

Board No 5	Dealer: North	Vul: N/S
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South	West	North	East
		1C	P
1D	P	1H	P
P	P		

♠ K97		♠ 10852
♥ 93		♥ QJ65
♦ AJ7		♦ Q96
♣ KJ872		♣ A5

♠ AJ4		
♥ A1084		
♦ K5		
♣ Q643		

♠ Q63		
♥ K72		
♦ 108432		
♣ 109		

Although South has only 5 points there might be a better one level contract if opener has a four card major, especially when there might only be 3 clubs in the North hand. East may well lead 2S which will be won by the Jack when West plays the 7S. Declarer is likely to make 6 tricks by playing a club off the table. Winning with the JC West needs to find a trump switch forcing East to split honours. A second club will now be won by East, and a heart lead would now go into North's tenace, so instead a diamond may be lead to the ace for the return of a second trump. Winning with the AH declarer can now play another club. If East ruffs high and returns a trump, this helps declarer score three trumps, KD, and two spades for minus 50 when East-West have 3 one level makeable contracts.

TIP: With only two clubs and five points and at least 3-3 in the majors it may worth keeping the bidding open to steal a low level contract.

Board No 6	Dealer: East	Vul: E/W
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South	West	North	East
			P
P	1C	P	1H
P	2NT	P	3NT
P	P	P	

♠ A7		♠ K
♥ KJ5		♥ AQ84
♦ Q10		♦ 87532
♣ AKJ843		♣ Q75

♠ 106542		
♥ 932		
♦ AKJ4		
♣ 9		

♠ QJ983		
♥ 1076		
♦ 96		
♣ 1062		

With 18-19 points, West has a choice of rebids between a jump to 3C or 2NT. With the red suit holdings it is probably better for the lead to come up to West, so 2NT is the better choice. The standard lead of KD allows North to examine dummy, and playing the lead of king for count and ace for attitude, discover partner's holding in diamonds. Playing normal count South will play the 9, to show an even number of diamonds, playing reverse count the 6D would be played. Seeing 5 diamonds in dummy and adding these to partner's doubleton North can safely cash the first three tricks, having noted the extra values in the dummy, disclosing that South is bereft of values. Failure to take this action will allow declarer to make 12 tricks.

TIPS:

- Try to right side the no trump contracts so that the lead comes into the most suitable hand.
- As defender, take time to plan the best line to help achieve the maximum tricks available

Board No 7	Dealer: South	Vul: Both
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South	West	North	East	
P	1D	X	1H	♠ KQ4
P	P	1NT	P	♥ QJ8
P	2D	X	P	♦ AK83
P	P			♣ AQ8
				♠ A85
				♥ 53
				♦ QJ10954
				♣ K10
				♠ J1096
				♥ AK964
				♦ 7
				♣ 532
				♠ 732
				♥ 1072
				♦ 62
				♣ J9764

With 7 losers and a sound 6 card suit West makes a normal 1D opening, and later confirms minimum values by passing partner's 1H overall of the takeout double although North's 1NT is 18-20 West knows that there will be no values left in the South hand, and expects East's points to be well placed. North could also rebid 2NT over 2D and this should go one down.

The play should be fun for West as North will eventually be end played to lead a black suit to supply the final trick.

TIPS:

- Open with sound suits and light values and let partner know the limits of the hand early on.
- Be careful making penalty double when partner is marked with few values

Board No 8	Dealer: West	Vul: None
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South	West	North	East	
	1D	P	1H	♠ 86
P	2S	P	3D	♥ A1087
P	3NT	P	P	♦ 7532
P				♣ Q86
				♠ AKJ2
				♥ Q
				♦ KJ98
				♣ A973
				♠ 74
				♥ KJ652
				♦ AQ10
				♣ 1054
				♠ Q10953
				♥ 943
				♦ 64
				♣ KJ2

West's jump to 2S shows 4 spades with 17-18 points and an unbalanced hand which would have been portrayed with a jump to 2NT. East shows the good 3 card support for diamonds in case partner holds more than four, and bidding concludes with the no trump game. With three suits bid North will lead the 6C and South should play the JC. If North has only the QC then this play cannot lose, and if West ducks, there is an inference that South also holds the KC. With stoppers in clubs declarer will win at trick one and play to set up heart tricks, losing just two clubs and one heart.

TIP: With extra values opener can make a jump bid which simultaneously confirms both the high points and the shape of the hand.

Board No 9	Dealer: North	Vul: E/W
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South	West	North	East			
		P	1D			♠ 9832
						♥ K1054
1S	P	2S	3C			♦ K6
4S	P	P	P			♣ J73
				♠ 764		♠ A
				♥ Q987632		♥
				♦ 43		♦ J109872
				♣ 9		♣ AQ10862
						♠ KQJ105
						♥ AJ
						♦ AQ5
						♣ K54

Disappointing for declarer after a normal bidding sequence, to run into a simple defence to defeat the contract after a singleton club lead. East wins with the ace of clubs, returns the club 10 to ask for a heart back, resulting in a one trick set.

TIP: Clear signals in defence and trust in partner produce best results.

