

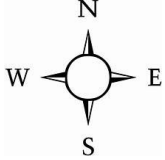
Hand of the Week 11/26/19

By John Stiefel

2 Interesting Hands

I thought two boards from today's game were particularly interesting.

On Board 20, the layout was:

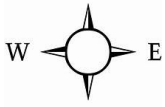
Dlr: W	♠ Q107	
Vul: Both	♥ 102	
	♦ 9875	
	♣ AK65	
♠ 9643	N	♠ AJ82
♥ 763	W  E	♥ Q854
♦ 63	S	♦ J
♣ Q983	♠ K5	♣ J1042
	♥ AKJ9	
	♦ AKQ1042	
	♣ 7	

The auction I recommend is 2C – 2D (waiting) – 3D – 4D (forcing) – 4H (Q-bid) – 5C (Q-bid) – 6D. Some notes about the auction.

- Other more sophisticated methods (e.g. 2NT response showing 8 – 10 points, 2H response showing 7+ points, 2S showing 3 “controls” with A counting as 2 and K counting as 1) should also reach the optimum contract.
- A raise to 4 of a minor after partner opens 2C and rebids 3 of the minor is forcing. Why must it be forcing? Answer – playing 4D as non-forcing (to be able to “stop on a dime”) is much less useful (because it comes up much less frequently) than playing it as forcing (thereby giving the partnership room to investigate slam).
- If I held the North hand, I would not be willing to stop short of slam unless it could be clearly established (via Q-bidding) that there were 2 fast losers.

- I was disappointed that none of the seven declarers in diamonds made 7. For instance, after a trump lead: win in hand, then lead a diamond to the 9 and lead a low spade from the dummy – West better take his A or he will lose it.
- If North had the king of spades instead of the Queen, he should convert 6D to 6NT at match-points but pass 6D at IMPs.

Board 28:

Dlr: N	♠ Q4	
Vul: N-S	♥ QJ97	
	♦ A52	
	♣ K742	
♠ J8765	N	♠ AK932
♥ 84	W  E	♥ A10
♦ 106	S	♦ 9743
♣ 10963	♠ 10	♣ QJ
	♥ K6532	
	♦ KQJ8	
	♣ A86	

At my table, North opened 1C, my partner overcalled 1S and South made the normal bid of 2H. I now jumped to 4S and everyone passed! The defense played 2 rounds of clubs before leading hearts, so my partner escaped for -50 (down 1).

The other results were all over the map. Five North-South pairs were in hearts, but only one was in 4H. The others were in 2H (one pair), 5H (two pairs) and 6 hearts (one pair). As you can see, 4H makes 4 but no more. Besides our -50, two other East-West pairs were -300 in 4S doubled and one East-West pair was in 5S doubled (also -300).

Here are my thoughts about the hand:

- It's an open question as to whether North should open her "bad 12" hand. I would pass it playing IMPS or playing weak NT. I would open it, however, at match-points and playing strong NT (as was the case here).
- I like the "law of total tricks." Here, I expected my partner to have 5+ spades for his overcall, so I bid 4S (i.e. contracted for 10 tricks when holding 10 trump). If we were vulnerable, I would content myself with a jump to 3S (pre-emptive).

- South should double 4S. Her opponents are clearly stealing, so North-South need to collect the maximum possible plus score.
- What about North after South doubles 4S? Answer – pass. Her hand started as a “bad 12” but has now become a “bad 10” with the Q of spades likely to be worthless. It just isn’t good enough to underwrite an 11-trick contract. On the other hand, it only takes 4 tricks to set 4S – and that should be no problem given partner’s strong bidding. (If my hand had settled for a pre-emptive jump to 3S, then South should still double, but here North should remove to 4H).