

## Summertown Bridge Bulletin, 4<sup>th</sup> April 2022

### Long suits and voids

There seemed to be an unusually high number of hands with long suits and/or voids last night. This is the kind of distribution that used to make people suspicious, in the early days of pre-dealt hands, that the deals spat out by a machine couldn't possibly be genuinely "random". These days we realise that highly distributional hands do turn up fairly frequently, and there are better strategies for bidding them – mostly involving bidding at least one level higher than we might have done ten or twenty years ago! However, although bold bidding sometimes pays off, it can also go badly wrong.

Take Board 10.

East dealt and almost always opened 1♦ (OK, it's just 10 high card points, but the diamonds are pretty solid and there are only six losers). What should South do now, with another six-loser hand, an excellent seven-card major and a void in the opener's suit?

The general rule is that if you make a pre-emptive bid, you have fully described your hand and so you need to leave it to your partner to decide whether to bid on. But here, if you look at the vulnerability and bid a

"sensible" 3♥ (as the majority of Souths did), your partner could well pass holding just the cards you need for game. Plus, looking at your void, it's likely that a 3♥ bid isn't going to be enough to silence the opposition – and they are vulnerable too. Take a deep breath and push the boat out to 4♥!

On the night, two pairs made 4♥ (once doubled, once undoubled but with an overtrick) and another two played in 3♥ making 10 tricks. One declarer who bid the game was very unlucky to receive a spade lead, which meant that when West came in with the Ace of hearts, she was able to give her partner a ruff. Declarer then misguessed the clubs (easy to do at this table, since East hadn't actually opened the bidding, while West had overcalled) and went one off. At another table, East opened a rather top-heavy 2♦ and this led to a spirited auction where E/W finally bought the contract in 5♦ doubled. Declarer played very well to keep this to only one down but, sadly for him, a score of 200 for N/S beat all the N/S pairs except the two in game. The best result for E/W was at the table where South decided not to pre-empt at all (maybe thinking the hand was too good for 3♥?) and East was allowed to play in just 3♦, making.

Dir: East  
Vul: All

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

Optimum  
EW 5Dx:  
+200

♠ J 9 8 4 3  
♥ A 3  
♦ A 10 3  
♣ Q 5 4

W	NORTH	E
S	10	T
T	SOUTH	T

♠ 7  
♥ 8 4  
♦ K Q J 9 5 4  
♣ A 10 8 2

9	
11	10
10	

♠ A 6 5  
♥ K Q J 10 9 7 5  
♦ - -  
♣ 9 6 3

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	-	-	4	1	-
S	-	-	4	1	-
E	3	4	-	-	2
W	2	4	-	-	2

Now let's look at board 12.

Dlr: West  
Vul: N/S

♠ 10 9 2  
♥ J 10 7 2  
♦ K 9 3  
♣ Q 10 7

Optimum  
EW 5C:  
-400

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

W NORTH  
EAST  
12  
SOUTH

♠ K J 8 7 5 3  
♥ K 5  
♦ A  
♣ 9 6 3 2

♠ A Q 6 4  
♥ A Q 9 6 4 3  
♦ 10 2  
♣ 5

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

6  
11 11  
12

Almost everyone opened this hand 1♦, and was later able to show the clubs, for which of course partner has a much better fit. Despite this, quite a few Easts tried to insist on playing in spades. This led to two bad scores, once when West caved in and left partner to attempt to make 10 tricks in spades; and once when a fiercely competitive auction wasn't allowed to subside below 6♣. However, it also once ended in a top for E/W, when – after bidding spades three times (!) and being doubled in 4♠ – East finally retreated to 5♣, and this making contract was also doubled.

At our table, West had other ideas. Looking at her very lopsided hand with only one card in the majors – and also, no doubt, being aware of the vulnerability – she opened with an enormous preempt of 5♦. This was passed round to South, who pondered for a while and eventually decided to double (for penalties, as the bid was above 4♠) rather than risk 5♥. When dummy went down and declarer proved to be void in spades, it looked for a while as if this had been the wrong choice; but fortunately partner had just enough to give us three defensive tricks, including a diamond (which doesn't have to be given away if declarer is playing in clubs). Nevertheless, the opening bid was a bold, imaginative move and possibly deserved a better result than it got.

Finally, on the same theme, here's board 14, on which several N/S pairs – including us – missed an opportunity for a good result.

East dealt and mostly opened with some sort of strength-showing bid. Even if this didn't show hearts (as some did), South can be pretty sure that East must have one of the red suits, and quite likely both black Aces. So it looks as if you should aim for a sacrifice, but where? You have a seven-card suit, so don't worry about your rather weedy spades, just leap directly to 5♣! In practice no one found this, but several pairs managed to catch up later in the auction and got a good result from playing in 5♣ or even 6♣ doubled.

Dlr: East  
Vul: None

♠ 6 3  
♥ J 10 3  
♦ A J 10 7  
♣ Q 9 6 3

Optimum  
NS 6Cx: -100

♠ Q J 10 5  
♥ 9 7 2  
♦ Q 9 8 6 5 3  
♣ - -

W NORTH  
EAST  
14  
SOUTH

♠ A 8  
♥ A K Q 8 6 5 4  
♦ K 2  
♣ A 8

♠ K 9 7 4 2  
♥ - -  
♦ 4  
♣ K J 10 7 5 4 2

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

8  
5 20  
7

So next time you hold a long suit and a void, away you go! Just be aware that it may not always end up as a good result – but it will certainly be fun finding out!