

## Rich Newell's GNT experience

My teammates from Minnesota were Mike Flader (you would recognize him from years of writing the Ruling the Game column years ago), Steve Gaynor, and Barry Purrington who was my partner the whole time.

Mike Flader had those three for a team and called me out of the blue a few months ago. I probably should have asked if we should bring Toby along for the ride, but they were well aware of my partnership with Toby and our fine history so far so I'm a little surprised they didn't ask us both initially. BBO's ability to run club swiss teams games was getting off the ground, and it sounded like it would be difficult for them to accommodate 5-person teams.

I had randomly asked Barry to play a 2-session online regional a few months ago. Toby & I teamed with him and a partner in Minnesota, and we finished 2<sup>nd</sup>, losing narrowly to a pro team. He is very friendly and easy going so I thought I should play with him.

I don't know if Toby felt left out or not, he seemed content to stay on the sidelines. If you're reading this Toby, I certainly want you in on future face-to-face GNT events in a normal world. Barry played a fairly standard 2/1 game with me very well, but my long partnership with you would have done a little better – and that is absolutely no disrespect to Barry with whom I had never played a game until this year.

We won all the matches in our club qualifying game. We won all five matches in our unit qualifying game too. As the #1 seed we selected the team with Tracey Ball and Nancy Wittwer. Over 48 boards we beat them by 26 IMPs – not a lot. And in the finals we beat Tony Ames' team by 22 IMPs.

Here are some of the interesting hands in the final session against Tony Ames.

First quarter, board 5

**D**  
5

**N** ynotsema **6+**  
 ♠AQ73  
 ♥AQ10  
 ♦KQ98  
 ♣J7

**W** runewell **35**  
 ♠J65  
 ♥532  
 ♦432  
 ♣A1082

**W** **N** **E** **S**  
 1♦ Pass 1♥  
 Pass 2NT Pass 4♦  
 Pass 4♠ Pass 6♦  
 Pass Pass Pass

**E** BPurringto **6+**  
 ♠10984  
 ♥J84  
 ♦6  
 ♣K9654

**S** jn55345 **8**  
 ♠K2  
 ♥K976  
 ♦AJ1075  
 ♣Q3

6♦ North  
 0 0

Our opponents had a sensible auction to 6D, and we could have set it on a club lead. If the club honors were switched, it probably would have gone ace, high encourage by me, king, down 1 - but I wouldn't lead away from a king in a slam either.

Mike Flader in the north hand opened 1NT with the 18-count, and after east threw in a favorable vulnerability 2C nuisance bid, our teammates were only getting to game. Lose 13.

First quarter, board 6

**6**

**N** ynotsema **6+**

♠K105  
♥K873  
♦92  
♣A952

**W** runewell **36**

♠Q97643  
♥QJ94  
♦3  
♣KQ

**W** **N** **E** **S**

Pass 1♣  
1♠ Dbl 2♠ 3♦  
3♠ 4♣ Pass 5♣  
Pass Pass Pass

**E** BPurringto **6+**

♠AJ82  
♥52  
♦J108654  
♣6

**S** jn55345 **8**

♠  
♥A106  
♦AKQ7  
♣J108743

5♣  
South

0 0

The five club contract only loses a heart and a trump.

3NT was down 2 at the other table, losing 5 spades and a club.

Lose 11.

First quarter, board 11

Board 11

N ynotsema 6+

♠AJ3  
♥Q62  
♦AKQ974  
♣J

W runewell 35

♠KQ5  
♥J3  
♦108652  
♣732

E BPurringto 6+

♠1098642  
♥A1085  
♦3  
♣Q10

S jn55345 8

♠7  
♥K974  
♦J  
♣AK98654

W N E S

Pass 1♦ Pass 1♥

Pass 2♠ Pass 5♦

Pass 6♣ Pass Pass

Pass

6♣ South

0 0

This didn't help morale either. The opening bid was 1C and after Judy jumped to 5 Tony bid on to 6. The ace of hearts is a sure loser, but of the five trump out, the two threatening ones dropped immediately, to her delight.

Our teammates were in a reasonable 3NT making 7, but lose 9.

One thing Barry and I had going for us most of the day was good defense:

Board 8: Our teammates were +140, we set 4 spades, win 5.

Board 9: Our teammates were +140, we set 3NT, win 7.

Board 10: Our teammates were +170, we set 4H, win 7.

But the score after the first quarter was 19-44 so we were down 25. That set felt pretty unlucky.