Board No 10	Dealer: East	Vul: Both
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South	West	North	East			
			P			♠ AK10865
						♥ 42
P	1C	2S	3H			♦ J73
P	3NT	P	P			♣ 52
P				♠ QJ9		♠ 732
				♥ K		♥ QJ1096
				♦ AK95		♦ Q8
				♣ QJ643		♣ A97
						♠ 4
						♥ A8753
						♦ 10642
						♣ K108

Playing the Good-Bad 2NT convention, West has an easy 3NT rebid after partner shows decent values and 5+ hearts. With South limited to a single spade and holding the two key cards of the AH and KC, nine tricks are safe.

TIPS:

- The Good-Bad 2NT convention is very helpful when opponents take up bidding space. The 2NT is a transfer to 3C when responder holds weaker values, and after opener accepts the transfer responder has three options :
 - pass shows long clubs
 - new suit is a weak long suit
 - raise of partner's suit is weak
- The good part of this is that all direct bids at the three level will confirm extra values
- The Good 2NT is the opposite, whereby all three level bids are weak, and 2NT is for stronger hands

Board No 11	Dealer: South	Vul: None
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South	West	North	East			
P	P	1D	2H			♠ AQ32
2S	3H	4S	P			♥ -
P	P					♦ K10765
						♣ Q842
				♠ 94		♠ 108
				♥ Q964		♥ AKJ1083
				♦ AJ32		♦ 94
				♣ K53		♣ J97
						♠ KJ765
						♥ 752
						♦ Q8
						♣ A106

With only 11 points but 6 losers North should always open 1D. Many players employ weak jump overcalls so East will probably use this weapon, and over South's 2S West will give a single raise in hearts (double raise if non-vulnerable). On a trump lead declarer need to set up diamonds to ensure 11 tricks, and if hearts are lead there is the option of ruffing 3 hearts in dummy. The favourable lie of the KC helps with the overtrick.

TIPS:

- Use the losing trick count as well as just points as it is always a helpful method of hand evaluation
- Be careful of the vulnerability in competitive bidding

Board No 12	Dealer: West	Vul: N/S
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South	West	North	East			
	P	1S	P			♠ AK9742
4S	P	4NT	P			♥ AK8
5D	P	6S	P			♦ A52
P	P					♣ 2
				♠ 5		♠ J
				♥ J963		♥ 10742
				♦ J10873		♦ KQ9
				♣ A63		♣ J10854
						♠ Q10863
						♥ Q5
						♦ 64
						♣ KQ97

South has 5 trumps and 7 losers and bids game immediately as there is no other feature worth showing. North may check on whether South has the missing ace of clubs before signing off in the small slam. TIP: With full game values but no key feature in the hand bid game straight away as this gives no further information to the defence.

Board No 17	Dealer: North	Vul: None
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South	West	North	East			
		1D	2S		♠ 5	
X	P	3C	P		♥ A63	
3NT	P	P	P		♦ AKQ83	
					♣ KJ32	
				♠ 862		♠ QJ10974
				♥ KJ874		♥ 10
				♦ 542		♦ 107
				♣ 94		♣ A765
					♠ AK3	
					♥ Q952	
					♦ J96	
					♣ Q108	

East has the perfect hand for a weak jump overcall, which South can double to confirm 4 hearts and values, and can then rebid 3NT with the major suit stoppers. Declarer has only to establish clubs in order to wrap up 11 tricks.

TIP: Over an opponent's major suit overcall it helps if a takeout double guarantees four trumps in the other major.

Board No 18	Dealer: East	Vul: N/S
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South	West	North	East			
			1C		♠ Q109	
2S	3H	4S	P		♥ A75	
P	P				♦ K10976	
					♣ A6	
				♠ 7		♠ KJ8
				♥ KQ10962		♥ 4
				♦ Q42		♦ A53
				♣ J54		♣ Q109872
					♠ A65432	
					♥ J83	
					♦ J8	
					♣ K3	

After South's weak jump overcall and West's free bid of 3H North stretches with a jump to game and the KH is played. Declarer can now place East with the AD, KS and QC and either one or both black Jacks or the QD. Winning with the AH declarer leads the QS, covered by the king and ace, and a second spade is captured by East's Jack. In order to gain entry to West's hand in order for hearts to be cashed the 10C is returned. Declarer wins in hand, and takes the diamond finesse, eventually making 11 tricks.

TIP: When in a tight contract take time to place the cards, and assume a favourable lie to secure the contract.

