

Some more that got away

In *The Ones That Got Away* I described some hands that were played at the club over recent months where some interesting point was missed by most of the players. Here are a few more. (As always, the hands have been rotated to make South the declarer.)

This first hand could have come straight from a text book on declarer play:

Dealer South	♠ Q 10 3										
Both vul	♥ Q 9 5 4 2										
	♦ J 3										
	♣ A 4 3										
♠ 8 6	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 9 5 4
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ K 10 8 6		♥ J 7 3									
♦ Q 10 8 6 5 2		♦ A K 7									
♣ 7		♣ 10 9 8									
	♠ A K 7 2										
	♥ A										
	♦ 9 4										
	♣ K Q J 6 5 2										

Most pairs played in clubs: one stopped in a partscore and one bid slam, both making eleven tricks. Two pairs reached 5♣ but went one down! In fact eleven tricks are cold as the cards lie.

It's a classic illustration of how to combine your chances. After two rounds of diamonds are cashed declarer wins the next trick and draws just *two* rounds of trumps. If they break evenly it's easy, but if not, *leave the third trump outstanding* and play on spades.

If the suit breaks 3-3 (or the jack drops in two rounds making dummy's ten a winner), you can draw the last trump and claim. Otherwise you have to hope that the defender with the third trump has to follow to all four rounds of spades. It works this time, and you can ruff your losing spade in dummy, return to hand, and draw the last trump.

Of course the *best* contract, and surely a top at pairs is - 4♠! Perhaps after an auction like this:

West	North	East	South
			1♣
No	1♥	No	1♠ (1)
No	3♣ (2)	No	3♦ (3)
No	3♠	No	4♠ (4)
All pass			

- 1) Not worth a game-forcing 2♠ - partner's 1♥ hasn't improved your hand. If he passes 1♠ you weren't making game.
- 2) If he were only 4-4 in the black suits opener would either open 1♠, or open or rebid 1NT (unless he is 4-1-4-4). He will therefore usually have *five* clubs, and responder is just about worth a limit bid of 3♣ - especially as his ♠Q looks likely to be critical.
- 3) Fourth Suit Forcing
- 4) Aware that this will be a 4-3 fit, but responder has shown a spade honour and a diamond shortage (by bidding the other three suits)

As long as spades are 4-2 or better (83.9%), there's nothing to the play. If after cashing the ♦A, K the defence persist with a third round (the ruff and discard doesn't help declarer), you can ruff in the short trump hand discarding a winning club, and draw three rounds of trumps. Now you just run the club suit. East can take his master trump whenever he likes but declarer has the rest. +620 and all the matchpoints.

There are many routes to 4♠ on this next hand, depending on the North-South no-trump range, and on whether West feels brave enough to come in with 2 or 3♣. Unsurprisingly no one bid slam, but assuming only one trump loser, your target at pairs should certainly be twelve tricks.

Dealer South Both vul	♠ A J 10 5 3 2 ♥ K 7 3 ♦ K 9 7 ♣ 3	West North East South No 2♥(2) No 1NT(1) No 4♠ All pass 2♠									
♠ Q 7 ♥ 9 8 ♦ 5 2 ♣ K Q 7 6 5 4 2	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K 6 4 ♥ J 10 6 2 ♦ Q J 10 3 ♣ 10 8 ♠ 9 8 ♥ A Q 5 4 ♦ A 8 6 4 ♣ A J 9
	N										
W		E									
	S										

- 1) 15-17
- 2) Transfer to 2♠

You win the club lead and run the nine of spades. Seeing no future in clubs, East switches to the ♦Q. You win that with the ace, repeat the spade finesse successfully, and draw the last trump. You now have eleven sure tricks (five ♠s, three ♥s, two ♦s and a ♣). If hearts divide evenly you'll have twelve. But what if they don't? Maybe the defender with long hearts will also be in sole charge of the diamonds – very likely if West did overcall in clubs. All you have to do is run the rest of the trumps. You can cash the ♦K first to simplify matters. This will be the position when the last trump is led from the North hand:

♠ - ♥ 9 8 ♦ - ♣ Q 7 6	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ - ♥ J 10 6 2 ♦ J ♣ -
	N										
W		E									
	S										

East has no safe discard.

Note that playing for the squeeze can never cost, and you didn't have to do anything clever – just keep an eye out for all the diamonds higher than the nine. If the Q, J and 10 haven't all been played, you'll have to hope hearts were 3-3 all along.

Sadly no one who played in 4♠ made more than eleven tricks...