Second quarter, board 4

We lost another 17 IMPs in the next three boards until this happened:

The screenshot shows a bridge hand interface with the following details:

- Board:** A red-bordered box in the top left contains the number '4' and a small 'D' to its left.
- North (N):** ynotsema, 6+ points. Hand: ♠75, ♥AKJ765, ♦K985, ♣5.
- West (W):** runewell, 36 points. Hand: ♠QJ2, ♥Q2, ♦A632, ♣J742.
- East (E):** BPurringto, 6+ points. Hand: ♠8, ♥109843, ♦107, ♣Q9863.
- South (S):** jn55345, 8 points. Hand: ♠AK109643, ♥, ♦QJ4, ♣AK10.
- Bidding:** A central table shows the bidding sequence: W Pass, N 1♥, E Pass, S 2♠, W Pass, N 3♦, E Pass, S 3♠, W Pass, N 4♠, E Pass, S 6♠, W Pass, N Pass, E Pass, S Pass.
- Score:** In the bottom right, there are two score boxes. The top one shows '6♠' and 'South'. The bottom one shows '0' and '0'.

1430 here would be of limited value since your partner's one key card could be the ace of hearts which rates to be no good. However the resulting queen ask bid (4NT 5C 5D) would get 5S = no queen. Even then you probably have nine trump and 50%+ of it dropping. I led my ace of diamonds and the contract was eventually down 1 and +100 while our teammates scored up +680 when the ace of diamonds wasn't cashed, win 13.

Should I double for penalty? It turns out we are +780 without it and +880 with it, and it's the same IMPs! On the rare occasion that someone has no diamonds (fairly unlikely) and somehow makes the contract our loss goes from -750 to -980 and that's one whole IMP. Although had our opponents been in the same losing contract, it could have been three IMPs (-100 vs -200)

Second quarter, board 10

Board 10

<b>N</b> ynotsema <b>6+</b>	♠ KJ542 ♥ KQ92 ♦ Q74 ♣ Q
<b>W</b> runewell <b>36</b>	♠ 1063 ♥ J103 ♦ 93 ♣ AK753
<b>E</b> BPurringto <b>6+</b>	♠ A97 ♥ 7 ♦ AJ8 ♣ J109842
<b>S</b> jn55345 <b>8</b>	♠ Q8 ♥ A8654 ♦ K10652 ♣ 6

Bidding Sequence:

W	N	E	S
Pass	1♠	2♣	2♥
3♣	3♥	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Score: 0 - 0 (3♥ South)

After my passed hand partner came in 2C, I competed to 3C. I wasn't thrilled with all the losers, but hoped it would sound like we had some stuff and they should settle for a partscore. That is what happened, and we won 10 when at the other table it went:

Three passes, 1S, 2C, X, my hand passed, 2h by north, and south blasted to 4.

Second quarter, board 12

Board 12

N ynotsema 6+

♠ Q973  
♥ K43  
♦ Q1093  
♣ Q4

W runewell 36

W N E S

1♣ Pass 1♥ Pass  
1♠ Pass 1NT Pass  
2♣ Pass Pass Pass

E BPurringto 6+

♠ 1052  
♥ Q1075  
♦ KJ84  
♣ 93

S jn55345 8

♠ K8  
♥ AJ982  
♦ 765  
♣ A62

2♣ West  
0 0

I got the ten of diamonds lead. Turns out I can make life easier playing the ace and taking the diamond hook pitching my heart, but I don't know that's possible. The jack holds, but should I draw trump or play on spades?

Well if the spades are 4-2, chances are good the opponents will play the trump for me, as I'm hoping to use that nice of clubs for a spade ruff. A low spade from dummy to the jack and queen worked well. Now a heart to the jack and a club to the queen. A diamond to my ace and back to work on the spades and I'm thrilled to see the king drop. A club to the 9 and ace but now I can draw the trump, cross to the ten of spades, and pitch the fourth spade on the king of diamonds for an overtrick.

My opponent started a precision 2C and found himself in 3. Our teammates led a spade, which helped them to engineer a spade ruff after winning the queen of clubs and the ace of hearts. Win 4.

We won the second round 32-18, so now we were only down by 11.

Third quarter, board 7

The image shows a digital bridge board interface for board 7. The board number '7' is in a red-bordered box in the top left. The interface is divided into four quadrants for player hands and a central bidding area. The top-left quadrant shows the North hand for player 'ynotsema' (6+), with cards: ♠K104, ♥Q1097, ♦A42, ♣J42. The top-right quadrant shows the East hand for player 'BPurringto' (6+), with cards: ♠AQJ83, ♥KJ52, ♦93, ♣53. The bottom-left quadrant shows the West hand for player 'runewell' (30), with cards: ♠965, ♥63, ♦10875, ♣K1087. The bottom-right quadrant shows the South hand for player 'jn55345' (8), with cards: ♠72, ♥A84, ♦KQJ6, ♣AQ96. The central bidding area shows a red header with 'W N E S' and a bidding sequence: 1NT, Pass 2♣, Pass 2♦, Pass 3NT, Pass, Pass. In the bottom right corner, there are two score boxes, both containing '0', and a button labeled '3NT South'.

