

2nd November , 2011

BIDDING 6-PACK

Problems

Board 1	None Vul			
♠ Q743	<i>South</i>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>
♥ J6			1♦	Pass
♦ Q7	1♠	Pass	2♥	Pass
♣ QT732	??			

Board 2	N-S Vul			
♠ Q73	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>
♥ AQ9	??			
♦ A7				
♣ KQT75				

Board 5	N-S Vul			
♠ A9542	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>	<i>West</i>
♥ K6	Pass	Pass	1♦	Pass
♦ 98	1♠	Pass	4♦	Pass
♣ K953	??			

Board 15	N-S Vul			
♠ AT85	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>
♥ AT862		1♦	1♠	Dbl
♦ 7	??			
♣ QT9				

Board 22	E-W Vul			
♠ K4	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>	<i>West</i>
♥ 9		Pass	1♠	Pass
♦ KQ9843	2♦	Pass	2♠	Pass
♣ KQ72	3♣	Pass	3♠	Pass
	??			

Board 29	Both Vul			
♠ AK954	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
♥ A9		1♠	Dbl	Pass
♦ 953	??			
♣ KJ9				

Solutions

Board 1	None Vul			
♠ Q743	<i>South</i>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>
♥ J6			1♦	Pass
♦ Q7	1♠	Pass	2♥	Pass
♣ QT732	??			

North has reversed, showing a good hand, but one which is not necessarily game-forcing. What are your methods here? Here's a commonly used style:

- *Fourth Suit at the Two-Level*: It's not available here, but when it is (as in 1♣ 1♠, 2♦ 2♥) it can be used to show weakness and allow the partnership to stop short of game).
- *Rebid of 2♠*: This shows at least a fifth Spade, ambiguous in terms of strength.
- *Raise of one of Opener's Suits*: Natural and game-forcing.
- *2NT*: A weakness bid, allowing the partnership to stop short of game. But Opener cannot pass 2NT, Responder may just have a very weak hand with nothing in the unbid suit, and a desire to play at the three-level in one of Opener's suits.
- *3NT*: Shows a strong preference for No Trump, so implies no support for Opener's suits and a good holding in the unbid suit.

Using those methods we'd say that South was close between bidding 2NT (weak, artificial), and 3NT (natural, enough for game). Our choice would be 3NT (assuming that Partner's reverses are reliable), though we would be nervous about the Spade suit.

Board 2	N-S Vul			
♠ Q73	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>
♥ AQ9	??			
♦ A7				
♣ KQT75				

What is your choice of opening bid with the East hand? 17 HCP fits into the 15-17 range, but surely this hand is too good. There is a good 5-card suit, and we really love that Club Ten! The only blot on the landscape is the ♠Qxx holding, but despite that, we would open this 1♣, planning to show 18-19 with a rebid of 2NT.

That approach works rather well on the actual hand. West responds 1♥, then after the 2NT rebid, West uses New Minor Forcing to find the 5-3 Heart fit

and zips into the good slam. However, if East opens 1NT, they are likely to languish in 4♥.

Board 5	N-S Vul			
♠ A9542	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>	<i>West</i>
♥ K6	Pass	Pass	1♦	Pass
♦ 98	1♠	Pass	4♦	Pass
♣ K953	??			

The first question is: “What does South’s 4♦ mean?” The common treatment nowadays is that it shows: (a) 4-card Spade support, (b) Enough for game, (c) Solid Diamonds (ideally six of them). That being so, should North pursue slam? The first thing for North to realize is that her hand might not be as good as it looks. If South has 4-6 distribution, then she has shortness in Clubs or Hearts and one of North’s side-suit Kings will be completely wasted. Even so, it’s possible to imagine South with the perfect hand: ♠KQxx, ♥Ax, ♦AKQJxx, ♣x. So, perhaps North can take a small risk with Roman Key Card here. As usual, Partner comes up with a disappointing response (two with), so 5♠ is the final contract. This mercifully makes when there is only one trump loser.

Board 15	N-S Vul			
♠ AT85	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>
♥ AT862		1♦	1♠	Dbl
♦ 7	??			
♣ QT9				

What is your choice here?

- 3♠? No, this is generally played as preemptive, and the hand is too good.
- 4♠? Some play this as “bidding what you think (or hope) you can make”, but nowadays the general style is to play it as a preempt (usually five trumps, though at this vulnerability perhaps the fifth trump is a luxury).
- **Redouble?** Shows values and something in Spades, but better to reserve the bid for hands which have more defense and less offense (and probably only three trumps).
- 2♦? In competitive auctions, a cue-bid is the generally prescribed remedy when we have support for Partner and at least game-invitational values.
- 4♦? Yes, this is a splinter, and a descriptive choice, don’t you think?

