

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.

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|-----------|----------|---|---------|
| Dlr: W | ♠ 973 | | |
| Vul: None | ♥ 6 | | |
| | ♦ KJ72 | | |
| | ♣ QJ853 | | |
| ♠ 8652 | | N | ♠ AKQJ4 |
| ♥ AJ75 | | W | ♥ K942 |
| ♦ --- | | ⊙ | ♦ 1094 |
| ♣ AK1074 | | E | ♣ 9 |
| | ♠ 10 | S | |
| | ♥ Q1083 | | |
| | ♦ AQ8653 | | |
| | ♣ 62 | | |

| <u>West</u> | <u>North</u> | <u>East</u> | <u>South</u> |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| 1C | Pass | 1S | Pass |
| 3D | Pass | 4NT | Pass |
| 5NT | Pass | 6S | All Pass |

Lead: ♥8

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 ♥Q is on side. Three pairs bid the 25-point slam. Two shared a top of 11½ 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!