

4th May, 2011

DECLARE & DEFEND

This week there were two hands where a trump safety play was called for. First, take a look at the trumps from **Board 7**.

AT6542
Q983

N-S are in a fine 6♠ contract and Declarer must play trumps for one loser. Two ways *not* to play the suit:

- Run the ♠Q around, losing only one trick when West has KJx (but losing two if East has KJx)
- Cash the ♠A first, protecting against East having KJx (but losing two if West has KJx)

The right way to play the suit, holding the losers to one in *both* cases, is to lead low from Dummy, planning to insert the Ten if West plays low. True, this blows an overtrick when East has the singleton King, but that is a reasonable price to pay for safety, considering that many (maybe most) pairs will not get to this slam.

The other safety play opportunity was on **Board 15**:
AT75
K984

The danger here is a 4-1 trump break, and the best way to hold this to one loser is to cash a high honor on the first round, then take a deep finesse on the next round if second-hand follows low. Of course, you will need to guess which defender has the four trumps. On the actual deal there were no clues from the bidding or the play. As it happened the trumps were 4-1 and a safety play *was* required. Well done those who went for the safety play, and extra well done to those who guessed to take it the right way!

On **Board 12** those East players who made 9 tricks in Hearts, after an opening Diamond lead, deserve a pat on the back. {See next column for diagram}

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	1♦	1♥	Dbl
1NT	2♠	3♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		

3♥ is most precarious, what's your line of play after the defense starts with three rounds of Diamonds?

	♠ 9643 ♥ AT9 ♦ AK875 ♣ 9	
♠ Q875 ♥ K8 ♦ T43 ♣ AQ83	<i>North</i> <i>Dummy Declarer</i> <i>South</i>	♠ AT ♥ QJ6542 ♦ J2 ♣ J52
	♠ KJ2 ♥ 73 ♦ Q96 ♣ KT764	

The key to success is not to lose a second trump trick, and the danger is that the defense will get a trump promotion. Not only that, there is also the danger that Declarer will lose a Spade, a Heart, two Diamonds and a Club.

Here's the way to 9 tricks:

Three Diamonds (Declarer pitches a Spade)
Spade shift won by Declarer's Ace
Finesse the ♣Q
Low Heart to Declarer's Queen
 Heart to the King and North's Ace
Diamond ruffed low by Declarer
Run the trumps.

On the run of the trump suit, South is squeezed in the black suits. This is the end-position with one trump to play:

	<i>North</i>	
	Immaterial	
<i>Dummy</i>		<i>Declarer</i>
♠ Q		♠
♥		♥ 2
♦		♦
♣ A8		♣ J5
	<i>South</i>	
	♠ K	
	♥	
	♦	
	♣ KT	

Declarer did well to pitch a Spade on the third Diamond, disrupting the defensive communications. And it was also essential for the first round of trumps to be led from Dummy. And that squeeze technique was necessary to bring in the 9th trick.

It doesn't help the defense for North to persist with a 4th round of Diamonds, as Declarer ruffs low and South has no good answer.

WednesdayGame.Com

Education & Entertainment for Bridge Players

4th May, 2011

BIDDING 6-PACK

Problems

Board 5	N-S Vul
♠ AK32	<i>East South West North</i>
♥ Q	Pass
♦ AKQ4	??
♣ K932	

Board 6	E-W Vul
♠ AK75	<i>West North East South</i>
♥ AKQ53	Pass Pass
♦ 8	1♥ Pass 1♠ 2NT
♣ 943	??

Board 13	Both Vul
♠ AKQT8	<i>West North East South</i>
♥ 874	Pass 1NT Pass
♦ 87	??
♣ AKJ	

Board 13	Both Vul
♠ 643	<i>East South West North</i>
♥ AKT	Pass Pass
♦ AK642	1NT Pass 2♥ Pass
♣ QT	2♠ Pass 3♣ Pass
	3♠ Pass 4♣ Pass
	??

Board 16	E-W Vul
♠ 987	<i>South West North East</i>
♥ Q76	1♥ 2♥ 3♣
♦ KQT5	??
♣ 864	

Board 18	N-S Vul
♠ KJT6	<i>West North East South</i>
♥ A	Pass Pass
♦ A95	??
♣ AKQT8	

Solutions

Board 5	N-S Vul
♠ AK32	<i>East South West North</i>
♥ Q	Pass
♦ AKQ4	??
♣ K932	

East has an awkward choice of opening bid, and we would say he had two reasonable plans, neither of them perfect:

- **Open 2NT:** Not ideal with a singleton Heart, of course, but at least it is a singleton honor. Even so, an acceptable choice, but not our favorite.
- **Open 1♦, planning to rebid 2♠:** Normally, this shows longer Diamonds than Spades, typically 4-5 or 4-6. But the ♦AKQx holding is a close approximation to a 5-card suit, so we rather like this plan. Doesn't it risk getting the partnership into a 4-3 Diamond fit? Not really. If Partner has three small then he's unlikely to insist on the suit, and if he has even as little as Jxx then the suit will be playable.

