

Summertown Bridge Bulletin, 25th July 2022

As Cliff said when he wrote the bulletin a couple of weeks ago, the disadvantage of F2F bridge, from the point of view of a bulletin-writer, is that with no record of what actually happened while the hands were being bid and played, there's very little to go on! So for this week, we've just picked out two hands with a bit of interest in the bidding.

Dlr: South
Vul: E/W

♠ 7 6
♥ Q 10 9 7 4
♦ A J 7 4
♣ 5 4

♠ A K Q 5
♥ A K 8 6
♦ K 9 8 3
♣ A

W	NORTH	E
E	3	S
S	SOUTH	T

♠ J 10 8 3
♥ - -
♦ Q 10 2
♣ J 9 7 6 3 2

	7	
23		4
	6	

♠ 9 4 2
♥ J 5 3 2
♦ 6 5
♣ K Q 10 8

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

On Board 3, South will pass as dealer, and then West has to decide what to open with 23 HCP and a 4-4-4-1 shape.

With fewer points, the recommended opening bid would be 1♥; that way, as long as your partner has enough points for some sort of a response, you won't miss a 4-4 fit in either of the major suits. Here, though, even without seeing the rest of the hands, you can tell there is a distinct risk that partner will pass (there are only 17 HCP left for the other three hands, so the chances of partner having fewer than 6 of them are quite high). Plus, with a hand as good as this, you almost certainly want to force all the way to game – in a suit if you have any kind of a fit, or else in NT if partner has at least 3 or 4 of the missing points.

If you're playing standard Acol, you can open 2♣ to show a very strong hand. Partner will normally respond 2♦, negative. Now what? No rebid is quite "correct", but the most practical way forward is 2NT. Yes, you have a singleton, but at least it's an Ace, and this rebid does convey the message that you have a relatively balanced hand with 23 or 24 points.

With nothing at all, partner could now pass; but as the cards lie, East should wheel out Stayman (either the plain vanilla, or the 5-card puppet version) and the superior 4♠ contract should then be found. At the table, only Holly and Zahir got there; the other three Wests played in 3NT, making either 8, 9, or 10 tricks – but none of them scoring as much as the 11 tricks available in a spade contract.

There were several hands where slams could have been made but, in almost every case, they weren't bid. The exception was Board 10, where everyone made 12 tricks in hearts, but only Clodagh and Joanna bid the slam – well done, ladies!

How would you have bid these E/W hands?

Dlr: East
Vul: All

♠ 10 9 8 3

♥ 9 5

♦ Q 10 3

♣ J 9 6 5

♠ K 4 2

♥ 7 6 4

♦ A J 9 5

♣ 8 4 3

W	NORTH	E
E	10	S
S	SOUTH	T

♠ A Q 6

♥ A K J 10 8 3 2

♦ 7

♣ K Q

	3	
8		19
	10	

♠ J 7 5

♥ Q

♦ K 8 6 4 2

♣ A 10 7 2

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

Again, East's first problem is what to open. The hand has 19 HCP, and you might not think it was good enough for a really strong opening bid; but there are only 4 losers (or 8 guaranteed playing tricks), and if partner has a couple of hearts and either one of the missing Aces or the ♠K, you'll have a very good chance of making 4♥. So unless you are playing a system that can show precisely 8 or 9 playing tricks (either Benjy, or old-fashioned Acol Strong Twos), you really need to open this hand with 2♣ or the equivalent.

West has a positive reply (at least 7 HCP) but no 5-card suit to mention, so the standard Acol response is 2NT, showing 8+ points and a fairly balanced hand (if using "step" responses, you would bid 2♠, showing 7-9 points). East rebids 3♥ and although West's hand is very flat, it does include both an Ace and a King, so it's just about worth a slam try. If West cue bids in diamonds (can't be a suit, since the initial 2NT has denied that option), East should have a go. Even if West just raises to 4♥, East can find out that West's values include one of the missing Aces, and this has three different advantages: it's a first-round control, it's almost certainly an extra trick, and it will provide an entry to dummy. So away you go!

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