

To bid, or not to bid ...?

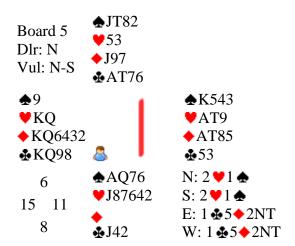
Let's start with a question that is as much about your bidding style as about right *vs.* wrong. You're vulnerable, they are not. Partner deals and passes, RHO opens 1D and this is your hand:

♣ AQ76 ♥ J87642 ♦ J42

What will you do?

The Trumps Teams played in the first week of July was convincingly won by WATTS (Marlene Watts - Michael Prescott, Susan Crompton - Peter Gill). They had a solid victory over our team in round 4, to which the board shown below was a major contributor. The South hand raises important questions:-

- 1) with a distributional hand and a long suit, do you "get in there" every time you can?
- 2) is a third-seat overcall more about competing for the part-score or helping partner with the defence when the opponents win the contract?



Susan Crompton and Peter Gill found their way to an over-optimistic 6D contract, but I had overcalled a heart, so partner eschewed his natural lead of a spade and led my suit instead. The spade loser vanished, as did partner's equanimity. At the 14 tables in play, 12 reached contracts of 3NT or 5D, all successful, including our team-mates. The 21 IMP swing was almost the entire margin of the match!

A small informal poll leads me to believe that there's about a 50-50 split on whether or not one should overcall, with the likelihood being inversely proportional to age ...

This genuine slam hand was something of a bidding challenge for the field:



After 1D-(2S weak jump overcall)-3C, one way to reach slam is via 4-minor keycard (aka Minorwood) in which case opener bids 4C which gets 4H (one keycard), then 4S (asking for the queen) which gets 5H (queen plus that king) and then it's up to North whether to play in 6C or the somewhat safer 6D. Only 3 of 14 pairs reached 6 of either minor – in our match it was a flat board with both NS pairs making 12 tricks in 5D.

^^^^^

Now for a hand requiring some thoughtful defence:

You pass as dealer, as do LHO and partner. East opens 1NT (15-17 hcp) and it continues 2C-2H-2S-2NT-3NT. What do you lead?

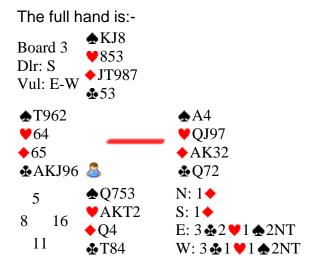
♣Q753 **♥**AKT2 **♦**Q4 **♣**T84

Well, you don't think much of your 4-card suits after this auction, so perhaps a minor? I led the C4 and saw this:

♠T962 **♥**64 **♦**65 **♣**AKJ96

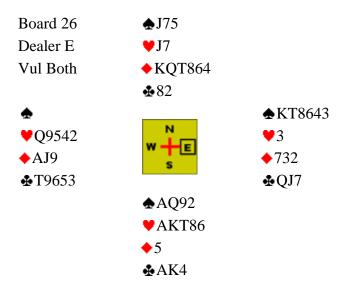
Declarer took the lead on table with the ace and played a heart to the jack and my king. Now what? Perhaps the other minor might do better, I thought, so I switched to the \blacklozenge Q. Partner played the \blacklozenge J on this and declarer took the ace, then played the \clubsuit Q and a third club to the jack, followed by two more clubs on which he pitched 2 small diamonds. Partner meanwhile pitched \blacklozenge 7, 8 and 9 as I threw a small spade and a small heart. Declarer now played another heart to the queen and my ace. Take the chair: what do you return?

By helpfully playing the jack, partner has told you that was his highest card, and from his subsequent discards you know he started with \$\ildestructer J10987\$. Therefore declarer started with \$\int AKxx\$, so you now know about 12 of his high card points. If he has the \$\int AJ\$ there isn't much hope, but if he only holds the \$\int A\$ or \$\int KJ\$ then you can get 2 spades to go with the 3 heart tricks, if you switch to a spade right now. Sadly, I got this wrong. The hand was also from our match against the WATTS team. Both declarers made 3NT for a flat board. In fact of the 7 pairs that reached 3NT, 6 made it, but that still doesn't excuse my defence.



Finally, just for fun, here's a hilarious hand that's not from the Trumps Teams, but

was played a couple of weeks earlier in the NSWBA Butler pairs:



As East, I opened a fairly miserable multi-2D. The subsequent auction was too gruesome to describe here, but NS reached 4S, after having been doubled in 4H along the way. Feeling that I'd made quite enough trouble with my opening, I was quite happy to wait for whatever penalty would now be coming our way, so I passed rather than doubling. I'm still waiting. Parter led \$5. Gary Lane proceeded to play the hand in a manner that ought to have made Deep Finesse feel jealous. Picking me for 6-1-3-3 shape, he took \$A, then played \$A\$ and a diamond towards dummy. Partner rose with the \$A\$ and played another club to the king. Now declarer ruffed his third club, played \$KQ\$ throwing 2 hearts, and led a heart towards hand. At this stage, East was reduced to holding only trumps and had to ruff, then was forced to exit a trump into the choice of tenaces. The result was that declarer eventually lost only a diamond and 2 trump tricks! Unsurprisingly, absolutely no one else in the room played in 4S, but Gary was able to demonstrate just why Deep Finesse could assert that 4S was cold on a 6-0 break ...