

## Summertown Bridge Bulletin, April 26 2021

Hello everyone,

This is Steven Bliss again, with three interesting hands from last night. They are not actually my most memorable hands of the evening, which were (a) finding the worst possible defence to allow a thin 5 heart contract to sneak through (Roger played it very well) and (b) finishing two boards against the robots with over 10 minutes to spare!

Dlr: South  
Vul: N/S

♠ K J 7 5  
♥ 6  
♦ 6 4 2  
♣ K J 8 4 2

Optimum  
EW 3H:  
-140

♠ 6 2  
♥ J 9 8 7  
♦ K Q 10 5  
♣ 9 6 5

WEST NORTH EAST  
15  
SOUTH

♠ Q 9 4 3  
♥ A K Q 10 5  
♦ A 3  
♣ Q 3

8  
6 17  
9

♠ A 10 8  
♥ 4 3 2  
♦ J 9 8 7  
♣ A 10 7

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

I was surprised to pick up a good score for not bidding 4 hearts on board 15. Eight of the ten pairs bid it 1 heart - 2 hearts - 4 hearts, and they all went one off. It's true that East has 17 points, but the two black queens may not be worth anything, and the Losing Trick Count suggests game is unlikely. (I have no time to explain the LTC here, but it's covered in many books on bidding – it isn't infallible, but it's a test that often works if used with caution.) If you want to explore whether 4 hearts is on, it's best to make a long suit trial bid of 2 spades, as Dave & Linda did, and West will just sign off in 3 hearts.

My other two hands both concern weak no trump openings. As I've said before in these bulletins, the weak no trump generates an amazing range of outcomes on what look like mundane hands. Board 5 is an example. Each side has 20 points and no one can make anything much. The computer thinks that 2 diamonds by EW is the optimum contract, but no one bid that! The contracts our ten pairs reached were as follows:

Four Norths played in 1NT, making between 4 and 8 tricks, one of them redoubled after a bidding mix-up.

Two Easts played in notrumps: 1NT+2, and 3NT-2 (another bidding mix-up, I think).

The other four EW pairs played in 2 hearts or 2 spades, either just making or going one off (they should really go off).

I hesitate to say what *should* happen. If playing strong no trump, North will open 1 club and East will probably bid 1NT and play there. If playing a weak no trump, North will obviously open that. East has three options: pass (as three Easts did), double (as I did – a bit risky), or bid a Landy 2 clubs looking for a major suit fit (assuming you do this with only 4-card suits).

Dlr: North  
Vul: N/S

♠ K 7 6  
♥ A 9 5  
♦ A 2  
♣ K 10 9 7 5

Optimum  
W 2D:  
-90

♠ 10 8  
♥ 7 4 2  
♦ Q J 10 9 3  
♣ Q 8 2

WEST NORTH EAST  
5  
SOUTH

♠ A Q J 4  
♥ Q J 10 3  
♦ 7 6  
♣ A J 3

14  
5 15  
6

♠ 9 5 3 2  
♥ K 8 6  
♦ K 8 5 4  
♣ 6 4

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

Personally, I prefer to keep Landy for slightly weaker and more distributional hands (at least 5-4 in the majors), but sometimes coming in with two 4-card suits will work – it just didn't here, unless you got a helpful defence. The interesting thing is how *dangerously* everyone lives with the weak no trump – it's safer, but boring, with a strong no trump.

Dir: North Vul: None	♠ K 10 7 4 ♥ 10 9 7 2 ♦ A 10 8 7 ♣ 5	Optimum NS 2S+1: +140																																		
♠ J 6 ♥ K 8 6 5 ♦ K J 4 ♣ J 9 8 7	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td style="width: 20px;">W</td><td style="width: 20px; text-align: center;">NORTH</td><td style="width: 20px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 20px;">E</td><td style="width: 20px; text-align: center;">17</td><td style="width: 20px;">S</td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 20px;">S</td><td style="width: 20px; text-align: center;">SOUTH</td><td style="width: 20px;">T</td></tr> </table>	W	NORTH	E	E	17	S	S	SOUTH	T	♠ A 8 2 ♥ A Q 3 ♦ Q 9 5 2 ♣ 10 6 3																									
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<table style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr><td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 30px; height: 30px;">7</td></tr> <tr><td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 30px; height: 30px;">9</td><td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 30px; height: 30px;">12</td></tr> <tr><td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 30px; height: 30px;">12</td></tr> </table>	7	9	12	12	♠ Q 9 5 3 ♥ J 4 ♦ 6 3 ♣ A K Q 4 2	<table style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr><td></td><td>♣</td><td>♦</td><td>♥</td><td>♠</td><td>N</td></tr> <tr><td>N</td><td>2</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>3</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td><td>2</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>3</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>E</td><td>-</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>-</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> </table>		♣	♦	♥	♠	N	N	2	-	-	3	-	S	2	-	-	3	-	E	-	1	1	-	-	W	-	1	1	-	-
7																																				
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E	-	1	1	-	-																															
W	-	1	1	-	-																															

Hand 17 was another weak no trump opening, but this time the interest is in the defence.

One pair were playing a strong no trump and opened the East hand 1 diamond. South overcalled 2 clubs, and got quite a good score for going one off (it might even make, if you take three rounds of trumps then guess the spades right).

Everyone else opened 1NT with the East hand: it's a poor 12 points with a flat 4-3-3-3 shape, but if you play weak no trump you do open these hands, at least when not vulnerable.

Every South began the defence by leading a top club, and then it all depended on whether South found the spade switch. Only two Souths did, both called Sandra, and they both defeated the contract. Everyone else either ploughed on with clubs, or switched to a diamond, and then 1NT made, usually with an overtrick or two. It's hard for the defence: South isn't sure whether to lead a spade, and North isn't sure whether to suggest a spade lead if South continues with another club winner.

Interestingly, if East plays a strong NT and opens 1 diamond, and South then passes, West will bid a heart, East will rebid 1NT (12-14), and the defence are now much more likely to lead spades in time.

*Steven Bliss*