

♠ ♥ **What a monster?** ♦ ♣

Dlr: East
 Vul: E/W
 Optimum
 NS 1510

♠ A K Q 9 8
 ♥ A K Q 10
 ♦ - -
 ♣ A Q 7 4

♠ J 7 6
 ♥ 8 3
 ♦ A K Q 7 6 5 4
 ♣ 9

NORTH
 WEST EAST
 6
 SOUTH

♠ 4 3 2
 ♥ 6 5
 ♦ J 10 9 3 2
 ♣ J 8 5

24
 10 2
 4

♠ 10 5
 ♥ J 9 7 4 2
 ♦ 8
 ♣ K 10 6 3 2

♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ N
 N 7 - 7 7 -
 S 7 - 7 7 -
 E - 1 - - -
 W - 1 - - -

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On Thursday, 24th November, 2016 Board 6 was a monster! The hand was played at 15 tables. At two tables the contract was 7♥ made. Three North/South pairs bid 6♥ and one North/South pair bid 6♠, all contracts making with an overtrick. Eight pairs bid game, five playing in hearts and three in spades. And one pair played in a spade part-score.

Life might have been easier if North was dealer. As it happened, West was dealer and probably didn't go quietly!

At our table West opened 3♦ an opening that might have been replicated at other tables. Or some West's might have tried a weak 2♦, perhaps a bit too strong albeit that East/West are vulnerable. Did anyone try the gambling 3NT? Partner, without stoppers in the other suits would bid 4♣ to play or 4♦ to play or for partner to convert to 5♣.

Anyway, at our table I was faced with an opening bid of 3♦.

Some North's might consider a Takeout Double. I opted for a slightly different route and simply bid 4♦ ...a Strong Takeout and suggesting good support for the unbid suits.

Partner, having previously Passed, bid 4♥.

Well that's the first hurdle cleared...we have a trump suit agreed. What next?

Board No 6 E/W Vul Dealer East								
-								
NS	EW	Bid	By	Tks	+Sc	-Sc	+	-
1	16	6♥	S	13	1010		21	7
2	10	4♥	N	13	510		11	17
4	14	7♥	S	13	1510		27	1
5	9	4♥	S	13	510		11	17
6	11	4♠	N	13	510		11	17
7	13	4♠	N	13	510		11	17
8	15	5♥	S	12	480		4	24
12	3	6♥	S	13	1010		21	7
17	32	6♠	N	13	1010		21	7
18	26	6♥	S	13	1010		21	7
20	30	4♠	N	11	450		2	26
21	25	4♥	N	13	510		11	17
22	27	7♥	S	13	1510		27	1
23	29	5♥	S	13	510		11	17
28	19	3♠	N	13	260			28

Clearly 4NT is pretty useless because you have all the Keycards that matter. I have to admit that I simply bid 6♥. It will take very little in partner's hand to make twelve tricks. Indeed it takes little to make all thirteen tricks. In the end I decided to settle for the small slam.

Partner suggested, after the hand was over that if I bid 5♦, promising first round control in diamonds (ace or a void), that he could bid 6♣ suggesting a club control (ace, king or singleton/void) and then I could bid 7♥. Perhaps that's a lot easier in hindsight.

Anyway, all the North's who didn't bid the small slam, and from North's perspective 6♥ looks more attractive than 6♠ because of the discarding options presented via the spade suit, should look at the hand again. And remember that East passed as dealer and West has pre-empted. It sounds like there is lots of room for partner to have the little that is required to make twelve tricks. And note that you have all the key cards in spades and hearts and two of the top three honours in clubs. Not much for partner to have except in clubs...the very suit where you need some help!

Paul J Scannell,
November 24th, 2016