

Summertown Bridge Bulletin 28 June 2021

As usual, there were quite a few interesting boards amongst those played last night. No fewer than 8 out of the 18 hands had at least one void somewhere, and we've picked three of those for this week's Bulletin.

Dir: North
Vul: None

♠ --
♥ K 10 9 7
♦ A 7 6 3 2
♣ A J 10 4

Optimum
NS 5D:
+400

♠ A J 7 4 3
♥ Q 6 4 3
♦ --
♣ K 9 8 7

	NORTH	
WEST	1	
	SOUTH	

♠ Q 8 6 5 2
♥ J 8
♦ K 10 8 4
♣ 6 3

12	
10	6
12	

♠ K 10 9
♥ A 5 2
♦ Q J 9 5
♣ Q 5 2

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	4	5	4	-	2
S	4	5	4	-	2
E	-	-	-	2	-
W	-	-	-	2	-

Board 1 should have warned us what was to come since, as you can see, both North and West have three-suited hands. North was dealer and everyone opened by bidding their five card suit, diamonds. Even though South has a four-card fit with partner's suit, the suit is a minor and the hand is so balanced that most people chose to respond with a natural 2NT, showing 11 or 12 points.

At this point North should perhaps smell a rat, since if South had a 4-card spade suit, surely it would have been mentioned? But we all know that in pairs, NT usually scores better than playing in a minor – so 5 pairs still ended up playing in 3NT, doomed to go down on a spade lead. Only the evening's winners, Bridget and John, bid and made 5♦ after successfully negotiating the bad trump break.

Just one West looked at their 10 points with a void in opener's suit, and doubled for takeout (it's normal to do this after 1♦ – 1NT, but obviously more of a risk when you know South has a stronger hand). East bid 3♠ and was allowed to play there for two off. If everyone had been in 5♦ this would have been an excellent result, but as it was, the enterprising gamble didn't pay off. That's bridge for you!

Board 5 also found 5 out of 8 tables playing in 3NT with a void in a major suit.

Again, North dealt, and all opened 1NT. This leaves South in a bit of a quandary, unless you and your partner have a clear agreement that a response of 3 of a minor is game forcing with slam interest. Most Souths just closed their eyes and raised to 3NT, and even when I did bid 3♦, Krys quite reasonably felt that his hand wasn't suitable, so we also played in 3NT.

In every case East then led a heart. Now North has to decide what to do. You can't make 9 tricks without playing on diamonds, and the normal way to do this would be to take a first round finesse

against the Queen. If it loses, and West still has a heart to play back, you will go down (just as happened in Board 1, although there declarer didn't have the option of holding up). So should you make sure of your contract by holding on to your ♥A until the fourth round – or should you take it immediately and gamble that the diamond finesse will work, giving you at least 11 tricks? On this occasion, Holly put her gambler's hat on and scooped the jackpot, with Erica not far behind.

Finally, here's Board 15. This time South dealt and once again, almost everyone opened 1NT. After two passes, the spotlight fell on the hand with the void, East.

Our experience is that it generally pays off to compete over a weak NT if you possibly can, and with 12 points, two 5-card suits and a void, not to mention favourable vulnerability, this seems like an excellent opportunity to do so. But if you play some sort of two-suited gadget, the likely contract here will be 2♥ by East, and your

trumps really aren't good enough to make 8 tricks (although one pair did manage it). Even a natural bid of 2♦ will fail against the bad break in that suit.

At our table we were unlucky to be playing against Trevor and Moira. Trevor made the natural 2♦ overcall and Moira, quite reasonably in view of her singleton diamond, corrected to 2♠, which, as the analysis says, is the optimum contract for E/W. Had her partner's spades and clubs been the other way round, the result might have been rather different. And that's also bridge for you!