

Bridge at the Village Lesson Hand—July 23, 2018

2/2

Brian Potter, Club Manager and Club Director

Play Notes—Board 14

- » If East can find the ♥K, there should be six fast hearts and six fast diamonds for twelve winners with a spade loser. Success requires a singleton ♥K in either defender's hand or (in North) either ♥Kx or ♥Kxx. There is a trap when North holds a bare king. The normal looking play of leading the ♥10 on the first round of hearts—to retain the lead in West if the finesse wins—fails when North holds a stiff ♥K. With today's lie of the cards, the first heart trick will be “♥10, K, A, 4”. Now South's ♥9xx will win the fourth round of hearts or become a ruffing winner when hearts are trumps. With diamonds as trumps, declarer can ruff two clubs in East and one heart in West to bring the diamond slam home.
- » After a club lead, East can take all the tricks in a diamond contract. Ruff the club at trick one. Pull two rounds of trumps ending in West. Lead a heart dropping North's ♥K. Run the hearts, discarding West's spade and two clubs. Ruffing the fourth round if necessary. Collect the thirteenth trick by ruffing a spade to West and ruffing West's fourth club in East.

Thoughts on Board 14

- » This is *not* a great slam contract. There are plenty of tricks and controls when the heart suit comes in. If it were just a matter of a winning heart finesse, that would be fine. The odds are not quite that good. ♥Kxxx(x) in either defender's hand dooms the contract to losing a heart and a spade. Today, the overbidders will get lucky and score up a slam bonus if they bid a statistically unsound 6♦ or 6♥.
- » Consider West's initial response {see note (1)} to East's opening 1♥ bid. Why doesn't West just respond 2♦? Diamonds is “where West lives.” West has 7 HCP (♦KQ and ♣Q) plus 3 DP (two for the spade stiff and one for the heart doubleton) totaling ten points. That's not enough for 2♦ when a partnership plays 2/1 game forcing, but it is the minimum for *Standard American*.

One should prefer the 1NT response because the major suit shortness is a “soft value” that does not carry its full weight. If hearts become trumps, the singleton spade may prove worthless. A threat of defensive diamond ruffs may force foregoing spade ruffs to pull trumps before the defenders start ruffing diamonds. If East has strong hearts, the ♥103 will not be an asset, even if hearts are not trumps. Thus, even playing *Standard American*, the 1NT initial response is preferable.