

Summertown Bridge Bulletin, 7th November 2022

Last night's session threw up no fewer than three hands where one player held more than half the points in the pack. You'd think this might have resulted in making a slam or two, but no. Even making games were sometimes hard to find – particularly after vigorous intervention by the opposition.

Dir: South
Vul: E/W

♠ 10 9 6 5 3

♥ J 7 5

♦ 7 2

♣ 9 5 4

Optimum
NS -650

♠ K 8 7 2

♥ Q 10 4

♦ 10 9 5

♣ 10 3 2

W	NORTH	E
E	3	A
S	SOUTH	T

♠ A J 4

♥ A K 9 6

♦ Q 6

♣ A K Q 8

1		23
5		
	11	

♠ Q

♥ 8 3 2

♦ A K J 8 4 3

♣ J 7 6

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

On Board 3, South dealt and mostly opened 1♦, although at our table, the opening was a weak 2♦ (presumably, discounting the singleton Queen). In either case, when the bidding is passed round to East there is really no choice but to double, even though you would much prefer to have four cards in both majors. When West shows spades, it follows almost as the night the day, that East will bid on to game in that suit, rather than finding the only making game in hearts. The analysis suggests that 4♠ can be kept to one off, but this relies on dropping that singleton

Queen of trumps, rather than taking the finesse – a seemingly more natural line, especially as you have a handy entry to dummy available in hearts.

On a couple of tables, East did try for game in NT by bidding 3♦ to ask for a stop, but still had to settle for the doomed spade contract.

One N/S pair tried to stop E/W from finding their fit by jumping to 3♦ themselves after the double. Unfortunately, this enterprising action was punished when East doubled again and West chose to leave this in for penalties. Minus 500 would have been an excellent result for N/S if it had stopped E/W from reaching a making vulnerable game: it was bad luck that, here, they were very unlikely to do so.

Another pair passed the South hand initially – presumably also discounting the ♠Q – but then did their best to put off E/W by jumping to 3♦ after East opened with a strong 2♣. In this case, they got away with it when E/W still continued to 4♠.

Finally, at one table, E/W achieved a good score by stopping in 3♠, after South opened 1♦ and then kept quiet.

With such a good suit, and at favourable vulnerability, it seems to us to be a good pairs tactic to come in with a 3♦ bid, particularly as it takes away the bidding space needed to ask for a stop for NT. In fact, looking at your singleton Queen, you might even consider opening a cheeky 3♦!

Boards 12 and 16 both featured very strong hands with a superb 6-card heart suit. Sadly, in both cases, the remaining cards in the suit were very badly placed.

Dlr: West
 Vul: N/S

♠ J
 ♥ A K Q 9 4 2
 ♦ A K J 4
 ♣ A 10

Optimum
NS +650

♠ A K 9 7
 ♥ J 7 6 5 3
 ♦ 10 9
 ♣ Q 9

NORTH
 WEST
 EAST
 SOUTH
 12

♠ 10 8 4 3 2
 ♥ - -
 ♦ Q 8 5
 ♣ J 6 5 3 2

♠ Q 6 5
 ♥ 10 8
 ♦ 7 6 3 2
 ♣ K 8 7 4

22
 10 3
 5

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

No two tables played Board 12 in the same contract, and only one played in a making contract (3NT) at game level (well done, Paul and Anne!). Another pair played in 4♥, which should survive the trump break even if you take the normal line of starting off by leading trumps from the top – but somehow, it didn't. The pair who reached 6♥ were, naturally, doubled and after a helpful lead, were lucky to go only one off; but it was still a bottom. And one North opened only 1♥, perhaps taking the view that the hand was two-suited and needed the extra bidding space. After a double from East, N/S found their 4-4 diamond fit – and played very

comfortably in only 2♦, for a rather surprising average.

So which N/S got a top on the hand? The ones who made their NT game? No ... it was a pair who played in hearts, but with West as declarer! After North opened a strong 2♣ and South replied with a negative 2♦, West popped in a 2♥ bid. North must have thought Christmas had come early and duly doubled. The hapless West could take only two tricks.

We have some sympathy with the pair who reached the slam, although it's not a very good one to be in: even if the hearts were breaking more normally, success would still have needed the ♦Q to be kindly placed. Despite what we said on the previous page, though, we wouldn't advise you to try to compete with West's hand. OK, the vulnerability is right for you – but you have only a five-card suit headed by a single low honour, with no intermediates; and if North ends up as declarer, do you really want your partner to lead a heart?

Lastly, here's Board 16, where the heart void is now in partner's hand. As it happens, the outstanding hearts this time do break well for you and 4♥ was bid and made at two tables, whilst two others understandably played in 3NT, making exactly 9 tricks and therefore scoring less than those who played in the suit, but more than the pair who saw the misfit and stopped below game.

Did you notice that South's hand here has exactly the same distribution as North's hand on Board 12? Maybe if South had treated this one as two-suited, N/S might have found their making diamond slam – but we'll never know!

Dlr: West
 Vul: E/W

♠ K 10 6
 ♥ - -
 ♦ Q 10 7 2
 ♣ A 8 6 5 3 2

Optimum
NS +920

♠ A 4 3
 ♥ 10 7 3
 ♦ 9 8 5
 ♣ Q J 10 9

NORTH
 WEST
 EAST
 SOUTH
 16

♠ J 9 8 7 5 2
 ♥ Q 9 8 2
 ♦ 6 4
 ♣ 4

♠ Q
 ♥ A K J 6 5 4
 ♦ A K J 3
 ♣ K 7

9
 7 3
 21

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	4	6	4	1	3
S	4	6	4	1	3
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-