

Summertown Bridge Bulletin, 26 October 2021

Only six tables last night, but as usual, lots of interesting hands!

Let's start with Board 4, where Deep Finesse tells us that North/South can always make 13 tricks in hearts.

Dir: West Vul: All	♠ A ♥ K J 8 3 2 ♦ K 9 6 4 3 ♣ Q 5	Optimum EW 7Sx: +1700																																	
♠ J 10 8 7 6 4 ♥ - - ♦ A Q 10 8 5 ♣ J 6	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="background-color: red; color: white;">NORTH</td><td></td><td style="background-color: red; color: white;">EAST</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: red; color: white;">W</td><td style="text-align: center; font-size: 24px; font-weight: bold;">4</td><td style="background-color: red; color: white;">S</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: red; color: white;">T</td><td></td><td style="background-color: red; color: white;">T</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: red; color: white;">SOUTH</td><td></td><td style="background-color: red; color: white;">T</td></tr> </table>	NORTH		EAST	W	4	S	T		T	SOUTH		T	♠ K 9 2 ♥ 9 5 4 ♦ J 7 2 ♣ 10 9 7 2																					
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W	-	-	-	1	-																														

West dealt and normally opened with a weak 2♠. North mostly overcalled with 3♥, East passed (yes, there are three useful spades, but no outside values and a totally flat distribution), South raised to 4♥, and that was that.

At one table West passed and so Annabel and Jemma were able to bid their way peacefully to 6♥. Trevor, in the North seat, chose to double over 2♠ and when Moira jumped to 4♥, he pushed on to slam. Well done to both pairs for getting there!

At our table West made it a little more difficult by opening with a multi 2♦, which could have been either a weak 2 in a major or a strong 2 in a minor. This meant that Kryz was able to show his hand by bidding only 2♥, and potentially gave us more room to explore. I did think of bidding 4♦ as a splinter agreeing hearts and showing slam interest. However, looking at my hand, I was afraid that West might have a hand that could be considered as a strong 2 in diamonds and if that was the case, any diamond bid from me might look to Kryz like a genuine suit: so in the end, like others, we failed to go beyond game.

For those of us who stopped in game, playing pairs, it now became very important to make as many overtricks as possible. It's quite easy to make 12 tricks, but when you discover that the trumps break 3-0, making 13 requires a little more thought. You have to give up on drawing more than one round, and aim for a cross-ruff, hoping that your three top clubs will stand up. Fortunately they do, and so you can make all the tricks in the form of three club tricks, one spade, and nine trump tricks altogether (one round played, and the rest on the cross-ruff). However, if you take out even one more round of trumps – perhaps to use as an entry – you restrict yourself to 12 tricks, and a poor score.

Out of the 18 boards played last night, no fewer than four were slam hands: but the wildest distribution was on Board 10, where neither side could make as many as 12 tricks.

Imagine you're sitting North, both sides vulnerable, holding this amazing hand:

♠ A K J 9 8 7 4
♥ -
♦ Q 9 8 7 6 3
♣ -

East deals and passes, partner passes, and West opens 1♥. What do you do now? Decide before you move to the next page!

As you can probably see, looking at all four hands, the winning action would have been just to overcall 4♠ - East is very unlikely to compete over this! As the cards lie there's no legitimate way for E/W to get more than two tricks in defence (since even after ♦A and a diamond ruff, the ♠Q will then drop); and even if the spades had broken less favourably, 10 tricks would probably still have been there for the taking.

In practice, all but one of the players holding the North cards bid 2♥, a conventional bid (Michaels) showing a two-suited hand with spades and one of the minors. Some lively bidding followed, ending up at several tables in a contract of 5♦ going one down. In fact, as the analysis says, 5♦ can always be made. The key here is to realise that you are very likely to lose two trump tricks and so you need to bring the spades in without loss – which, on almost any layout, will involve ruffing them at least once. Hence, once again, the winning line is NOT to draw trumps immediately, but to wait until after the spades are set up.

Dlr: East
Vul: All

♠ A K J 9 8 7 4
♥ - -
♦ Q 9 8 7 6 3
♣ - -

Optimum
NS 5S:
+650

♠ Q 6 3
♥ A J 10 8 4
♦ 10
♣ A K 3 2

W	NORTH	E
E	10	A
S		S
T	SOUTH	T

♠ 10 5 2
♥ 9 5 3 2
♦ A J 4
♣ Q 9 5

10
14 7
9

♠ - -
♥ K Q 7 6
♦ K 5 2
♣ J 10 8 7 6 4

♣	♦	♥	♠	N	
N	-	5	-	5	-
S	-	5	-	5	-
E	2	-	3	-	2
W	1	-	3	-	2

Finally, here's a much more "normal" hand which happens to be a very good advertisement for a system that was advocated in this Bulletin a couple of weeks ago by James Bentley, and (coincidentally) was also recommended to Sandra recently by Peter Finbow.

Suppose you open 1NT, your partner bids 2♦ or 2♥ as a transfer, and the next player doubles their bid to show that suit (perhaps just lead-directing, perhaps also suggesting a possible contract their way). Should you now complete the transfer, regardless of your holding in partner's suit? Or have your opponents now given you a way to tell partner more about your hand?

Dlr: East
Vul: None

♠ K Q 10 2
♥ K Q 2
♦ 7
♣ A 10 8 7 2

Optimum
NS 1N, NS
2C: +90

♠ A 7 6 4
♥ A 9
♦ K 6 4 3
♣ Q 6 5

W	NORTH	E
E	14	A
S		S
T	SOUTH	T

♠ J 9 5
♥ J 10 5 4 3
♦ J 8 2
♣ K J

14
13 7
6

♠ 8 3
♥ 8 7 6
♦ A Q 10 9 5
♣ 9 4 3

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

Here, after West opens with a weak NT, North would like to chip in but probably doesn't have a way to describe this hand, so passes. East bids 2♦, transfer to hearts. Now if South doubles, West can pass, showing exactly two cards in hearts – whereas completing the transfer would guarantee at least three. (If you want to go the whole hog, you can even use a redouble to show four or five cards in partner's suit.)

If North also passes, then you haven't lost anything, as partner can still come in with hearts. However, since this is a hand where whoever plays the contract is slated to go down, passing the double gives you the

best chance that your opponents will accept the poisoned chalice!

This is a very simple gadget and it's a situation that comes up relatively frequently, so do think about adopting it with your regular partner.