Board 6	E-W Vul
♠ AK75	<i>West North East South</i>
♥ AKQ53	Pass Pass
♦ 8	1♥ Pass 1♠ 2NT
♣ 943	??

First, what would have been your rebid if South had passed instead of bidding 2NT? Obviously that hand is way too good for 2♠, and is a top-of-the-line 3♠ bid, or maybe even a stretch to 4♠. But after the Unusual No Trump by West, what are the choices? One of the Spade raises has been taken away, but is replaced by the possibility of a cue-bid.

- **3♠?** That's the weakest way to raise Spades and this hand is way too good for that.
- **4♠?** A bit aggressive (though tempting).
- **Cue-bid?** Yes, that's another possibility and there are two such bids available. It's that Unusual vs Unusual situation. There are various implementations of this convention, our own preference being "Lower for lower", whereby the lower cue-bid is a game-try in the lower suit (so here 3♣ for Hearts and 3♦ for Spades).

Board 13

♠ AKQT8

♥ 874

♦ 87

♣ AKJ

Both Vul*West North East South*

Pass 1NT Pass

??

If you happen to be an optimist, you will decide that the West hand is going to slam regardless, and it's a simple matter of playing in 6♣ or 6NT. In that case, all you have to do is invite Partner's opinion on which contract is likely to be better. How do you do that?

- 1NT 2♥, 2♠ 4NT? No, that won't work, it's generally played as slam-invitational with five Spades.
- 1NT 4♥, 4♠ 4NT? No, that's generally played as Roman Key Card.
- The way to insist on slam while also giving Partner a choice between Spades and No Trump is: 1NT 2♥, 2♠ 5NT.

Board 13

♠ 643

♥ AKT

♦ AK642

♣ QT

Both Vul*East South West North*

1NT Pass 2♥ Pass

2♠ Pass 3♣ Pass

3♠ Pass 4♣ Pass

??

Partner transferred to Spades, then bid a game-forcing and supposedly natural 3♣ (but it has been known for such bids to be fudged a little, sometimes a fellow just wants to make a forcing bid). You showed Spade support with 3♠, and now your Partner has gone and bid 4♣? Does he have a massive two-suiter, offering you a choice between 4♠ and 5♣? Not necessarily. Spades have been (more or less) agreed, Partner is interested in slam. Do you cooperate? Sure you do! How do you cooperate? You could cue-bid Diamonds, but that won't help Partner much, will it? As you have the ♥AK Partner will be pretty much forced to bid 4♠ (unless he has Heart shortness). Cue-bidding is futile, and the descriptive bid here is 5♠! This says "I have the unbid suits under control, I am slammish, but I am worried about trumps". Bingo!

Board 16

♠ 987

♥ Q76

♦ KQT5

♣ 864

E-W Vul*South West North East*

1♥ 2♥ 3♣

??

With her Michaels bid, North has shown Spades and a minor and it's pretty safe for South to assume that the minor is Diamonds. The colors suggest N-S might have a profitable sacrifice, especially as they have something of a double fit. Should South bid Spades or Diamonds and how many should she bid?

One possibility is to bid 3♦ first, and then 4♠ next time around. That clearly conveys the message of a hand that wants to sacrifice and which has better Diamonds than Spades. The trouble with that approach, though, is that it gives E-W extra space in which to maneuver. So we would cast science to the winds and bid a swashbuckling 4♠. Then we would resort to animal cunning, using the decibel level of the ensuing Double to judge whether to sit for 4♠ or try 5♦. But if you don't do animal cunning, you might as well bid 5♦ directly over 3♣.

P.S. It turns out that 4♠ and 5♦ are both -300 and a good save against 4♥. If you get to your sacrifice quickly there is a chance that E-W might push on to the 5-level, going down one.

Board 18

♠ KJT6

♥ A

♦ A95

♣ AKQT8

N-S Vul*West North East South*

Pass Pass

??

What is your plan as West?

- *Open 2♣ and rebid 3♣?* Not a good idea, the subsequent auction is likely to get crowded and there's a good chance of missing out on a 4-4 Spade fit.
- *Open 1♣?* That might work, you'll follow up with a jump shift to 2♠ next time around, assuming, of course, that there actually is a next time around.
- *Open 2NT?* We don't have much objection to the singleton Ace, but don't you think that the hand is too good for a 20-21 2NT? That's 21 of the finest, with a good five-card suit, and look at those lovely black Tens!
- *Open 2♣ and rebid 2NT?* Yes, we'd upgrade this one. The downside is that this plan will make it difficult to reach 6♣ when you belong there.

If West opens 2♣ and rebids 2NT, East will take his side to game, down one. Yes, Declarer would have done better to open 1♣! That gets E-W to the making contract of 5♣.