

Bridge at the Village Lesson Hand—March 4, 2019

Brian Potter, Club Manager and Club Director

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There are several slam hands this week. Board thirteen is a lucky number for North–South, but bidding the slam may be essential to keep the luck. With twelve top tricks in hand, even the declarers who take the practice finesse in diamonds will win twelve tricks. For an above average score, North–South *must bid a slam*.

Board: 13 Dealer: N Vul.: All ♠964 ♥975 ♦KJ85 ♣T74 <table style="font-size: small; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td><td style="padding: 2px;">♠</td><td style="padding: 2px;">♥</td><td style="padding: 2px;">♦</td><td style="padding: 2px;">♣</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td><td style="padding: 2px;">6</td><td style="padding: 2px;">6</td><td style="padding: 2px;">4</td><td style="padding: 2px;">2</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td><td style="padding: 2px;">6</td><td style="padding: 2px;">6</td><td style="padding: 2px;">4</td><td style="padding: 2px;">2</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">E</td><td style="padding: 2px;"></td><td style="padding: 2px;"></td><td style="padding: 2px;"></td><td style="padding: 2px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W</td><td style="padding: 2px;"></td><td style="padding: 2px;"></td><td style="padding: 2px;"></td><td style="padding: 2px;"></td></tr> </table>	N	♠	♥	♦	♣	N	6	6	4	2	S	6	6	4	2	E					W					♠KQJ832 ♥T ♦AQ4 ♣KQ6 <table style="font-size: small; border-collapse: collapse; margin: 10px auto;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td><td style="padding: 2px;"> </td><td style="padding: 2px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W</td><td style="padding: 2px;"> </td><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td></tr> </table> ♠AT5 ♥KQ432 ♦7 ♣AJ52	N		E	W		S	♠7 ♥AJ86 ♦T9632 ♣983 17 4 HCP 5 14	<h3 style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">Possible Auction</h3> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 25%;"></th> <th style="width: 25%;">North</th> <th style="width: 25%;">East</th> <th style="width: 25%;">South</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>West</td> <td>1♠</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>2♥ (1)</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Pass</td> <td>3♣ (2)</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Pass</td> <td>4NT (4)</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Pass</td> <td>6♦ (6)</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td colspan="3" style="text-align: center;">All Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td colspan="3">Lead: ♦10, ♦9, ♣9, or ♣8</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		North	East	South	West	1♠	Pass	2♥ (1)		Pass	3♣ (2)	Pass		Pass	4NT (4)	Pass		Pass	6♦ (6)	Pass		All Pass				Lead: ♦10, ♦9, ♣9, or ♣8		
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Bidding Notes—Board 12

- (1) Game forcing (usually) with a good five-card heart suit
- (2) Promising, by not rebidding 2♠, a hand worth more than a minimum (up to fifteen points) opening hand with a club suit or feature. North has, for the moment, concealed the diamond control with some hope of encouraging a diamond lead up to the ♦AQ4. This ploy will work on some East players because they are stuck for a lead.
- (3) Tending to deny a fourth trump because South would normally offer either a *Jacoby forcing raise* or a *splinter raise* with four-card trump support.
- (4) With extra values including controls in all four suits and extra trump length, North is slam minded and asks for key cards.
- (5) Two key cards without the trump queen. North knows that a grand slam is a bad idea, but still likes the chances for either 6♠ or (thanks to South's 2♥ response) 6NT.
- (6) Committing to slam and showing the diamond control so South may advance to 6NT with a suitable heart control.
- (7) South's suitable calls are . . .
 - 6♥: ♥A or ♥K with no more than one fast heart loser (passes the buck back to North who may be well placed to bid 6NT after this rebid)
 - 6♠: to play
 - 6NT: to play . . . What should South do? Note that passing is *not an option*.

Opening Lead Notes—Board 12

- » East has no good lead, but a trump, the ♥A, or a minor suit spot seem to be the likely candidates. None of these choices impair North's chances.

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- » Conventional wisdom against a small slam calls for an attacking lead that retains a possible entry while aiming to establish a winner. That tactic suggests an apparently risky minor suit lead up to North's announced minor suit controls.

Play Notes—Board 12

- » After winning the first or second trick, North can cash six spades, four clubs, and a diamond for eleven tricks. While retaining control of every suit, North leads the ♥10 from hand towards ♥KQxxx on the table. This play either wins the twelfth trick or establishes it for later use.

Thoughts on Board 12

- » This hand is a North–South bidding problem. There are twelve top tricks available in three denominations. In a weak field, where some pairs will stop in game, reaching any slam should yield an above average (or even top) score. In a strong field, where most pairs will reach 6♠ or 6NT, 6♠ may yield an average minus score.
- » With each partner holding a splinter in a suit bid by the other, reaching 6NT will be difficult. 6♠ will probably be the more popular slam contract. Reaching the top spot in 6NT will require inspired bidding by both partners.
- » If East ducks the ♥A when North leads the ♥10 toward the ♥KQ432 on the table North can try for a thirteenth trick (and a likely matchpoint top) by risking the contract with a finesse for the ♦K at trick twelve. Today, that risky top or bottom play will work.