

Summertown Bridge Bulletin, 13 March 2023

Once more we're writing about hands which we haven't played ourselves, and where we can't see the bidding or play online, as they were played face-to-face. So what we've done this time is to look at three deals where the analysis says a slam could have been made, although on the night no one bid any of them; and one more deal where the analysis – and the most cursory glance at all four hands! – says that no slam could be made, but nevertheless two pairs went there.

Dlr: East
Vul: E/W

♠ 2
♥ K Q 9
♦ K J 10 6 3 2
♣ K J 10

♠ A Q 10
♥ A 8 7 4 2
♦ A 7 4
♣ 7 6

WEST NORTH EAST
SOUTH
6

♠ K J 9 8 7 6 5 4 3
♥ - -
♦ 8
♣ A Q 5

13 14 10 3

♠ - -
♥ J 10 6 5 3
♦ Q 9 5
♣ 9 8 4 3 2

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	2	2	1	-	-
S	2	1	-	-	-
E	-	-	-	7	7
W	-	-	-	7	7

There were only four and a half tables in play, and the vagaries of the movement used meant that Board 6 was played only twice, once in 5♣ and once in 4♠. Both declarers made all 13 tricks and with the ♠K sitting pretty for you, it's easy to see that this can be done in either spades or NT. Is there any way to get to the grand slam – or, failing that, a sensible way to bid at least 6♠ or 6NT?

First of all, what should East open? With a 9-card suit but only 10 points, and at adverse

vulnerability, the choice for most people will be between a pre-emptive 4♠ and a quiet 1♠, with the former being more likely unless the partnership has an understanding that this bid will not include an outside Ace. West will probably assume partner has an 8-card suit and so, although their three Aces make game an odds-on success, it's hard for West to envisage where 12 tricks would come from, let alone 13. However, if East can make a bid showing a game-level pre-empt with an outside defensive trick – such as a “Namyats” opener (here, 4♦) - then West may pluck up the courage to ask about key cards, which will at least lead to a 6♠ contract. Getting to the grand slam on only 24 points seems too much to hope for.

On Board 13 East, the player with the long major suit, has even fewer points, but the hand also features a void, and benefits from a second long suit. However, North is bound to open the bidding and as N/S have a good fit in spades, you would think they might outbid E/W. In fact, this board was played four times and every time the contract was 5♥, making 12 tricks three times out of four. Should you be in the slam? Without interference, maybe you could find out about the double fit and the spade void, which is what makes it work. In the real world, West can probably work out that partner will have at most one card in spades, but there isn't likely to be room to find out about the secondary club fit.

Dlr: North
Vul: All

♠ A J 6 4 2
♥ 8 5
♦ K 9 6 5
♣ A 3

♠ 9 5 3
♥ A 10 7
♦ A Q 4
♣ K J 10 6

WEST NORTH EAST
SOUTH
13

♠ - -
♥ K Q J 9 6 4 3
♦ 7
♣ Q 9 8 4 2

12 14 8 6

♠ K Q 10 8 7
♥ 2
♦ J 10 8 3 2
♣ 7 5

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	-	3	-	4	-
S	-	3	-	4	-
E	5	-	6	-	1
W	5	-	6	-	1

The third board where a slam was makeable was Board 19. Here three N/S pairs played in 4♠ making 12 tricks, whilst the fourth doubled 3♦ by West and achieved a top by getting it three down at favourable vulnerability.

If West opens with a weak 2♦, North can only double for takeout and it will be hard to get beyond 4♠. This is a good argument for opening with a weak two; but, at adverse vulnerability, East should resist the temptation to make a further pre-emptive raise with so few points and such a flat hand.

If West passes, North – with a 3-loser hand – might take the opportunity to open with a game-forcing bid, after which South's Ace and King should be shown with a positive response, and slam might be reached. North will be worried about the clubs, though, so may still stop before getting there.

Dlr: South
Vul: E/W

♠ A K Q 7 3
♥ A K 10 7
♦ - -
♣ Q J 10 2

♠ 10
♥ Q 4 3
♦ Q J 9 8 5 4
♣ A 8 7

19

♠ J 9 8
♥ J 5 2
♦ K 6 3
♣ 9 6 5 3

♠ 6 5 4 2
♥ 9 8 6
♦ A 10 7 2
♣ K 4

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

Dlr: North
Vul: None

♠ Q 8 6 5
♥ Q 8 7 4
♦ 9 4 3
♣ A 9

♠ A K J 9 7 4
♥ A J 5 3
♦ K
♣ Q 6

17

♠ 2
♥ K 2
♦ Q J 10 8 6
♣ K J 8 5 2

♠ 10 3
♥ 10 9 6
♦ A 7 5 2
♣ 10 7 4 3

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	4	4	3	3	3
W	4	4	3	3	4

Finally, here's Board 17, where E/W have a nasty misfit. One pair played in a shaky 4♠ but managed to bring it home after the ♣A was led, whilst another subsided in 3NT and got a top for making 11 tricks on a helpful heart lead. However, two pairs reached the dizzy heights of 6NT. History does not record how this happened, but it seems likely that East opened and West then somehow got too excited to check for missing Aces.

Should East open this hand? There are only 10 points, and no Aces: but with two good 5-card suits, and easily qualifying for an opening bid either by the rule of 19, or by

counting losers, we ourselves would always give it a go. The trick is to remember that if you have a strong hand and partner opens the bidding, very often he or she will not have as many high card points as you would normally expect. Sad, but that's bridge for you!