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EDUCATION AND ENTERTAINMENT FOR BRIDGE PLAYERS

BIDDING 6-PACK 1st July 09

Problems

Board 3	E-W Vul
♠ T7	<i>East South West North</i>
♥ AKJ983	Pass Pass Pass Pass
♦ 854	??
♣ A5	

Board 3	E-W Vul
♠ 643	<i>South West North East</i>
♥ 6	Pass Pass Pass 1♥
♦ AQJT	??
♣ QJT94	

Board 5	N-S Vul
♠ T764	<i>West North East South</i>
♥ Q3	Pass Pass 2NT Pass
♦ K982	??
♣ KJ5	

Board 17	None Vul
♠ QJ742	<i>South West North East</i>
♥ K432	1NT Pass
♦ T2	??
♣ 95	

Board 21	N-S Vul
♠ AT954	<i>North East South West</i>
♥ AJ8	??
♦ KJ7	
♣ K7	

Board 27	None Vul
♠ KQT7	<i>East South West North</i>
♥ 97	Pass 1♥ Pass
♦ 86	1♠ Pass 4♥ Pass
♣ AQ953	??

Solutions

Board 3	E-W Vul
♠ T7	<i>East South West North</i>
♥ AKJ983	Pass Pass Pass
♦ 854	??
♣ A5	

You are probably familiar with the Rule of 15. You add your HCP to the number of Spades to calculate your Cansino points (known to some as Pearson points). If the Cansino count is 15 or more then the hand is suitable for a 4th seat opening. By that reckoning East should pass this deal out, but that hardly makes sense with such playing strength. Surely this hand is worth opening 1♥, in the reasonable expectation that the extra Heart will be sufficient compensation for having to compete with the higher-ranking Spades.

Another reason to break the Rule of 15 is that E-W still might have game, whereas that seems most unlikely for the opponents. On the actual deal, N-S do indeed have a Spade fit, but E-W have 10 tricks in Hearts, N-S only 8 in Spades.

Board 3	E-W Vul
♠ 643	<i>South West North East</i>
♥ 6	Pass Pass Pass 1♥
♦ AQJT	??
♣ QJT94	

What is your choice, having passed initially and then heard 1♥ on your right? It seems that South needs to do something, all the more so as her side is White vs Red:

- **2♣?** The suit is certainly good enough but it seems that South should be offering a choice to Partner.
- **Double?** This is definitely a possibility and might be the choice of many. But three small Spades is not very appetizing, the danger is that North will over-compete in Spades with a moderate 4-card holding.
- **2NT?** This would show the minors but also a more distributional hand, and perhaps a weaker one.
- **1NT?** That would be our choice, also showing the minors (as a passed hand). That's where all the values are, and that's what we want led if West ends up declaring some number of No Trump.

Board 5	N-S Vul
♠ T764	<i>West North East South</i>
♥ Q3	Pass 2NT Pass
♦ K982	??
♣ KJ5	

Is the West hand good enough for a slam try opposite a 20-21 2NT opening? Not quite, it's a point or two shy. The next question is "Should West try for a 4-4 Spade fit?" to which the answer is a resounding "No!" Here's why:

- E-W have more points than they need to make game, and there is an excellent chance they can make loads of tricks without the need for a ruff.
- West's doubleton is the ♥Q, which reduces the likelihood that there is a useful ruff in that suit.
- The Spades are awful, and there is a good chance that No Trump will actually play better than Spades, particularly if East's Spades are not too hot, and/or the missing trumps are 4-1.
- Bidding 3NT directly gives the opening leader no useful information.

Board 17	None Vul
♠ QJ742	<i>South West North East</i>
♥ K432	1NT Pass
♦ T2	??
♣ 95	

South has three ways to go:

- *Transfer to Spades*: This ensures that at least a 5-2 fit will be reached, but runs the risk of missing a more profitable 4-4 Heart fit.
- *Garbage Stayman*: Here, South bids 2♣ and, when she hears 2♦ from Partner, she bids 2♥, which says "pick-a-major". This approach gets N-S to their 4-4 fit when they have one, but risks the occasional 4-2 fit when, as here, Opener is 2-2 in the majors. The good news, on this particular hand, is that North will choose Spades, getting to the 5-2 fit after all.
- *Modified Garbage Stayman*: Some play a version of Garbage Stayman whereby the Hearts are always at least as long as the Spades, which reduces the chances on ending up in the 4-2 fit.

Anyway, there are pros and cons in each of the above, but on this deal all roads will lead to 2♣ played from the North side.

Board 21	N-S Vul
♠ AT954	<i>North East South West</i>
♥ AJ8	??
♦ KJ7	
♣ K7	

If you are going to play in 3NT, it usually pays to tell the opponents as little as possible along the way, and it usually also helps to make the strong hand Declarer. North, with two minor suit Kings to protect, opens 1NT rather than 1♣, and is suitably rewarded when East has a blind lead against 3NT. On the actual deal, after this unhelpful auction, East will lead a Spade, as it happens. That will be an easy 11 tricks and +660. Things work less well if North makes the mistake of opening 1♣. Now one of these bad things will happen:

- *Either*, N-S will end up in 4♣, a contract which makes 10 tricks and +620 with normal play.
- *Or*, N-S will avoid the 4♣ trap, but, against 3NT the defense will be warned off a Spade lead. 10 tricks and +630 with normal play.

Board 27	None Vul
♠ KQT7	<i>East South West North</i>
♥ 97	Pass 1♥ Pass
♦ 86	1♠ Pass 4♥ Pass
♣ AQ953	??

Let's assume that E-W are playing a 2/1 system, making the East hand not quite good enough for an initial 2♣ response. Now, over 4♥, what's your choice? West obviously has self-sufficient Hearts and a very strong hand, and East is good enough to make a slam try. But let's not use Roman Key Card here. East wants to suggest slam and let West decide. The best way to do this would be to bid 5♣, showing a Club control. Is it clear that this is a slam try in Hearts and not an attempt to escape 4♥? It certainly should be. West is quite happy to play Hearts even opposite a void, and subsequent suit bids are slam tries, not alternative contracts.

As it happens, some Wests will open the West hand 2♣, after which the auction starts:

<i>East West</i>
2♣ 3♣
4♥ ??

West's 4♥ says "Minimum hand, Hearts are trumps". East is far too good to pass here, and can bid 4♣. As before, this bid is a slam try in Hearts, not an attempt to escape Hearts.