

Bridge at the Village Lesson Hand—February 24, 2020

Brian Potter, Club Manager and Club Director

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Double dummy analysis of this week's lesson deal—board ten—shows each side winning ten tricks with its own preferred suit as trumps. This means that East–West can go +620 to score a vulnerable game in spades while North–South will hold their opponents to +200 by saving in 5♦†–1. That balance may give each partnership a difficult “play or defend” problem to solve with a 400 point (9 IMP) or larger swing in the balance.

Board: 10 Dealer: E Vul.: All ♠AJT85 ♥QT53 ♦A8 ♣84	♠73 ♥KJ64 ♦KQ5 ♣AJ92 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;"> N W E S </div> ♠Q ♥9 ♦JT97643 ♣KQT6	Possible Auction <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;">West</td> <td style="width: 25%;">North</td> <td style="width: 25%;">East</td> <td style="width: 25%;">South</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1♠ (1)</td> <td>†</td> <td>4♥ (2)</td> <td>5♦ (3)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass (4)</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>† (5)</td> <td>All Pass</td> </tr> </table> Lead: ♥Q, ♥10, or ♥3	West	North	East	South			Pass	Pass	1♠ (1)	†	4♥ (2)	5♦ (3)	Pass (4)	Pass	† (5)	All Pass	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">14</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">11</td> <td style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">HCP</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">8</td> <td style="text-align: center;">7</td> </tr> </table>	14		11	HCP	8	7
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Bidding Notes—Board 10

- (1) This opening is routine in third seat where light openings are essential. A first or second seat opening with the 11-count is effective, too. Each honor pulls full weight as either a first round control or as an honor in a long major suit. The two minor suit doubletons also help. Automatic in third or fourth seat, this opening is light but acceptable in first or second seat. The loser count of 7–7½ combines with an easy heart rebid to reach a minimum hand if East responds constructively.
- (2) North has a full valued, hair on its chest *takeout double*. Without North's double, East might offer a *constructive raise* (maybe, 1 HCP light but with an extra trump or two that more than compensate) or a slightly light *limit raise*, perhaps via *Drury*.
 After the takeout double, preemption becomes important. Doubler also has opening values with the advantage of sitting over opener. The balance of power is probably nearly even, but the known ten-card spade fit and the diamond splinter suggest that both sides may make a high-level contract. Thus, all raises should be *total tricks raises* showing a trump fit with six more trumps in the combined hands than the level of the raise, usually without a side suit ace or king.
 The normal preempt would be to 4♠. East's hand is too good for that. The actual 4♥ bid is a raise to 4♠ showing a likely defensive winner in hearts and suggesting a heart lead against an adverse minor suit contract. If you and your partner discuss this treatment and agree to use it, you should alert such bids as lead directing raises.
- (3) With eleven minor suit cards and an on side singleton ♠Q, South has no desire to defend 4♠—a likely make with partner's spade shortness and East's likely minor suit ruffing value.
- (4) West confirms defensive values—the two tricks opening showed. With poor defense and better offense (e. g., ♦xxx and a club splinter) West would probably bid 5♠.

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- (5) With the ♥A {rather than the ♥KQ(x)} and no sixth trump, East doubles for penalty. With a powerful hand, West would pull East's double to 5♠ inviting a slam. With a weaker defensive hand, East would bid 5♠ guarding against a successful 5♦ contract.

Opening Lead Notes—Board 10

- » Holding ♥QJ(x), West would surely lead the ♥Q hoping to pin North's ♥Kx(x) under East's ♥Ax(x).
- » Leading the ♥Q hopes for ♥AJ in East and ♥Kx(x) in North. Leading the ♥10 aims to trick declarer into placing East with ♥AQ(x) and misplaying if North holds ♥KJx(x).
- » On the auction, West should lead some heart. On this hand, all heart leads have the same consequences.

Play Notes—Board 10

- » Sight of the table should encourage East to collect the spade winner at trick two. After that, West's ♦A assures a one trick set. South has exactly ten winners with no hope for an eleventh trick after the defenders win both major suit aces.

Thoughts on Board 10

- » A light third seat opening can reap huge rewards on this hand. If North has the opportunity to open either 1♣ or 1NT (weak), North–South will usually go +130 in a diamond partial or –100 in 5♦ (which might make on a defensive blunder for +600 to North–South). After West opens 1♠ in third seat, East will not stop below 4♠ (+620 to East–West). If North–South fail to find their diamond fit after West opens, the swing could be 750 points.
- » *The Law of Total Tricks* can be an invaluable (though sometimes flawed) competitive bidding guide. Don't sit at the bridge table without it.
- » Bids that guide the defense can offer competitive paths that also set the table for an effective defense when the opponents sacrifice or overbid.