

Summertown Bridge Bulletin, 13 September 2021

As usual, there were a quite a few interesting hands last night. Let's take a look at some of them.

Dlr: South
Vul: E/W

♠ 6 5 3 2
♥ K 9 3 2
♦ J
♣ K 10 7 6

Optimum
NS 3S:
+140

♠ 8
♥ 7 6 4
♦ A K 7 6 2
♣ Q J 8 2

NORTH
WEST 3 EAST
SOUTH

♠ K Q 10
♥ 10 8 5
♦ Q 10 8 5
♣ A 9 5

7
10 11
12

♠ A J 9 7 4
♥ A Q J
♦ 9 4 3
♣ 4 3

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

Board 3 was played in spades by South four times. On the face of it, it looks like declarer should lose two clubs, a diamond and a spade, but ten tricks were made at three tables. West's opening lead each time was the ♦A. With the singleton in dummy, it is clear that there is no future in continuing this suit. In this situation, it is normal for East to help partner by indicating with the play to the first trick which suit they would like partner to switch to, using a "suit preference" signal. A high card would indicate a higher suit (excluding trumps), a low card would indicate a lower suit, while a middling card should indicate no preference or trumps. Here it is in fact difficult to know what to ask for, as East doesn't really want a heart lead, having nothing in the suit,

and asking for a club would risk opening a frozen suit for declarer. In fact, as the cards lie, West needs to switch to the ♣Q to trap dummy's ♣K and stop declarer from taking nine tricks. However, at all four tables West switched to a heart. This allows declarer to win in hand and cross to dummy by ruffing a diamond to lead trumps twice - thereby losing only one trump trick - and then eventually to discard a losing club on the fourth heart (overtaking the Jack with the King) when the suit breaks 3-3.

On the two tables where the hand was played in diamonds by West, there is also an interesting defensive point. With South having bid spades, the normal lead was a spade, with dummy's King played and won by South with the Ace. What should South then do? There is often a reluctance to lead from a broken holding with an AQ in the suit. This makes sense if declarer is on your right, but here South can see that dummy does not hold the King, which means that it is held either by partner or declarer. If partner has it, it is imperative to lead the suit to make sure of cashing three winning hearts. If declarer has the King, it doesn't matter if South starts off with the Ace, since declarer will always make the King anyway. On this hand, where North has supported South's spades, it seems very likely that declarer has no more spades. If South switches to a club, declarer will win with the Ace in dummy and discard a losing heart on dummy's top spade. As is so often the case, it is best to lead up to dummy's weak suit.

Dlr: North
Vul: E/W

♠ 9 8
♥ 9 4
♦ J 8 7 5 4 2
♣ A 10 7

Optimum
NS 1S+2:
+140

♠ 6 4 2
♥ A Q 10 5 2
♦ 10 3
♣ 9 3 2

NORTH
WEST 9 EAST
SOUTH

♠ 7 5 3
♥ J 8 6
♦ K Q 9 6
♣ Q J 8

5
6 9
20

♠ A K Q J 10
♥ K 7 3
♦ A
♣ K 6 5 4

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

Board 9 was interesting since it was played in 1♠ twice by South making nine or ten tricks, and once by South in 4♠ going one off; twice by South in 3NT making nine tricks, and once in 3NT by North going one off. The first problem is for South as to what to open with this powerful 20-pointer after two passes. The singleton in diamonds is a bit off-putting. However, if South chooses 1♠, this risks missing a game when, as here, partner only has 5 points and passes. Nowadays, it is generally deemed acceptable to open a hand like this, where the singleton is an Ace or King, with 2NT (or your equivalent bid showing a balanced 20). If the singleton is a Queen or below, then it is best opened with the long suit.

Opposite a 2NT opening it often helps to play the 5-card Puppet Stayman convention, where a bid of 3C asks opener whether they hold either a 4- or 5-card major. In this case, if South opens 2NT, North, with no interest in whether partner holds even a 5-card major, simply bids 3NT. On the normal lead of a heart from West, Declarer can win the King and has nine top tricks. So what happened on the table where 3NT went off? Well, South opened with 1♣, and North not unreasonably responded 1NT, which South raised to 3NT. This meant that the hand was wrong-sided and played by the weak hand. The hearts were eventually led from East, capturing declarer's King. There is a lot of luck involved in the game of Bridge!

Dlr: South
 Vul: None
 Optimum EW 3S: -140

♠ 6 5 2
 ♥ 5 2
 ♦ A 10 7 5 4 3
 ♣ 8 2

♠ K 10 8 7
 ♥ Q J 10 9 4
 ♦ K J 8 6
 ♣ - -

NORTH
 WEST 11 EAST
 SOUTH

♠ J 9 4 3
 ♥ A 7
 ♦ 2
 ♣ J 10 9 7 4 3

4
 10 6
 20

♠ A Q
 ♥ K 8 6 3
 ♦ Q 9
 ♣ A K Q 6 5

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

Board 11 features a similarly strong hand to that on board 9, with South once again holding 20 points. It illustrates another reason for opening with 2NT rather than one of a suit. 2NT is somewhat pre-emptive and makes it more difficult for the opposition to enter the bidding. At our table South chose to open 1♣. The West hand was ideal for a take-out double of this. North doesn't really have a bid, so this was passed round to me with the East hand. How do you respond to partner's take-out doubles? Sandra and I treat them as though partner had opened one of each of the other three suits, though primarily the majors. We then raise accordingly. With six points and four spades, I therefore raised Sandra's "1♣" opening to 2♠.

This makes it difficult for South to re-enter the bidding, and even coming back in with 3♣ is not a success on this particular hand. With careful declarer play, nine tricks can be made in the spade contract. According to Deep Finesse 2NT should go one off on best defence, but even that is better than the opponents scoring 140 in spades. The contract was actually played in NT at four tables making variously six, seven or eight tricks.

Krys Kazmierczak