

# Bridge at the Village Lesson Hand—March 11, 2019

Brian Potter, Club Manager and Club Director

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For this week's lesson deal—board three—double dummy analysis shows North–South making a spade slam on 20 HCP. And so they do, with a certain heart loser and lively chances for a diamond loser.

Board: 3 Dealer: S Vul.: EW ♠ ♥AQT2 ♦J5 ♣QJT8764  <table style="font-size: small; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td><td style="padding: 2px;">♠</td><td style="padding: 2px;">6</td><td style="padding: 2px;">5</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td><td style="padding: 2px;">♥</td><td style="padding: 2px;">6</td><td style="padding: 2px;">6</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">E</td><td style="padding: 2px;">♦</td><td style="padding: 2px;"></td><td style="padding: 2px;">4</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W</td><td style="padding: 2px;">♣</td><td style="padding: 2px;"></td><td style="padding: 2px;">4</td></tr> </table>	N	♠	6	5	S	♥	6	6	E	♦		4	W	♣		4	♠AKQ7 ♥K984 ♦K642 ♣3  <table style="font-size: small; border-collapse: collapse; margin: 10px auto;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td><td style="padding: 2px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W</td><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td></tr> </table> ♠JT8642 ♥73 ♦AT873 ♣	N	E	W	S	♠953 ♥J65 ♦Q9 ♣AK952  15 10 <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">HCP</span> 10 5	<h3 style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">Possible Auction</h3> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left; padding: 5px;">West</th> <th style="text-align: left; padding: 5px;">North</th> <th style="text-align: left; padding: 5px;">East</th> <th style="text-align: left; padding: 5px;">South</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">1♣ (1)</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">+ (2)</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">3♣ (3)</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">4♥ (5)</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">4♠ (6)</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">5♣ (7)</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">5♦ (5)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">5♥ (8)</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">6♠ (9)</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="4" style="padding: 5px;">All Pass (a)</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="4" style="padding: 5px;">Lead: ♣10</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	West	North	East	South	1♣ (1)	+ (2)	3♣ (3)	Pass	4♥ (5)	4♠ (6)	5♣ (7)	5♦ (5)	Pass	5♥ (8)	Pass	6♠ (9)	All Pass (a)				Lead: ♣10			
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## Bidding Notes—Board 3

- (1) West lacks the traditional high card values for a first seat opening bid. Yet, *losing trick count* indicates a better than minimum opener (7 losers for an typical minimum opener compared with {depending upon how one counts losers} 5–6 losers for this hand). If East bids hearts, West's hand will make a fine dummy. West can rebid clubs twice if East bids pointed suits. West should open.
- (2) North has a perfect hand for this *takeout double*. A singleton in the adverse suit, four cards in each other suit, and 15 HCP, all in prime cards, combine to make this hand an ideal *takeout double*. North will be pleased with any suit South bids. If South should make a penalty pass, North has the setting tricks after South brings the trump suit home.
- (3) This bid is preemptive showing five or more clubs and a weak side hand. East treats the hand as though it were ♠xxx ♥xxx ♦xx ♣AK9xx. Why?
- (4) Showing a good hand for spades (about 8–11 points). The club void, ♦A10xxx, heart doubleton, and sixth spade combine to form a hand too strong for a jump to 4♠.
- (5) Asking partner to lead the bid suit rather than the agreed trump suit if the other side declares. It is unusual that, on the same hand, both sides make this lead directing commitment to the next level of the agreed trump suit.
- (6) North would rather play the spade game than defend against 5♣.
- (7) East takes the sacrifice in clubs.
- (8) 5♠ would have shown a hand with nothing special. ♦Kxxx, a heart control, ♠AKQx, and a club splinter combine to a hand with solid extra values in context. Thus, North control bids the ♥K to show both the control and mild slam interest.
- (9) Since North has shown a good hand for a spade game with a heart control, South feels good about the hand. Combined with North's heart control, the rounded suit shortness should hold rounded suit losers to one heart loser. Since North must like diamonds, there should be side suit winners there. Thus, South bids the spade slam. At most tables, North–South will probably stop in a spade game, perhaps in 5♠.

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- (a) In matchpoint terms, East–West have a “good save” at 7♣. North–South will score +980 for bidding and making 6♠. Beating 7♣+ three tricks will earn only +800, a 180 point gain for East–West. Since the spade slam appears to be fragile, most East–West pairs will probably defend undoubled rather than saving.

### Opening Lead Notes—Board 3

- » West feels endplayed on the opening lead. The spade void prevents a safe exit in trumps. Leading from ♥AQ102 under North’s control bid feels wrong. On the auction, a diamond lead seems like giving away a free finesse. East’s bidding suggests that the opponents hold one club between them.
- » Eventually settling on a club, West leads the ♣10. If East has ♣AKxx, and the adverse clubs split 1–1; maybe, East will win trick one and switch to a heart at trick two. If not, maybe declarer must ruff in the hand with long trumps.

### Play Notes—Board 3

- » The opening club lead forces a ruff in the hand with long trumps. South counts six spades and two diamonds on top with a certain fast heart loser. The ♥A should be on side so that the ♥K is a likely ninth winner. The long diamonds in the closed hand are South’s only shot at the fulfilling tricks.
- » South has two legitimate plays for picking up the outstanding ♦QJ9x and winning the three long diamonds: a 2–2 diamond division (almost a 41% chance) or a 3–1 division with a singleton honor in West and a finesse through East’s ♦Q9 or ♦J9 on the second round (working between 12% and 13% of the time).

### Thoughts on Board 3

- » Will many pairs bid this slam? Probably not; with 20 HCP in the combined hands, some pairs may stop in partscore or even let East–West make a club partial.
- » Should North–South bid this slam? Only by the slimmest of margins; on the average, the payoff for bidding slam is only about thirty points better than the payoff for stopping in game. Quite a few unfavorable twists of distribution could send this slam down in flames, but not as the cards lie.
- » The diamond suit is a challenge, and playing it correctly is a key to making this slam worth bidding. First, declarer must realize that, with ♦QJ9x outstanding, there is no two-way finesse for one honor if the other honor drops on the first round of diamonds. If the diamonds break ♦H–♦H9x, declarer can pick up the ♦H9x only when they are under the ten.

Thus, the best play for five diamonds starts with a low diamond to North’s king. If West plays an honor, return a small diamond toward the ♦A9 in South covering East’s card. If both opponents play a small diamond on the first round, return a diamond to South’s ace. If either defender has ♦HHx, there was no honest play to pick up the whole suit for five winners. The described play combines chances for having a 2–2 diamond division with the chances of finding West with a singleton honor to yield about a 53% chance of making the slam. Statistically, that 53% success chance means that one should bid this slam. Who could tell at the table?