

# Summertown Bridge Bulletin, 1 March 2021

by Trevor Dawn

Should bridge be an Olympic Sport? As I understand it, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) thinks it should be recognised as a sport, but Sport England, which controls the grants to aspiring sports players, and HMRC do not agree. Why do I raise the matter now in the introduction to this bulletin? Well, one of the fascinating things about sport is that some players handle certain situations better than others; or they make fewer mistakes; or they capitalise on the opportunities that present themselves during the course of the “game”.

In all sports there are some matches when it is best to stick to basics, adhere to your system and make as few mistakes as possible. Those are the nights when the cards split badly, when risks are disproportionately punished and there seems to be a conspiracy against you. You shoot six over par in a round of golf in windy conditions and your rivals shoot one under; you miss a black off the spot and your opponent clears the table at snooker. At the bridge table, you make nine tricks at NT and everybody else makes at least ten.

I have chosen four hands from last night where everyone (or almost everyone) is in the same contract, but where the results vary. Why is that? You can make up your own mind. Here are the hands.

On Hand 2, 10 pairs out of 11 played in NT. Those who bid 6NT did not succeed, and yet 6 pairs who did not bid the slam registered either 12 or 13 tricks. The declarers sitting North have the better chance, say on a heart lead. This is an example of capitalising on the opportunities that present themselves. You have to believe in the spade finesse; you have to believe that the clubs split 3 – 3. Both happened. So, is it easier to make 12 tricks when you don't need to?

Dlr: East Vul: N/S	♠KJ ♥K864 ♦QJ98 ♣KQ8	Optimum NS 6N; +1440																																							
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W	-	-	-	-	-																																				

Dlr: South Vul: E/W	♠J92 ♥AQJ975 ♦32 ♣A5	Optimum NS 1H+2; +140																																							
♠AQ3 ♥K32 ♦J7 ♣KQ872	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="width: 20px; height: 20px;"></td><td style="width: 20px; height: 20px; text-align: center;">North</td><td style="width: 20px; height: 20px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">West</td><td style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em;">3</td><td style="text-align: center;">East</td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 20px; height: 20px;"></td><td style="width: 20px; height: 20px; text-align: center;">South</td><td style="width: 20px; height: 20px;"></td></tr> </table>		North		West	3	East		South		♠K108 ♥1086 ♦98654 ♣J4																														
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On hand 3, again 10 out of 11 played in hearts and again there were 5 different results. Here the ♣J was the dominant opening lead. Declarer has to play for the ♥K to be with West and that trumps split 3 – 3 to make 2♥ composed of a club, two diamonds and at least five hearts, making eight tricks. Yet four declarers made nine tricks. Was it that they saw an opportunity that others missed, or was it a weakness in the defence? Try taking ♣A at trick one, cross to diamonds, finesse the ♥Q at trick 3, cross to the diamonds again at trick 4 (dropping the ♦J) and then lead another diamond at trick 5. If West ruffs, you overruff and then draw trumps dropping the ♥K. If West

declines to ruff, you jettison a spade and repeat the process on the next trick.

Dir: West  
Vul: None

♠AQ5  
♥K83  
♦AQ75  
♣J43

Optimum  
N 1N+1;  
+120

♠1097  
♥Q97  
♦982  
♣K862

West 8 East

♠KJ62  
♥A102  
♦1043  
♣1097

♠843  
♥J654  
♦KJ6  
♣AQ5

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	1	2	2	1	2
S	1	2	1	1	1
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

16  
5 8  
11

There are points aplenty for a successful 3NT contract on hand 8, but only two people made it. Should they have done so? How many times have we asked that question? On every hand it seems there is someone who lands an “impossible” contract. What does declarer have to envisage to even stand a chance of succeeding? That there are no five (or heaven help us six) card suits lurking about; that the remaining 13 points are evenly distributed; that the heart honours are split. So, on a ♠2 lead which succeeded in toppling the contract eight times out of nine, declarer can count eight tricks (two in ♠, four in ♦ and two in ♣). Declarer wins with ♠Q, crosses to ♦K and plays a low club.

West wins with the ♣K and returns a spade which declarer wins with the ♠A. Actually, it doesn't matter what West leads at trick 3, the play will be the same. Declarer will cash diamonds and clubs and exit with a spade. East will be forced to lead away from his ♥A. The eagle-eyed among you will have spotted that holding up the ♣K till the third round would work well, but that leaves East with the problem of what to discard on the fourth diamond (and indeed West).

Everyone is in 1NT on hand 10; most people lead a heart from the East hand. Half the field makes the contract and half do not. Can seven tricks always be made on a heart lead? Probably yes, as long as declarer decides not to force the situation. After ♥A and a heart return taken by the King, declarer can count four tricks in diamonds, one in hearts and one in spades. The chances are that the defence will make a mistake when discarding on four rounds of diamonds, exiting with a spade. How many Easts would resist cashing their heart winner when faced with dummy of ♣KJ10 and ♠J, knowing they have ♠A for an entry?

Dir: East  
Vul: All

♠K109  
♥KJ95  
♦AJ84  
♣62

Optimum  
EW 2H;  
-110

♠6432  
♥A7  
♦972  
♣AQ94

West 10 East

♠AQ8  
♥Q10632  
♦Q6  
♣875

♠J75  
♥84  
♦K1053  
♣KJ103

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	-	2	-	-	-
S	-	2	-	-	-
E	1	-	2	1	1
W	1	-	2	1	1

12  
10 10  
8

This is my last SBC bulletin as an analyst. I have found it challenging to analyse hands which I have played. It makes me empathise with football managers who have to comment on their team's performance when they are so involved in the results. I have run out of things to say and interesting angles to investigate. Everybody who plays club bridge experiences the highs and the lows several times on the same session. We all know when we have bid well, played well, been lucky in the distribution, gambled successfully, been helped by the opposition. In the end, we all enjoy something each time we play (well almost), and the camaraderie of the club is the most compelling reason we all come back.