

Summertown Bridge Bulletin, 12 December 2022

There were a lot of very varied results this week on almost every board – perhaps the mulled wine had something to do with it? Anyway, there’s no theme to this week’s Bulletin, just some random thoughts about three of the hands.

Dir: North
Vul: N/S

♠ A K J 4
♥ K 8 4 3
♦ 9 7 5
♣ K 8

♠ 3 2
♥ A Q 10 7 6 2
♦ 8 2
♣ A 7 5

WEST NORTH EAST
5 SOUTH

♠ 10 6
♥ 9 5
♦ A 6 4 3
♣ Q J 6 4 2

♠ Q 9 8 7 5
♥ J
♦ K Q J 10
♣ 10 9 3

| | ♣ | ♦ | ♥ | ♠ | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | - | 3 | - | 4 | 1 |
| S | - | 2 | - | 4 | 1 |
| E | 1 | - | 1 | - | - |
| W | 1 | - | 1 | - | - |

First, here’s Board 5. This one was played only three times (we played a Howell movement to avoid a 3-board sitout for the half table, but it does mean that some of the boards don’t get played as often as normal). Two NS pairs reached the making spade game, but one didn’t.

As we were playing face to face there’s no record of the bidding, so we can’t tell what actually happened; but if North opens a weak NT, how would you bid the South hand? Normally, you would start with 2♥, transferring into spades. Whether or not West doubles to show

hearts, North dutifully bids 2♠. How do you continue?

If you happen to have a spade fit, your hand has only seven losers, so perhaps you should make an invitational raise to 3♠ and see what partner has to say. The problem is, though, that if there isn’t a spade fit, partner is going to have to bid 3NT and may not be very happy with your nine points, particularly if she has a minimum 12 count.

The way round this is a natty little gadget known as “breaking the transfer”. If you open 1NT, partner makes a transfer bid, and you have both four-card support for their suit and a maximum for your NT opener, plus a doubleton somewhere, you can show this by responding with a bid that goes higher than the standard transfer.

The simplest method is to bid the transfer suit (the one partner has asked you to bid) at the three level. Partner will pass with a weak hand but, with a suitable hand such as this one, will go on to game.

If you want to be a bit more sophisticated, you can even break in different ways to show particular features of your hand. The version we use is that bidding the transfer suit at the three level shows good trumps (two out of the top three honours); bidding a different suit at the three level shows a worthless doubleton in that suit; and bidding 2NT shows you have four trumps and maximum points, but neither of the other two features. Of course, if opener doesn’t bid the transfer suit, responder must then re-transfer.

Finally, since it’s often worthwhile playing in your nine-card trump fit even if your opponents have the balance of the points, some players agree they will always break the transfer whenever they have at least four cards in the transfer suit. It bears thinking about!

Board 14 was played six times and, unusually, the same contract - 4♠ - was reached every time. The analysis says you can make 11 tricks, but two declarers made only 10. It all depends how you play the trumps.

Normally, missing only four cards, you would expect the Jack to drop in two or at most three rounds, in which case you can just play out the top cards in any order. Here, however, there happens to be a four-nil break and you can only get round it by starting with either the Ace or the King. As there's a finesse position in both hands, is there any good reason to do it this way round? Well, yes, there is. If you start with one of the top cards in the hand with two honours, you still retain the possibility of finessing against a four-nil break in either hand. So whenever you have this kind of holding, you should always start with one of the honours from the hand that has both. It can't do any harm, and sometimes, as here, it will do you a lot of good!

Dir: East
Vul: None

♠ Q 10 6 4
♥ Q J 7 2
♦ Q 6
♣ A 8 5

♠ J 8 3 2
♥ 8 6 5
♦ J 9 2
♣ 10 9 2

W NORTH E
S 14 A S
T SOUTH T

♠ - -
♥ 10 4 3
♦ K 10 8 7 5 3
♣ K Q J 4

11
2 9
18

♠ A K 9 7 5
♥ A K 9
♦ A 4
♣ 7 6 3

| | ♣ | ♦ | ♥ | ♠ | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | 3 | - | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| S | 1 | - | 4 | 5 | 5 |
| E | - | 1 | - | - | - |
| W | - | 1 | - | - | - |

Dir: East
Vul: N/S

♠ 10 4
♥ Q 8 4
♦ A Q 5
♣ K 10 9 4 2

♠ A K Q J 7 2
♥ 2
♦ K 6 3
♣ 8 7 6

W NORTH E
S 18 A S
T SOUTH T

♠ 9 8 6
♥ A 9 7 6 5
♦ 9
♣ A Q J 3

11
13 11
5

♠ 5 3
♥ K J 10 3
♦ J 10 8 7 4 2
♣ 5

| | ♣ | ♦ | ♥ | ♠ | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | - | 1 | - | - | - |
| S | - | 1 | - | - | - |
| E | 2 | - | 1 | 6 | 4 |
| W | 2 | - | 2 | 6 | 4 |

Finally, here's a more advanced declarer play problem. Assume you're playing in 4♠ on Board 18. If South has bid diamonds, and North leads the ♦A, you'll have an easy ride to 12 tricks - maybe even 13 if North leads the ♦Q or ♦5. But if you reach your contract unopposed, and the lead is a trump, how can you make 12 tricks, as the analysis says you can against any lead?

Without a trump lead, you could lead a diamond from dummy towards your King. If South has the Ace, you're home and dry; and if North has it, as here, you would still be able to ruff your other two

diamonds. But after a trump lead, and a trump continuation when North wins the ♦A, this won't work. Looking at both hands, can you see how to do it?

The answer is to play a *low* diamond from both hands at trick 2. Win the trump return, take the one diamond ruff you can get, and then finesse the clubs twice (coming back to hand with heart ruffs). Now play your remaining trumps. As long as you've kept the ♦K and one club in your hand, and two clubs in dummy, at trick 11 North will be squeezed in the minor suits. An elegant double dummy solution, but a very unlikely line to find at the table!