In his book *Winning leads against No Trump*, David Bird suggests you lead a major on this auction, since south is known to have more minor cards. Furthermore, your doubleton has better chance of finding partner with a 5-card suit.

The only thing my six of hearts lead did was set up declarer's heart spots. From there declarer had no problem scoring three hearts, four diamonds, and two clubs. Obviously the spade lead is the killer and I was pretty down on myself fearing that I had given away the contract my choice of lead.

Thankfully a club lead at the other table (no Stayman) went around to the nine. Double dummy from here it becomes necessary to run off some minor cards to give east a chance to trim his major holdings. But after ace of hearts inexplicably it went 4 6 9 King?!. I don't know if that was subterfuge on the part of east to score the jack later, but after continuing queen of spades to the king, declarer had 1 spade, 2 hearts, four diamonds, and two clubs.

Push board.



Third quarter, board 8

The image shows a bridge hand interface with the following details:

- Board:** A diamond card with the number 8.
- North (ynotsema, 6+):** ♠A982, ♥KQ75, ♦952, ♣A7.
- West (runewell, 30):** ♠KQ103, ♥83, ♦K743, ♣J32.
- East (BPurringto, 6+):** ♠J65, ♥J64, ♦Q86, ♣K1086.
- South (jn55345, 8):** ♠74, ♥A1092, ♦AJ10, ♣Q954.
- Bidding:**

	W	N	E	S
1♦	Pass	1♦	Pass	1♥
2♥	Pass	2♥	Pass	3♥
4♥	Pass	4♥	Pass	Pass
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
- Score:** 0-0. A button indicates 4♥ South.

I started with the king of spades. A diamond to the ten and my king, and having nothing better to do I played queen of spades and a low one, forcing someone to ruff (declarer). Now a trump to the king and a diamond nine, queen, ace. Ace of hearts, club to the ace.

At this point Barry all the useful cards except the spade. It turns out Declarer can safely draw trump and lead toward the queen of clubs. On the nine of spades Barry pitched his diamond leaving this position making it difficult for declarer to get to the board to draw trump. The only play is the queen of clubs, forcing Barry to win the king, and get declarer to the board via a club or trump. Win 10.

After the same spade lead and diamond finesse, Steve Gaynor played ace of clubs and a club. When the king popped, he hopped up ace of diamonds, pitched the diamond, and the rest of the hand was relatively friendly in terms of ruffing and drawing trump.

Third quarter, board 10

Board 10

<b>N</b> ynotsema <b>6+</b> ♠ A ♥ KQ9 ♦ AJ654 ♣ AQ83		
<b>W</b> runewell <b>36</b> ♠ KJ1043 ♥ AJ42 ♦ 92 ♣ 102	<b>W N E S</b> Pass Pass 1♠ Dbl Pass 2♦ Pass 3♦ Pass Pass Pass	<b>E</b> BPurringto <b>6+</b> ♠ Q62 ♥ 108653 ♦ 7 ♣ 9654
	<b>S</b> jn55345 <b>8</b> ♠ 9875 ♥ 7 ♦ KQ1083 ♣ KJ7	3♦ South 0 0

In third seat I made a leading-directing bid and the auction died too quickly. The free 3D raise shows extras, but not 20hcp and a stiff ace in the opponents' suit. South also owed their partner's 3D bid another call as well, maybe a 3S cuebid.

At the other table it was 1S X 2S with the singleton diamond & junkpile. But the interference prompted a higher 3D voluntary bid followed by 3S, 4D, 4N, 5C (1 key card), 6D and 15 IMPs to our team.

So we won that round 32-5 and were leading by 16 with one quarter to go.

Fourth quarter, board 1

**D**  
1

**N** ynotsema **6+**  
 ♠ Q8632  
 ♥ J632  
 ♦ K3  
 ♣ 84

**W** runewell **36**  
 ♠ K5  
 ♥ 105  
 ♦ A10964  
 ♣ AK105

W	N	E	S
	Pass	Pass	1♣
1♦	1♠	2♦	2♠
3♦	Pass	Pass	Pass

**E** BPurringto **6+**  
 ♠ A7  
 ♥ K97  
 ♦ J852  
 ♣ Q763

**S** jn55345 **8**  
 ♠ J1094  
 ♥ AQ84  
 ♦ Q7  
 ♣ J92

3♦ West  
 0 0

The opponent interference made it difficult on us; I would have preferred a 2C cue bid showing 10-11 and diamond support in which case I probably need to bid game. That wasn't a problem for the opponents who opened a 10-12 NT in the east which was raised to 3NT, lose 7.

We got 6 IMPs back the following board when both sides won the partscore battle.

