

Bridge at the Village Lesson Hand—March 9, 2020

Brian Potter, Club Manager and Club Director

1/2

This week's East–West slam deal will and should play in game at many tables. The two red singletons, the ten-card spade fit, and the nine-card club fit give this board a 28 HCP point deck for East–West, and East–West have 22 HCP, enough to reach the slam range, if their bidding will let them realize it. North–South also have a ten-card fit and a nine-card fit with a 28 HCP deck, East–West can win three aces and a ruff against either North–South red suit contract.

Board: 11 Dealer: S Vul.: None ♠AKQJT9 ♥3 ♦84 ♣J963	♠8 ♥AJ95 ♦QJ953 ♣Q82 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;"> N W E S </div> ♠52 ♥KQ864 ♦KT762 ♣T	♠7643 ♥T72 ♦A ♣AK754 10 11 HCP 11 8	<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></td> <td></td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2♠ (1)</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>2NT (2)</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3♥ (3)</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>4NT (4)</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5♠ (5)</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>6♠ (6)</td> <td>All Pass</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p style="text-align: center;">Lead: ♥A, ♦Q, ♦J, or ♣2</p>	West	North	East	South				Pass	2♠ (1)	Pass	2NT (2)	Pass	3♥ (3)	Pass	4NT (4)	Pass	5♠ (5)	Pass	6♠ (6)	All Pass
West	North	East	South																				
			Pass																				
2♠ (1)	Pass	2NT (2)	Pass																				
3♥ (3)	Pass	4NT (4)	Pass																				
5♠ (5)	Pass	6♠ (6)	All Pass																				

Bidding Notes—Board 11

- (1) With six solid spades and ♣J9xx for a possible seventh trick, some players might consider opening 1♠. Yet, no side hand defensive trick argues for preemption. The weak 2♠ opening is better. Some might even open 3♠ at this vulnerability.
- (2) With a ten-card spade fit and three fast side suit winners, East will not stop below 4♠. Thus, East may as well ask for a side suit feature, first. Remote slam chances may come to life.
- (3) Heart feature (ace, guarded king, void, or singleton). Opposite East's ♥10xx, West's heart feature is a gin card for slam. Now, East is willing to risk the five-level.
- (4) How many key cards among { ♠A, ♠K, ♥A, ♦A, ♣A } do you have?
- (5) Two key cards with the ♠Q (trump queen). East now knows that one of ♠A, ♠K, and ♥A is with the defenders.
- (6) After West's bidding, East can count six likely major suit winners and one major suit loser, three minor suit tops, a diamond ruff or several, and some long clubs. There must be good play for twelve tricks, and the defense cannot take two fast tricks without a defensive ruff. Slam is worth a try.

Opening Lead Notes—Board 11

- » West's heart feature is obviously either shortness or ♥Kx(x). North wants to get South on lead to put a heart through declarer. On the other hand, cashing the ♥A and letting any defensive entry be the setting trick may work better (*The Bridge World*, "Einar's Advice Adjusted", v90, no. 12, p. 12 and v91, no. 1, p. 29).
- » Following the "get partner in" or "build a side suit winner" tactics, North should lead either a diamond honor or the ♣2.
- » Cashing the ♥A is probably best. It books the contract and heavily pressures West.

Bridge at the Village Lesson Hand—March 9, 2020

2/2

Brian Potter, Club Manager and Club Director

Play Notes—Board 11

» After North sees the dummy (with South's ♥K under the ♥A promising the ♥Q) it is clear that West began with a stiff heart. Exiting with the ♥J will kill the ♥10 on the table as a squeeze menace. Other exits might help declarer. North exits the ♥J transferring the defensive heart control to South, West ruffing. Now, North guards clubs and South guards hearts while both defenders guard diamonds. Unfortunately for West, there are too few spade winners for diamonds to be the pivot suit in a double squeeze.

» West can count six spades (one of them the heart ruff at trick two), the ♦A, a diamond ruff, and the ♣AK, and two or three long clubs for twelve or thirteen tricks. Sweet, except the defenders have already cashed an ace and they hold the ♣Q1082.

West *must* bring in the long clubs without the luxury of a loser. If South holds Qxx(x), the slam is down. On all 2–2 club splits, twelve tricks are available. If North holds all four clubs and defends correctly, the defenders get a club. That leaves the 3–1 club divisions as the interesting cases.

» North, holding ♣Q82, needs a way to play the club spots that will convince West to play for a 2–2 club division. Should North show true count, telegraphing the queen hoping West will treat the count signal as false and play for the drop? What about giving false count hoping West will treat is naive honesty and play for the drop? Either way, North should start making this decision as soon as ♣AK754 come down in the dummy. North knows that West will lead a club up to the ♣AK754, playing high the first time and follow with another club to ♣K754. North must plan ahead to smoothly play in tempo to both leads hoping West will decide to play South for ♣Q10 on the second round. Whether to play the club spots in the order ♣2, ♣8 or ♣8, ♣2 is less important than smooth, in tempo (neither hesitating nor rushing) play as though the North cards are immaterial.

» West begins by cashing a top club. South produces the ♣10 and North follows. West returns to the closed hand and leads the ♣J to which North follows low. The slam rests on the next play from dummy. The club spots from North leave only the ♣Q unplayed from the defenders hands. The ♣10 is either a singleton (West must let the ♣J ride.) or South began with ♣Q10 (West must rise with the ♣K to drop the now singleton ♣Q.) Did North noticeably hesitate before playing either low spot? Play North for the queen and call the director about hesitation without cause if South holds it. Do the order in which North plays the ♣82 have meaning is a signal? Would this North player give a true (or false) signal or (best) play the cards randomly? Statistically, the choice between finessing and playing for the drop is nearly even. If North helped with the guess, go with your gut.

Thoughts on Board 11

» Since this slam depends upon what will often amount to a nearly blind guess in clubs, it is nearly a 50% contract. The pairs who bid it have bid aggressively. Those who bid it and make it have gained from a bidding skill, good play, and luck trifecta.

» Given the 10% chance of a 4–0 club division that will defeat the slam combined with the chances for ♣Qxx with South, this is more like a 45% contract—good for swingers.