

Mentor Panel
for Mentee- Mentor Game, January 3, 2023
compiled by Michael Lavine

Comments from some of the mentors from the Unit 191 January 3 mentor/mentee game. We will start with board 6 because The Common Game has comments on boards 1-5.

Board 6. East deals. EW are VUL. NS are silent.

West	East
♠AQT42	♠K63
♥AKT42	♥Q65
♦2	♦A965
♣42	♣AQT

Questions: How should EW bid? Should they reach slam?

I expect every East to open 1 notrump. Then there are two questions for West. First, is West worth just a game, a slam try, or should West force to slam? Second, how should West handle a hand that's 5-5 in the majors?

From West's point of view, East is highly likely to have 3 or more cards in at least one major suit. So, West should expect to have an 8 card fit and should evaluate the hand as 13 HCP plus 3 points for shortness in the minors. In addition, West's high cards are well placed in his major suits. West doesn't have questionable values like queens and jacks in short suits. So, West should at least invite slam, and possibly drive to slam without inviting.

Playing Jacoby transfers, responder shows an invitational or better hand with 5-5 in the majors by transferring to one major, then bidding the other. (More details on Jacoby transfers are [here](#).) Responder can show 5-5 hands of various strength:

1. Invite game. Transfer to hearts, then bid 2 spades.
2. Force game. Transfer to spades, then bid 4 hearts.
3. Invite slam. Transfer to spades, then bid 3 hearts.

So, in my opinion, West should transfer to spades, then bid 3 hearts. East will then choose a major. West will then either bid 4 of the major, having already shown slam interest, or make a control bid in diamonds.

This is a very good slam. If both major suits break 3-2 then there are 12 sure tricks. If one of the major suits breaks 4-1 then there are 11 sure tricks and the 12th relies on the club finesse.

But the slam is even better than that because when EW play the major suits they should win the first honor in West and the second in East. That way, if North shows out, there is a proven finesse against South, as happened in spades.

This hand also posed a defensive question for NS. The NS hands were

North: ♠8 ♥83 ♦QJ873 ♣KJ873

South: ♠J975 ♥J97 ♦KT4 ♣965

At one table South led one of the major suits and EW took the first 10 tricks in the major suits. North had to come down to three cards. South can help North know which cards to keep by discarding a low club early, indicating no high honors in clubs. Then North knows that if South has any help in the minors, it's in diamonds, and North can discard diamonds.

Board 8. West deals. Neither side is vulnerable.

	North		
	♠ 9		
	♥ J9		
	♦ K8762		
	♣ KQ652		
West		East	
♠ K742		♠ QJT3	
♥ KQ653		♥ AT	
♦ T		♦ AQJ93	
♣ T43		♣ A8	
	South		
	♠ A865		
	♥ 8742		
	♦ 54		
	♣ J97		

West and North start with passes. Then East will open the bidding with 1 diamond and plan to rebid either 2 notrump or jump shift in spades over the expected 1 heart from West. At one table the bidding went

W	N	E	S
P	P	1D	P
1H	?		

Now North has a decision. First, can North show both minor suits? Most pairs play that the Unusual Notrump (See https://www.bridgebum.com/unusual_2nt.php.) shows the two lowest unbid suits. Here, since diamonds and hearts have been bid, 2NT would show spades and clubs. (Two diamonds would also show spades and clubs. Double would also show spades and clubs but would have more in high cards and less in distribution.) So no, North cannot show both suits. Second, is North worth an overcall of 2 clubs? A two-level overcall normally

shows a hand with a good suit of at least five cards and at least close to an opening bid. See, for example, Karen Walker's advice at <http://kwbridge.com/comp.htm> about overcalls. I make a two-level overcall with a bit less than her example. I like overcalling 2 clubs here because it could gain in several ways. It could buy a good contract; it could direct a good lead; and it could suggest a good sacrifice. Also, on this board, North is a passed hand, so South will realize North can't have an opening bid and South will be cautious. If North overcalls the bidding has gone

W	N	E	S
P	P	1D	P
1H	2C	?	

and East has a decision. East is clearly good enough to bid, but what? DBL, 2S or 2N? If you play Support doubles, that's what DBL would be. 2N would show about the right amount of strength but I don't like it here because N doesn't have a good enough club stopper. Stopping the suit only once may not be good enough to make 3 notrump and, if partner has something like Qx or Jxx you want the opening lead to come up to partner. So, I would opt for 2S. That's what happened at our table. The bidding has now gone

W	N	E	S
P	P	1D	P
1H	2C	2S	P

and it's up to West. At our table, West passed and EW played in 2 spades, making 5. I suspect that West did not recognize that East made a reverse. A reverse (See https://www.bridgebum.com/reverse_bids.php.) shows considerable extra strength. In light of East's extra strength, West should have kept bidding and should have raised to 4 spades.

Board 16. West deals. EW are VUL. EW are silent.

North	South
♠AT9842	♠KJ7
♥Q6	♥K75
♦5	♦AKQJ96
♣AKJ4	♣5

At our club about half the pairs played six spades and about half played either four or five spades. That was true across the whole Common Game field: about half the pairs bid a slam. Should NS bid slam? If so, in diamonds, spades, or notrump? How should the bidding go? We expect the bidding to start

N	S
1S	2D
?	

Then should N bid 2S or 3C? In our opinion either bid is acceptable. If N chooses 3C then the bidding has gone

N	S
1S	2D
3C	?

and it's South's turn. If NS play that South's 2D is forcing to game then S can bid just 3S here. (Also true if N had bid 2S on the second round.) That's how South shows a hand worth a game force with just three card support: start with a two-over-one, then show support. After South's raise North is not a bare minimum but doesn't have enough extra to investigate slam, so the bidding would be

N	S
1S	2D
3C	3S
4S	

and it's back to South. South has much more than a minimum. South would have bid the same way with, for example,

♠KJ7 ♥K875 ♦AQJ7 ♣95

which is still not a bare minimum for this bidding sequence. South's actual hand will deliver several more diamond tricks than the example and has first or second round control of every suit. So it's up to South to ask for aces and bid the slam:

N	S
1S	2D
3C	3S
4S	4N
5H	6S

It's not a perfect slam because NS could lose the ace of hearts and might also lose a spade, but it's worth bidding.

Six notrump is a slightly better contract than six spades because even if the spades don't split, NS might get a twelfth trick from the club finesse — 2 spades + 1 heart + 6 diamonds + 3 clubs — but bidding six notrump is difficult. NS would have to spurn their 9 card spade fit. Over 80% of the Common Game field played in spades.