Fourth quarter, board 5

The screenshot shows a bridge hand interface with the following details:

- Board:** 5 (Diamond suit)
- North (N):** ynotsema (6+). Hand: ♠A754, ♥QJ875, ♦A7, ♣A3.
- West (W):** runewell (36). Hand: ♠10963, ♥962, ♦QJ102, ♣Q4.
- East (E):** BPurringto (6+). Hand: ♠2, ♥K43, ♦865, ♣J108762.
- South (S):** jn55345 (8). Hand: ♠KQJ8, ♥A10, ♦K943, ♣K95.
- Bidding:**
  - West: Pass
  - North: 2♦ (highlighted), Pass 2NT
  - East: Pass 3♠, Pass 4NT
  - South: Pass 5♦, Pass 6♠, Pass Pass Pass
- Score:** 0-0 (6♠ North)

A very intelligent Flannery auction revealing a max 4-5-2-2 hand got to the correct strain. The jack of clubs went around to the ace, and Tony started to pull trump. However he wasn't planning to pull four trump, and after he did he only had the heart suit and the ace of diamonds in his hand. He led to the ace and played the ten. I think Barry played up the line, but I had zero motivation to do so since we know the count so I went hi-lo. Tony was planning to play for 3-3 and overtake the ten with the queen, but when he called for the ten and a low heart from his hand Barry the slam-killer conveniently forgot to take his king. Cut off from his hearts, he lost some minor cards in dummy to go down 2.

I think I would have taken a heart finesse at trick 2 and watch the opponents cards. Then the ace of hearts. At that point I'll know it's either Kxx or Kxxx of hearts with east and maybe start cross ruffing? Not sure.

The hyper-competitive opponents bid 3C and 4C and could have been down one spade, two hearts, two diamonds, two clubs, and a diamond ruff for -800 but the end result was only a 4S contract but win 13.

Fourth quarter, board 6

Board 6

<b>N</b> ynotsema <b>6+</b> ♠ AK43 ♥ A3 ♦ J1075 ♣ K95		<b>E</b> BPurringto <b>6+</b> ♠ J85 ♥ 108762 ♦ A2 ♣ 762	
<b>W</b> runewell <b>36</b> ♠ 1076 ♥ KQ94 ♦ Q93 ♣ J103	<b>W</b> <b>N</b> <b>E</b> <b>S</b> Pass 1♦ Pass 1♠   Pass 1NT Pass 3NT   Pass Pass Pass	<b>S</b> jn55345 <b>8</b> ♠ Q92 ♥ J5 ♦ K864 ♣ AQ84	

Score: 0 - 0 (3NT South)

It might not be standard, but I led the king of hearts on this board (note the 4<sup>th</sup> best goes around the jack) and partner encouraged with the 8. One the play of the clubs I don't know if it was the heart thread or the ten of clubs second time that caused Judy to finesse, but I won my jack with what would have been trick 9 for the declarer. However I was not prepared the cash a hearts for fear declarer – who had paused for a while – was protecting her jack. I exited a spade. She basically cashed her club and four spades and claimed 9 tricks, showing everyone the board. Only problem was she had 8 tricks, and now there was 0% chance of no getting the defense wrong. “But I wanted 9 tricks” said a disheartened Judy. Barry must have known I wanted a heart thru and I'm sure he would have nabbed the ace of diamonds and done that very thing. Down 1 and win 10 as Mike Flader got a heart lead from the other direction and watched two suits split 3-3 for ten tricks.

Fourth quarter, board 8

Board 8

N ynotsema 6+

♠ 975  
♥ J754  
♦ J10975  
♣ 5

W runewell 30

♠ AQJ84  
♥ A9863  
♦ 6  
♣ 109

W N E S

1♠ Pass 3♠ Dbl  
4♠ Pass Pass 5♦  
Pass Pass Pass

E BPurringto 6+

♠ 10632  
♥ Q  
♦ 82  
♣ J86432

S jn55345 8

♠ K  
♥ K102  
♦ AKQ43  
♣ AKQ7

5♦ South

0 0

Barry was a bad boy not self-alerting 3S as weak but Judy inquired, likely wondering where all this bidding was coming from. I didn't think we would have much defense in a minor contract so I bid 4S to try and shut things out. Once my ace of spades held I suspected declarer had three hearts for the takeout double and went ace of hearts and a heart for +50. 4SX at the other table can be set double dummy, but it made and our team lost 11 imps. Preventing a double game swing saved 3 IMPs anyway.

In the end we won the last quarter by 6 to win the 48-board set by 22 IMPs. And we only beat Tracey and Nancy's team by 26, the matches were challenging.

We will play in an online national GNT event in mid-July. A 1-day swiss event (eight 7-board matches) will narrow the field from 25 to 16, and if we can get past there it will be 60-board KO matches. But let's not get ahead of ourselves.