

Bridge at the Village Lesson Hand—January 7, 2019

Brian Potter, Club Manager and Club Director

1/2

On board two this week, East–West have game in either major suit—whenever a North–South preempt does not block the path to game. When North–South buy the contract in diamonds, they should lose two spades and a heart to win ten tricks. If the defenders neglect to cash their three winners off the top, an alert North–South declarer can win twelve tricks in a diamond contract. Unlike, North–South, East–West have some potential to win more than ten tricks.

Board: 2	♠53	Possible Auction			
Dealer: E	♥76	West	North	East	South
Vul.: NS	♦KQJ9542			1♣ (1)	Pass
♠Q876	♣T2	1♥ (2)	3♦ (3)	3♥ (4)	5♦ (5)
♥AKT842	♠AK42	♣? (6)	...		
♦	♥QJ95	Lead: ♠6			
♣963	♦76				
	♣K75				
	♠JT9				
	♥3				
	♦AT83	6	9	HCP	13
	♣AQJ84	12			

Bidding Notes—Board 2

- (1) East prepares a 1NT rebid that will show a balanced hand with 12–14 HCP.
- (2) With a six-loser hand, West plans a drive to game if there is a fit.
- (3) North preempts in the long suit. In now obsolete methods, a jump overcall showed a powerful hand. Experience has shown that bidding all strong hands with informative doubles or simple overcalls works better. That choice leaves cue bids and jump overcalls available for other purposes.
- (4) With a doubleton in the adverse suit and four-card support for partner’s suit, East offer a single raise.
- (5) With a splinter in the adverse suit, powerful four-card trump support, and a strong side suit; South extends North’s preempt.
- (6) This hand presents both partnerships with complex competitive bidding choices.
 - East players who open 1NT weak open 1NT showing a balanced 12–14 HCP.
 - North could have passed or bid a different number of diamonds.
 - East might have passed, raised to 4♥, or doubled over 3♦.
 - South may have passed rather than raising to 5♦.
 - Here, West might pass, double, or bid 5♥.

With so many choices, different auctions and results may happen at different tables.

Opening Lead Notes—Board 2

- » If North declares in diamonds, East’s top spade lead is nearly certain. With a heart switch, the defenders should collect two top spades and one top heart for ten tricks to East–West in their diamond contract.

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2/2

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- » With West declaring in hearts, the likely diamond lead should eventually leave West with three club losers, as long as North retains the ♣10 to win the first club trick and ♣2 as a safe exit card finessing the ♣K exposed on the table.
- » If South leads a club against East's major suit contract, East's ♣K will make along with the ten major suit winners. Other leads should reach the same conclusion as when West declares—three club winners to North—South and ten major suit winners to declarer.

Play Notes—Board 2

- » As mentioned in the discussion on leads, either side easily wins ten tricks while declaring. What must the defenders lead against 6♠ to defeat the slam?

Thoughts on Board 2

- » On hands like this one where each partnership can win a large, nearly equal, number of tricks; the bidding challenges players' judgement. Especially with a game or slam in the balance (as for East–West in either major suit on this hand), players must bid high enough to earn their game or slam bonuses without bidding so high as to go down. When the other partnership can make a higher level contract, a sacrifice may be in order. If North–South can play 5♦[†] down one, they will be –200 rather than –420 for allowing East–West to make a heart game. Yet, North–South's sacrifice in 7♦[†] against 6♥ is a “phantom” save as 6♥ is doomed to fail. Saving in 7♦[†] against 6♠ is another matter. Some apparently reasonable defenses will let East–West win twelve tricks by ruffing two diamonds and cashing twelve major suit winners. What must the defenders lead against 6♠ to defeat the slam?
- » Assume that you are East playing 6♠ and that South leads a diamond. How will you take twelve tricks? What precautions will you take in case trumps break 4–1 or 5–0? Would you worry about a defensive overruff? Why so or why not?