

**Mentor/Mentee game**  
**13-Feb-2024**  
**Mentor Discussion**

Comments from Michael Lavine on the Unit 191 February 13  
mentor/mentee game.

**Board 4.** West deals. Both vulnerable.

	North	
	♠ T975	
	♥ 862	
	♦ 53	
	♣ K752	
West		East
♠ AJ4		♠ 3
♥ KJT		♥ AQ7543
♦ QJ94		♦ AK8
♣ JT4		♣ A63
	South	
	♠ KQ862	
	♥ 9	
	♦ T762	
	♣ Q98	

Board 4 saw about half the EW pairs stop in four hearts and the other half reach six hearts. As you can see, there are 12 easy tricks, so six hearts is a good contract. How should EW know to bid it? I expect the bidding to start 1D-1H; 1NT at almost every table. Now East has to evaluate whether to settle for game or to explore slam. East has 17 HCP opposite a maximum of 14 HCP from West, so a first assessment might be that EW should settle for game. In that case East can just bid 4H, counting on West to have at least two hearts for the 1NT bid. However, a second assessment might compare the actual West hand with this one -- S:543 H:AQ73 D:AK8 C:A63 -- in which two small hearts have been replaced by two small spades. The two hands have the same HCP, but the actual hand is much more powerful than the hypothetical hand because the long heart suit is likely to produce one or two extra tricks. Further, the hand's honors outside its long suit are all aces and kings, which are sure to be useful, as opposed to quacks (queens and jacks) which might not produce tricks. So in my

opinion, the actual East hand is strong enough to investigate slam. How can East do that? There is no heart bid that shows this strength. Perhaps the best possibility is to bid 2C, New Minor Forcing. On this hand West will support hearts. Now that East knows about the heart support slam seems even more likely, especially with East's excellent control of all suits, and East could just bid 6H or could go through 4NT, RKCB, first. The pairs who bid the slam were rewarded on this hand.

You might think that East was lucky to find the spade Ace opposite East's singleton spade. It's true that an ace opposite a singleton makes for a good fit and that EW were lucky in this regard. However, this slam is a laydown for 12 top tricks. If West had had the spade King instead of the Ace then the slam would depend on the location of the spade Ace (lead up to the spade king for the potential 12th trick) and would still be worth bidding. And if West did not have either the spade Ace or King then there would be compensating values elsewhere and EW might not need a spade trick. In my opinion, the Easts who investigated slam did a good job of hand evaluation, appreciating the value of their long hearts and outside prime (aces and kings) values.

**Board 12.** West deals. NS vulnerable.

	North	
	♠ AKJ94	
	♥ 7542	
	♦ —	
	♣ KT94	
West		East
♠ 653		♠ —
♥ QT9		♥ AKJ
♦ KQJ62		♦ A9874
♣ J5		♣ Q7632
	South	
	♠ QT872	
	♥ 863	
	♦ T53	
	♣ A8	

Board 12 has points of interest in both bidding and play. I expect West to pass and North to open 1S at almost every table. Though N has only 11 HCP, the good distribution adds value to the hand, which meets both the Rule of 20 and

