

SOME RANDOM RECENT HANDS

My partner picked up this hand:

♠ void
♥ Q J 9 7 5 3
♦ A K Q J 5 3
♣ A

He opened 1♥ to see what would happen.

LHO overcalled 1♠ and I made a cue-raise of 2♠ (but even a raise to 2♥ works the same way).

What do you think he should do now?

One option – if it had been known to partner – would be to use the Grand Slam Force (5NT), previously discussed in Column 40.

Another option is to jump to 5♥. After all, what on earth could the random jump to the 5-level mean? In situations where you may not want to be in slam with no honours opposite, the jump to the 5-level is superior to the GSF, which commits you to the 6-level and is exploring for the 7-level.

The jump to the 5-level simply asks you to bid the small slam with one of the top two honours in the trump suit (and you can bid 7-level if you have both top honours too). I held:

♠ A 10 4 2
♥ K 8 2
♦ 8 7
♣ K 7 6 2

So would bid 6♥. Change the ♠A to the ♥A, so that I held ♥A-K-8, and I should bid 7♥.

As an interesting 'extra', an opening bid of 5-Major should have exactly the same meaning: partner, please bid 6-Major with one of the Ace or King of the trump suit, and bid 7-Major with both the Ace and King. (I've never held that opening hand, but the above example is nearly good enough – perhaps requiring the ♥10 to solidify the suit.)

For the next hand, you have to work out what to do when your RHO opens 1♥ and you hold:

♠ K Q 9 8
♥ K J 7 4
♦ A K J 5
♣ 8

Our opponent doubled.

I would never contemplate a double with this hand. What are you going to do when partner bids clubs? After all, bidding again shows a hand that was too good for a normal overcall, and this hand does not qualify for that treatment.

As it happened, his partner held a 2-0-5-6 hand shape and responded with 5♣ (after opener's partner's weak 3♥ raise). Holding:

♠ A 6 4 3
 ♥ A J 8 6 5
 ♦ void
 ♣ A J 9 6

I was happy to double 5♣.

Now what? The doubler retreated to 5NT. His partner took some time, then bid 6♦ - also doubled. Fortunately for them, that was only failing by 2 tricks, for 300. The point is, though, that this 'mini-disaster' should not have happened and would not have happened opposite a 1NT overcall, rather than the misguided double.

Whilst talking about poor doubles, let's look at this hand. Sitting South, you hold:

♠ 4 3
 ♥ 6 5 2
 ♦ K J 4 2
 ♣ K Q J 2

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		1♦	Pass
2♣	Pass	3♣	Pass
5♣	Pass	Pass	?

Don't double! That will alert declarer to the bad trump break. You don't have any sure tricks outside the trump suit. Sit it out and hope the bad breaks make life awkward.

At both tables, South doubled and, on a non-diamond lead, the contract made!

North
irrelevant

♠ K 10	♠ A Q 7
♥ A K Q 3	♥ 9
♦ 10 6	♦ A Q 9 7 3
♣ A 8 7 5 3	♣ 10 9 6 4

♠ 4 3
 ♥ 6 5 2
 ♦ K J 4 2
 ♣ K Q J 2

Note: Playing 2 over 1 game forcing, East's "correct" rebid is a splinter bid of 3♥. Then West should rebid 3NT. Mind you, I think that West has a 3NT rebid after the minimum raise to 3♣ anyway!

Here's a recent hand from my bridge club:

♠ void	
♥ A K 9 4 3 2	
♦ K 5 2	
♣ 10 8 4 2	
♠ K 10 8 5 3 2	♠ A J
♥ Q 8 7	♥ void
♦ J	♦ A 10 9 8 7 6 3
♣ A Q 6	♣ K J 7 3
	♠ Q 9 7 6 4
	♥ J 10 6 5
	♦ Q 4
	♣ 9 5

Nobody managed to make 4♠. A couple of pairs played in 5♦ X. I do wonder whether East 'ran' to 5♦ after somebody doubled 4♠? If so, once again, it was a poor double of 4♠ (which you are happy to defend).

How do you play in 4♠? On the lead of the ♥A, ruffed in dummy, you have to ensure you take as many ruffs as possible. Cash the ♦A. Ruff a diamond (which allows for bad trump breaks – often a consideration if the opponents have bid to 4♥ on their minimal values), then trump a heart – with the ♠A. Cross to your ♣A. You shouldn't lead the ♠K now; this is hand to try to make as many trump tricks as possible.

Simply cross to dummy's ♣J, then trump another diamond. If South ruffs, you over-trump; if South discards (only hearts remain) you can trump low. Just lead your remaining heart (the Queen). North will be on lead (the defence's first trick). They can lead a club for South to ruff. Now South only has trumps remaining, so will have to lead one. You win with the ♠8, and exit with a low trump. Once again, South has to lead a trump, so you win the ♠K-10 over South's ♠Q-9!

It's not really double-dummy, given that these types of hands require as much cross-ruffing as possible. After a few tricks, you will start realising the count of the hand – and know that spades are breaking badly (once North has long hearts for their overcall, then 3 diamonds).

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