

Bridge at the Village Lesson Hand—April 1, 2019

Brian Potter, Club Manager and Club Director

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This week, North–South have a 24 HCP heart slam. Even though East–West can safely preempt to 3♠ against a game or 5♠ against a slam, it is unlikely that they will bid. North–South should have a free run to the contract of their choice. If they pick a heart contract, they should take twelve tricks (thirteen if East leads a club).

Board: 1 Dealer: N Vul.: None ♠K987 ♥T3 ♦KQJT5 ♣65	♠A ♥Q8542 ♦A9874 ♣Q4 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block; margin: 5px;"> N W E S </div> ♠JT52 ♥AK976 ♦ ♣A832	♠Q643 ♥J ♦632 ♣KJT97 12 9 HCP 7 12	<h3 style="text-align: center;">Possible Auction</h3> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">West</th> <th style="text-align: left;">North</th> <th style="text-align: left;">East</th> <th style="text-align: left;">South</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td>1♥</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>4♦⁽¹⁾</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>4♠⁽²⁾</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>4NT⁽³⁾</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>5♠⁽⁴⁾</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>6♥⁽⁵⁾</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="4">All Pass</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p style="text-align: center;">Lead: ♠3, ♠Q, ♥J, or ♣J</p>	West	North	East	South		1♥	Pass	4♦ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	4♠ ⁽²⁾	Pass	4NT ⁽³⁾	Pass	5♠ ⁽⁴⁾	Pass	6♥ ⁽⁵⁾	All Pass			
West	North	East	South																				
	1♥	Pass	4♦ ⁽¹⁾																				
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Pass	5♠ ⁽⁴⁾	Pass	6♥ ⁽⁵⁾																				
All Pass																							

Bidding Notes—Board 12

- (1) Splinter Raise—South has shown a game force (or stronger in some partnerships) with four-card trump support and, as extra values above the game force, a singleton or void in *diamonds*. Any rebid by North other than 4♥ is a slam try because either the diamond ruffing values significantly improve the North hand or the North has extra values worth a slam try opposite any game force. 4♥ shows a minimum range hand with wasted honor strength {e. g., ♦KQJ(x)} opposite the splinter.
- (2) *Control bid* showing slam interest with a spade control.
- (3) 1430 Keycard Ask—South promises to place the contract after hearing about North’s keycards.
- (4) North shows two keycards (the pointed aces) among {♠A, ♥AK, ♦A, ♣A} plus the ♥Q (queen of trumps).
- (5) South warns North against bidding a grand slam without extra values (e. g., a side suit black king) or greater strength outside the red suits.

Opening Lead Notes—Board 12

- » East is in a bind on the opening lead. A small spade might kill an entry to partner’s hand. Leading the ♠Q might blow a trick. The ♥J lead may simply waste the tempo. A diamond lead may kill West’s only entry before the defense has established the setting trick. Clubs look like the suit to attack, but a club lead may blow the setting trick at trick one (or surrender an overtrick).
- » Anyone brave enough to try the ♣J lead gets a gold star from me. Conventional wisdom recommends an attacking lead against a small slam. From East’s hand against this bidding that suggests a black suit lead (a spade or the ♣J).

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Play Notes—Board 12

- » North will have a great deal of fun playing this hand. Win the opening lead and cash the three side suit aces (♦A last). Then start the cross ruff: diamond ruff, spade ruff, diamond ruff, spade ruff, diamond ruff, spade ruff, and diamond ruff (that is seven ruffs and three aces for ten tricks with two top trumps left or a trump and ten tricks with one top trump left). The defenders will have less fun. Graciously surrender the defensive club winner (to the ♣K or a trump) at trick thirteen.

Thoughts on Board 12

- » Note the keys to a successful crossruff: (1) always, cash your side suit tops *before* beginning the crossruff and (2) usually, have some high trumps in both hands so that the defenders will be under ruffing if they ruff in during the crossruff.
- » If you hold side suit tops after you start a crossruff, a defender may discard their cards in the suit where you hold top cards. After the crossruff, the defenders may have trump control and enough trump length to ruff your top cards.
- » If you try a crossruff without the top trumps, a defender may overruff part way through the crossruff, pull trumps, and run a side suit. Sometimes, when trumps are very weak (e. g., jack high or weaker), crossruffs may be the only way to win more than one or two trump tricks. In such cases, go for it.