On the next hand 6♥ is cold but only one pair out of six bid it. Furthermore thirteen tricks are there for the taking but only two declarers were up to the task:

Dealer North
None vul

♠ K 9
♥ A 6 2
♦ A K 10 8 4 3
♣ J 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ J 8 2
♥ 10 9 5
♦ Q 9 7 5
♣ 9 8 5

♠ 10 5 4 3
♥ J
♦ J 6 2
♣ K Q 7 4 3

♠ A Q 7 6
♥ K Q 8 7 4 3
♦ None
♣ A 10 6

On a diamond lead the best line is: win, discarding a club; draw *two* rounds of trumps with the ♥K and ♥A; cash another top diamond discarding the other club loser; then ♠K, ♠A and a spade ruff. If that has all passed off peacefully return to hand with ♣A, draw the last trump and claim. Note that if the defender with the last trump can ruff or over-ruff at any time, that only kills the overtrick in 6♥. The small slam is never in danger. So 7♥ is laydown on a 2-2 trump break and will make on any 3-1 break as long as the defender with the third trump has at least two diamonds and at least three spades.

By the way, suppose you have an accident and finish in no-trumps, rather than spades. How many tricks should you make as the cards lie? The answer is *thirteen!* Say it's played by North and East leads a top club. (Nothing else is better.) Declarer wins, crosses to the ♥A and takes the ♦A, K, discarding clubs as before. Now he runs the rest of the hearts. Here is the position as the last one hits the table:

	♠ K 9			
	♥ -			
	♦ 10 8			
	♣ J			
	♠ K 9			
	♥ -			
	♦ 10 8			
	♣ J			
	♠ A Q 7 6			
	♥ 4			
	♦ -			
	♣ -			

A diamond is thrown from the North hand, but what can East discard? Either the ♣J or South's long spade will be the thirteenth winner.

To finish with, two slam zone hands to practise your bidding on:

Dealer East
EW vul

♠ 4 3
♥ 10 9 8 6
♦ J 10 3 2
♣ Q 10 5

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A K J 7 6
♥ K 2
♦ 8 7 6
♣ K 7 4

♠ Q 10 9 2
♥ A Q J 7
♦ A 5 4
♣ J 3

♠ 8 5
♥ 5 4 3
♦ K Q 9
♣ A 9 8 6 2

With only ten top tricks on view, we obviously can't recommend 6♠ on this one, or suggest any bidding sequence which doesn't involve either East or West (or both) over-bidding. Nevertheless two pairs out of six bid it, and everyone who played in spades made twelve tricks. West's diamond losers go away on East's good hearts; the eleventh trick is the ♣K, by virtue of the ♣A being kindly placed; and the twelfth trick is a club ruff in the short trump hand. Someone's lucky day!

Dealer West
Both vul

♠ J
♥ Q 10 6 5
♦ Q J 9 4 3
♣ A 8 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ Q 10 9 4 3 2
♥ None
♦ Q 10
♣ 10 4

♠ K 8 7 5
♥ 8 7 4 3
♦ 2
♣ K J 10 5

♠ A 6
♥ A K J 9 2
♦ A K 8 6
♣ Q 7

Half the field bid slam on this, but no one reached the easy 7♥. (You just have to remember to ruff your losing spade in dummy before drawing all the trumps. Half the declarers forgot and held themselves to twelve tricks.)

You probably need quite sophisticated methods to bid it; for example:

- | | | | |
|--|---------|----------|--|
| | North | South | |
| | No | 2NT (1) | 1) Difficult choice – a bit light for an Acol 2♣, and not really an Acol 2♥. That it is off-shape and has a shaky ♣ stop might deter some, but 2NT is the least bad option. 1♥ would be truly awful! |
| | 3♣ (2) | 3♥ | 2) Stayman for <i>five</i> -card majors – a popular method with experts |
| | 4♣ (3) | 4♦ (3) | 3) First round controls |
| | 4NT (4) | 5♦ (5) | 4) Greatly encouraged - time for Roman Key Card Blackwood! |
| | 5NT (6) | 6♦ (7) | 5) Four key cards (♠A, ♥A,K, ♦A) |
| | 7♥ (8) | All pass | 6) Asking for <i>specific</i> kings |
| | | | 7) ♦K (denies ♣K) |
| | | | 8) North can count 5 hearts, 5 diamonds, the black aces and a ♠ ruff in the short trump hand. The key is finding out that South has a strong hand and a <i>five</i> -card suit. |