

The Big Payoff

Slam bidding at bridge



The Big Payoff – Slam Bidding at Bridge

By Bill Treble
(Masterpoint Press, Toronto, Canada, 2017, soft cover, 244 pages)

\$34.95 post-free from Paul Lavings Bridgegear or \$30 from the NSWBA book stall

I have been looking at this book on my shelves out of the corner of my eye for some time now, thinking it would be a good read as Treble won the 2017 US Teachers Association Award for his “Defending at Bridge – A First Course”.

The author first looks at what it takes to make a slam, examining balanced hand situations, upgrading with a bit of shape or good intermediate cards and degrading with poor shape and lack of intermediates. Then he looks at distributional slams, the power of 5-4, 5-5 and 6-4 trump fits, high cards in partner’s suits and fitting shapes. There are many full example hands at the end of each chapter and Treble always discusses the play and defence as well the bidding.

In the cue-bidding chapter I was surprised that on the first round of cue-bidding he only shows aces, as opposed to first and second round controls. However the method certainly seems to have a number of advantages. Chapters follow on major-suit and minor-suit auctions and auctions after 1NT and strong hands. In the last chapter of the book Treble revisits the Bridge World debate between Ron Klinger and Jeff Rubens from the 1970s on whether Fast Arrival or Picture Jumps are the best method of giving preference in strong auctions.

This auction from the chapter “Ask and Blast” was impressive in its simplicity:

♠ 962	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ AJ
		N									
W			E								
		S									
♥ 74		♥ KQT952									
♦ KJ8743		♦ A2									
♣ 84		♣ QT5									
♠ Q742											
♥ AJ8											
♦ 6											
♣ AKJ76											
		♠ KT85									
		♥ 63									
		♦ QT95									
		♣ 932									

W	N	E	S
		1H	P
2C	P	2H	P
4D	P	4NT	P
5H	P	5NT	P
6C	P	7H	//

This is a 2/1 GF auction so 2♣ is forcing to game and East’s 2♥ rebid is unlimited. The author is strong on splinters and West’s 4♦ is music to East’s ears. 5NT guaranteed possession of all the five keycards plus the queen of trumps and 6♣ showed the king of clubs.

If you wanted to focus on one area that would improve your game and your results I would strongly recommend slam bidding. If you missed the grand slam and only played 6♥ on similar hands at the recent Coffs Harbour Congress you would probably gain 4-5 imps against the datums. If you bid 7♥ you would most likely gain 12 imps.

None of the example hands are biased towards the author’s preferred methods and he is quite happy to miss the odd difficult slam. I can’t think of one area of slam bidding the author has not thoroughly discussed. Kickback, Exclusion, auctions after Stayman and transfers, inverted minors, Jacoby 2NT are all there and the list goes on. A fascinating book and highly recommended.