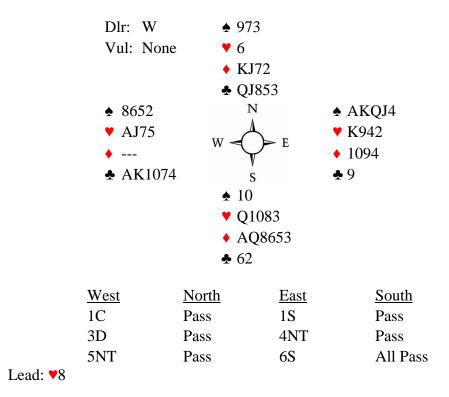
Hand of the Week 11/05/19

By Tom Joyce

Mini-Splinters

Playing at the Hartford Bridge Club on October 30, I had the misfortune of playing board #8 against the wrong pair: Geof Brod and John Stiefel, two promising young Grand Masters. This was the hand.



The bidding is instructive. Geof had only 12 points, but after John responded 1S, Geof's hand became much better. It's definitely worth a game invitation, and standard bidders would rebid 3S to invite game. Geof had a better bid available though, 3D. This is a mini-splinter.

A mini-splinter is a bid one higher than a reverse. It shows support for partner's suit and shortness in the suit bid. Although it is called a mini-splinter, this is actually a 2-way bid. It shows the values to play at either the 3 or the 5 level. If partner signs off in 3S, opener will pass with a 3-level holding and raise to 4 with a 5-level holding. If partner jumps to 4S, an opener with 5-level values will make a slam try. This understanding allows the bid of 4D (2 levels over a reverse) to be used to show a game-going hand without extras.

Now it was John's turn to reevaluate. He only has 13 HCP, but he has all of the spade honors, plus a 5th trump and a singleton club. In addition, he knows that his partner's values are in clubs

and hearts and that he has no more than 1 loser in diamonds. John now bid 4NT (keycard Blackwood) and Geof responded 5NT to show an even number of keycards plus a void – obviously diamonds. John then signed off in 6S.

Seven spades always makes because the $\P Q$ is on side. Three pairs bid the 25-point slam. Two shared a top of $11\frac{1}{2}$ matchpoints for bidding and making 7. The other pair bidding the slam made 6 and earned 10 matchpoints. The other pairs bidding this skinny slam were Paul Sanson-Bernard Kohn and Laurie Robbins-Tom Lorch. Well done!