Anyway, 2♦ and 4♦ are the realistic alternatives. If you chose 2♦ then we hope that you went all the way to game later in the auction, this hand is too good to stop short, even opposite the most putrid of

overcalls. As it happens, 12 tricks are possible when the Spades are 2-2.

Board 22	E-W Vul			
♠ K4	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>	<i>West</i>
♥ 9		Pass	1♠	Pass
♦ KQ9843	2♦	Pass	2♠	Pass
♣ KQ72	3♣	Pass	3♠	Pass
	??			

Let’s assume a 2/1 style of auction, whereby 2♦ is forcing to game. By the time South bids 3♣, North has a pretty good hand for Spades. But if North simply bids 4♠ now, it will sound like reluctant support. But King doubleton in trumps and a singleton in the unbid suit, is far from reluctant, it should be downright enthusiastic. So our suggestion here is for North to bid 4♥. This cannot be natural, we don’t introduce a new suit at the four-level, in an uncontested auction, and expect to play it there. No, 4♥ is encouraging with secondary Spade support, as opposed to 4♠ which might be a hand with a singleton in Spades and a weak Heart holding, such as: ♠4 ♥J9 ♦KQ984 ♣KQJ72. Does 4♥ guarantee a Heart control? No. 4♥ is the only bid available which shows real Spade support (as opposed to reluctant support) so it’s possible (though perhaps a little unlikely) that North could have two Heart losers for his 4♥ bid. After North’s 4♥, N-S will reach the fine (and making) 6♠ slam.

Board 29	Both Vul			
♠ AK954	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
♥ A9		1♠	Dbl	Pass
♦ 953	??			
♣ KJ9				

Should West make a Penalty Pass here? E-W can surely make game, so to beat that score they would have to hold 1♠ doubled to just four tricks. That looks like a tall order, as Declarer (North) probably has three trump tricks and should be able to rustle up a couple more from somewhere. That indeed turns out to be the case. Change the West hand to: ♠QJT94, ♥K952, ♦AT8, ♣87. West has the same HCP and distribution, but is a much better bet for a Penalty Pass. How so? Here West scores just as many trump tricks as the original hand, but in so doing uses up only three HCP instead of seven. If you adjust the North hand accordingly, it turns out that North can make only *three* tricks in 1♠ doubled. The conclusion is that the second hand is good for the Penalty Pass but the actual hand is not. So, we’d suggest that West goes straight to 3NT.

2nd November, 2011

DECLARE & DEFEND

On Board 13 North no doubt declared 4♥.

♠ AJ ♥ AJT4 ♦ T84 ♣ 7654
<i>Declarer</i>
<i>West</i> <i>East</i>
<i>Dummy</i>
♠ KQ32 ♥ K987 ♦ AK9 ♣ K8

South opens 1♦ in third seat, North responds 1♥ and South goes straight to 4♥.

East leads the Club Two to Dummy's King and West's Ace. West cashes the ♣Q next, then leads the ♣T (East playing the Jack) which you ruff in Dummy.

You are on course to make 10 or 11 tricks, it depends on whether or not you can pick up the ♥Q.

There is no help to be gained from the opponent's auction (or lack thereof), how do you play the suit?

- *If you rely on technique* then you will realize that the only way to cater for a singleton Queen while also picking up four to the Queen, is to cash the ♥K, and finesse against West. So you cash the ♥K (catering for singleton Queen with East), then finesse against West, succeeding even if West has ♥Qxxx..
- *If you rely on intuition* you might say "Phooey" to the aforementioned and play East for the ♥Q. Why? Well, East made an unattractive opening from ♣Jxx. That suggests that perhaps the alternatives (including a trump lead) were less attractive.

If you are persuaded by this logic then (after ruffing that third Club) you will cross to the ♠J and run the ♥J. By not cashing the ♥A first, you will lose out to a singleton Queen with West, but will gain when East has ♥Qxxx (four cases instead of just one). Yes, it turns out that East's hand is: ♠765, ♥Q63, ♦Q765, ♣J32. The other leads were indeed no more attractive than the Club.

So, there you have it. As Yogi Berra might have put it: "Good intuition always beats good technique. And vice versa" ☺

This play problem is from **Board 26**:

	♠ A763 ♥ 83 ♦ Q984 ♣ 942	
♠ KJ85 ♥ AQT94 ♦ 7 ♣ T53	<i>North</i> <i>Dummy Declarer</i> <i>South</i>	♠ QT92 ♥ K5 ♦ AKT53 ♣ J7
	♠ 4 ♥ J762 ♦ J62 ♣ AKQ86	

East declares 4♠ after South has overcalled Two vulnerable Clubs. South starts out the defense by leading Clubs, and Declarer ruffs the third round. Suppose, for a moment, that Declarer plays a trump, which holds. A second trump is played, South showing out and North ducking again. That's good defense by North, now if Declarer plays another trump, North will win, a return a Diamond, forcing Declarer to guess the Heart situation. Maybe he'll guess right, maybe not.