the Suggestion of 22. The Rule of 20 says to open 1 of a suit if your HCP plus the length of your two longest suits is at least 20. See [https://www.bridgebum.com/rule\\_of\\_20.php](https://www.bridgebum.com/rule_of_20.php). The Suggestion of 22 is simply the Rule of 20 plus the additional requirement that your hand contain at least two quick tricks. After North opens, East has a decision: is East's hand good enough to bid and, if so, what should E bid? East certainly has enough points for a two-level overcall, but the suits are not as robust as one would like for an overcall. The choices are between Pass, Double, 2NT (Unusual) and 2D. Of those four calls I like Pass the least and think it is clearly inferior to DBL. Whatever call East chooses, South will want to raise spades, but to what level? On this hand, NS can make four spades, but if South's clubs and diamonds were reversed, then four spades would likely go down. After South's spade raise, West will want to bid diamonds, but to what level? The answer isn't clear and may depend on which call East chose. With all the distribution around the table there will likely be some close decisions at high levels. In our game, 3 NS pairs played in spades, 2 EW pairs played in notrump, 3 EW pairs played in diamonds, and one EW pair played in clubs. I don't know how EW ended up in either notrump or clubs. Of the pairs in diamonds, two made 11 tricks but one made only 10 tricks. It looks like the opening lead will be a spade and East will ruff. At that point West will have more diamonds than East and declarer should think of West as the master hand. The hearts are solid and there are two unavoidable club losers, so the main question is what to do about West's three spades. Should EW try to establish clubs for spade discards or should EW try to ruff three spades in the East hand? To me it looks easier to ruff spades in East. So I think the play should go:

Trick 1 — spade ruff in East

Trick 2 — small diamond to West, exposing the 3-0 diamond break. Now EW cannot afford to pull trump because they won't have enough trump in East to ruff all West's spades, so

Trick 3 — spade ruff in East

Trick 4 — small diamond to West

Trick 5 — spade ruffed with East's Ace

Trick 6 — heart Jack to West's Queen

Trick 7 — pull trump and concede two clubs.

That line will yield 5 diamonds in West, 3 spade ruffs in East, and 3 hearts, for a total of 11 tricks.

**Board 15.** South deals. NS vulnerable.

	North	
	♠ J6	
	♥ A972	
	♦ 75	
	♣ AKT74	
West		East
♠ 53		♠ QT9
♥ K85		♥ J64
♦ AQJ8		♦ K9432
♣ J962		♣ 83
	South	
	♠ AK8742	
	♥ QT3	
	♦ T6	
	♣ Q5	

Board 15 also has points of interest in both bidding and play. The first point is whether South should open 1S or 2S. South is a little light in HCP for 1S, especially because the two queens are unsupported so might not pull their weight on offense. On the other hand, South does satisfy the Rule of 20 and Suggestion of 22, and South does have an easy rebid of 2S. So some Souths might open 1S and others might open 2S. I don't think this hand is too strong to open a vulnerable 2S, but I do think it's too strong for a nonvulnerable 2S. If S opens 2S then North has to decide whether to try for game. It's close, but all of North's values rate to be useful, and North might be able to contribute a ruff or establish some club tricks, so there might be 10 tricks available. If North makes a game try by bidding 2NT, South will show a maximum and North will continue to game. On the other hand, if South opens 1S then the bidding might go 1S-1N; 2S-? and again North will realize that all the hand's values are working, so will likely continue to 4S. In our game every South played in spades: three played 2S; one played 3S; and five played 4S. They made either 8, 9, 10, or 11 tricks. It looks to me that South should recognize that the best chance for extra tricks is to establish clubs, so the plan should be to take two rounds of spades and leave the queen outstanding. Then play three rounds of clubs and see whether they break 3-3. If they do, then South will win 5 spades, 5 clubs, and the heart Ace, for 11 tricks. If clubs break 4-2 then South will ruff the fourth club and make only 10 tricks. One key point is that South should leave the spade queen outstanding before playing clubs. If South plays a third trump and lets the opponents win the queen, then EW might be able to play hearts and knock out

the heart Ace, dummy's entry, before the clubs are established. South must retain the heart ace in dummy before establishing clubs. A second key point is that South should allow for the possibility that clubs are more likely to split 4-2 than 3-3. So South should play club Queen, club Ace, and ruff the third round of clubs. Instead, if South plays the club King on the third round then East might be able to ruff it and lead a heart through the queen. Then EW will be able to knock out dummy's entry before the clubs are established. A better play is to ruff the third round, then knock out the spade Queen. South might lose two diamonds but still retain dummy's heart Ace as an entry to the remaining clubs on which to pitch South's losing hearts.