only East can guard the Spades, while West must retain ♥ 10, so that each of them can keep at most one Club. So, if we read the position correctly, a club to the ♣ A will bring down the ♣ K and our ♣ Q will be good.

Well, it's nice to day-dream about how we might have played the hand…

Best wishes,

Roger Heath-Brown