Board No 19				Dealer: South	Vul: E/W	
South	West	North	East			
1H	2H	4H	4S		♠ A1093	
P	P	X	P		♥ A10873	
P	P				♦ Q2	
					♣ Q7	
				♠ J8765		♠ KQ2
				♥ KJ4		♥
				♦		♦ J87643
				♣ A10853		♣ J962
					♠ 4	
					♥ Q9652	
					♦ AK1095	
					♣ K4	

Over South's 1H opening West's cue bid is the Ghestem convention whereby:

- The cue bid shows 5-5 in the two extreme suits, spades and clubs over 1H
- 2NT shows 5-5 in the lowest two suits, both minors over 1H
- 3C shows 5-5 in the two remaining suits, spades and diamonds over 1H
- When the opening bid is clubs, which is often a short suit, many players use the 2C overcall as natural, and substitute the cue bid with 2D

The advantage of this convention is the precision of knowing both suits immediately, unlike the Michaels cue bid which shows the other major and a minor rather than a specific minor. Ghestem helps East to "sacrifice" in 4S based upon the double fit in the black suits. As North-South have a non-vulnerable game on their way, going two light in 4SX is not a good save. If you hold it to one off, it is a great save, and this is possible if N/S take their eye off the ball.

It is difficult for South to bid on over the double when the KC looks doomed and partner is marked with decent spades, but 11 tricks can be made in 5H.

TIP: Having an agreed convention to describe two suiter hands in competition is essential and Ghestem fits the bill well.

Board No 20				Dealer: West	Vul: Both	
South	West	North	East			
	P	1S	P		♠ K10952	
2H	P	3D	P		♥ K2	
3NT	P	P	P		♦ AKQJ3	
					♣ 2	
				♠ J84		♠ AQ3
				♥ 1073		♥ 865
				♦ 104		♦ 97
				♣ A10985		♣ J7643
					♠ 76	
					♥ AQJ94	
					♦ 8652	
					♣ KJ	

Pairs bring out the greedy instinct in players – with NT offering the best return for your investment. South knows that they have a diamond fit, but is also aware that he needs to protect the club position. North then is aware that South had some ammunition in Clubs, so with the solid diamond suit and the heart K in reserve, he passes – hoping for the top score.

And home it rolls! Even if West leads a Spade to his partner's Queen and a Club comes back, the Jack should be finessed.

The safer contract is 4H, and perhaps North should offer it over 3NT from South!

Board No 26	Dealer: East	Vul: Both
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South	West	North	East			
			1H			♠ AJ98652
P	1NT	2S	P			♥ A75
P	3D	P	P			♦ 86
P						♣ Q
				♠ 3		♠ Q74
				♥ Q		♥ K10983
				♦ J109754		♦ AKQ
				♣ AJ982		♣ 105
						♠ K10
						♥ J642
						♦ 32
						♣ K7543

If North decides to jump to 3S over 1NT this is likely to win the bidding battle, with the added bonus that 9 tricks are available. As the spade suit lacks honours many will compete with just 2S, and then keep quiet. On the sequence above it is more difficult for N/S to bid again at game all with few values. Some E/W partnerships may play 2NT over 2S in this competitive position as showing 5-5 in the minors, and may end up going down one in 3C rather than plus one in 3D. On the other hand, playing 2NT as a relay to 3C, which can be passed with long clubs, or converted to 3D with long diamonds works better in this instance, as a double of 2S can then be takeout showing both minors. Moreover, playing this way allows an immediate bid of 3D over 2S to confirm a stronger invitational hand where game may be possible.

TIP: It is essential to have bidding agreements for these frequently arising competitive situations.

Board No 27	Dealer: South	Vul: None
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South	West	North	East			
P	1H	P	1S			♠ 104
P	4D	P	4S			♥ 1053
P	P	P				♦ 8652
						♣ QJ73
				♠ KJ62		♠ AQ875
				♥ AKQ72		♥ 98
				♦ 4		♦ KJ73
				♣ A109		♣ 64
						♠ 93
						♥ J64
						♦ AQ109
						♣ K852

West has only 5 losers and a strong trump fit in spades so jumps to 4D to signal the singleton and a hand with slam potential. For East this is bad news as the diamond honours are now worthless, and so game is the limit.

TIPS:

- When strong trump fits are found, being able to show outside shortage helps to judge whether or not slam prospects are worth exploring further.
- Some players can distinguish between singletons and voids in this situation by showing singletons with a direct bid of the suit, and bidding one level higher than the agreed major suit to confirm an outside void. Thus, 3S over an agreed heart fit leaves room for responder to enquire where the void lies by asking with 3NT. Now 4C/D confirms a minor suit void and 4H the spade void. If responder has no immediate interest in voids the sign off of 4H is available. When spades is the agreed major 3NT asks for the void and this time 4C/D/H show the void.

Board No 28	Dealer: West	Vul: N/S
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South	West	North	East	
	1S	P	2D	♠ A854
P	2NT	P	3NT	♥ AJ7432
P	P	P		♦ 64
				♣ 10
				♠ QJ1097
				♥ Q105
				♦ J92
				♣ AQ
				♠ K632
				♥ 6
				♦ 873
				♣ KJ854

A solid 1S opener and with that empty heart suit, North passes, leaves West rebidding 2NT to show a minimum hand. East really doesn't want to introduce that "thin" club suit, so just raises to 3NT. A heart lead gives 2 tricks in hearts, 5 in diamonds, and 2 in clubs if the finesse is taken. Alternatively, you can play to establish spade winners in West, resulting in 10 tricks.

Many thanks to Grand Masters Maureen & Bob Pattinson who have prepared this excellent commentary for you.