Perhaps a better line of play, once North has ducked that first Spade, is to abandon trumps and proceed along cross-ruff lines. For example:

South cashes two Clubs
Declarer ruffs the third Club
The ♠Q holds the trick
Cash ♦A and ♦K
Ruff a Diamond
Cross to the ♥K
Ruff a Diamond
Cash ♥A

Here is the end-position:

	<i>North</i>	
	♠ A76	
<i>Dummy</i>		<i>Declarer</i>
♠ K		♠ T9
♥ QT		♥
♦		♦ T
	<i>South</i>	
	♥ J7	
	♣ 8	

Now Dummy leads the Heart Ten, and there is nothing that North can do. That line is not guaranteed to succeed, but it seems to offer better odds than playing a second round of trumps.

On **Board 30**, there are two play problems, one for N-S and one for E-W:

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		Pass	1♣
1♦	Pass	2♣	Dbl
2♦	2♥	3♦	All Pass

♠ JT7 ♥ J5 ♦ AKJ63 ♣ QT4	<i>North</i> <i>Declarer Dummy</i> <i>South</i>	♠ A642 ♥ AT4 ♦ QT82 ♣ 86
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North leads a low Club to South's King, then the Ace is cashed, and Declarer's Queen wins the third round (North playing the Jack, a Heart being pitched from Dummy). Does Declarer see an end-play in his future? He sure does! Trumps are drawn, the ♥A is cashed, and Declarer exits a Heart. Whoever wins that trick will be end-played ... either Declarer will get a ruff and sluff ... or the defense must break open the Spade suit. If Declarer fails to set up the end-play then he will have to break open the Spades himself, losing an extra trick in the process.

♠ Q83 ♥ K862 ♦ 754 ♣ J75	<i>Declarer</i> <i>West</i> <i>East</i> <i>Dummy</i>	♠ K95 ♥ Q973 ♦ 9 ♣ AK932
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There are two sides to every deal, and here is Board 30 from the N-S side. Assume the same auction as shown above, except that this time South is more enterprising. Instead of selling out to 3♦ she pushes on to 3♥. The defense will be leading Diamonds at every opportunity, so you had better assume a 3-2 trump break, it's hard to imagine surviving 4-1. Our suggested line of play goes:

- Diamond to East's King
- Diamond Ace ruffed on the board**
- Heart to the King and Ace
- Diamond ruffed on the board**
- Cash the ♥Q**
- Cash the ♠A and ♣K**
- Lose a Club (to West)
- Diamond ruffed in hand**

Now a Spade is led towards Dummy and East is helpless. If he hops with the Ace then Declarer has two Spade tricks ... if he ducks then Dummy wins and plays Clubs. Either way, Declarer escapes for down one and a good board.

	♠ AK4 ♥ AKQ ♦ QT7 ♣ A875	
♠ Q73 ♥ 4 ♦ K85432 ♣ J32	<i>Dummy</i> <i>West</i> <i>East</i> <i>Declarer</i>	♠ T862 ♥ T72 ♦ J96 ♣ QT4
	♠ J95 ♥ J98653 ♦ A ♣ K96	

On **Board 31**, West throws in an emaciated Weak Two, after which N-S will probably end up in 6♥. Declarer wins the Diamond lead, draws trumps and ducks a Club early, hoping for a squeeze. But none is needed when Clubs are 3-3. That's 12 tricks.

Now suppose that South is greedy and declares 6NT. West leads a Diamond, how you plan to make 12 tricks? There are 11 tricks and it is possible that one defender or the other (it would surely have to be West) has the singleton or doubleton ♠Q. So:

Win the ♦A

Cash ♥AKQ (West pitches two Diamonds)

Cash ♣AK (both defenders follow)

Cash remaining Hearts (West pitches the ♣J and two more Diamonds)

Assuming that West had six Diamonds, he must have started life with 2=1=6=4 or 3=1=6=3 shape. In the first case, you simply cash the Spades, hoping that East's doubleton includes the Queen ... in the second case, you must cross to the ♠A and exit a Diamond, end-playing East in Spades. Which is better? Well, the throw-in has been scientifically proven to be more fun. Added to which, it works!

There's space left, so we'll insult your intelligence with this trump holding from **Board 17**:

<i>Declarer</i>	<i>Dummy</i>
♥ AT76432	♥ J98

Lazy Declarers (not you) will cash the ♥A, hoping that the enemy trumps are 2-1. But the correct way to play that holding is the safety play of a first round finesse, protecting against RHO having all the missing trumps. It's a play which cannot cost, and which turns out to be essential on the actual deal, as East does indeed hold ♥KQ5.

Brian Gunnell