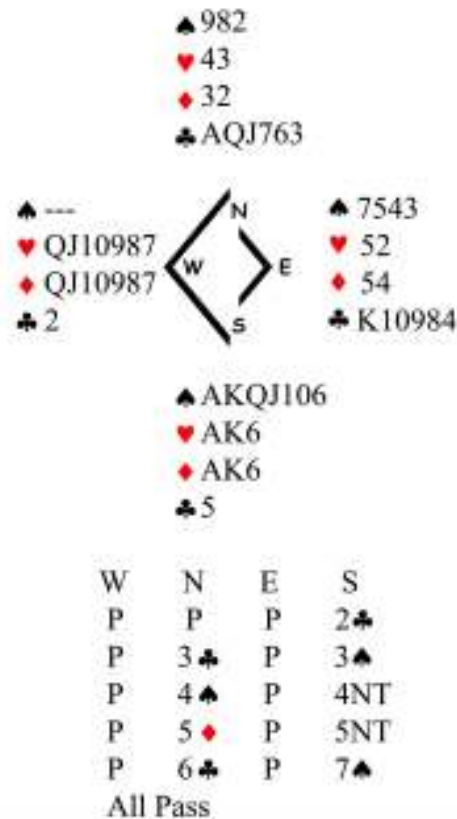


163. Too Strong to Preempt

Published on page 2 of the Trail Times, Wednesday, November 6, 2013

Today, I will take a break from the beginner bridge columns and discuss a hand I gave to my Tuesday night workshop in Warfield.



--East West Vulnerable--

It did not occur to me when I made the hands that West would ever try to preempt. One never pre-empts with a five-loser hand. Opposite certain minimum openings from partner, this will make slam. Hardly worth a pre-empt!

Furthermore, one never pre-empts with a two-suited hand or a hand that makes game opposite a minimum opener from partner. In addition, one normally does not think of game when partner makes a weak two bid and one only has 12 to 14 points.

West passes. North is too flat to pre-empt and a weak two in clubs is not available. The suit is fine in quality, but with a six card club suit, one should be a little more distributional to open three clubs. This is a third seat pre-empt only.

South has a strong two club opener. This is one of the few cases, North elects not to use two diamond as a waiting bid. Instead he makes a positive response in clubs.

A positive response shows two of the top three honours and a six-card minor without exception. Exceptions are common to bridge rules, but not here. A positive response in a major shows a five-card suit. North later supports spades, so South knows North has six clubs and three spades, so he has at most four red cards.

South asks for aces and North has one. South bids seven spades.

Lead:

Should West lead his singleton club? No! The contract is seven spades. West has no trump, and his partner will never be able to get in to give him a ruff. Singleton leads are nice when they work, but they become riskier the weaker partner is.

Even if West had a trump he should never get his ruff because declarer is in seven. It would be better to lead a long unbid suit and hope partner can ruff that.

The play:

Is there a finesse or ruffing finesse possible in clubs? A ruffing finesse is possible. Should you try it? No. One should ruff the two losers. That was the plan when you bid the grand. One did not need to ask for kings, but it is a good habit to get into when you have all the aces and king and queen of trump.

Cash AK of hearts and diamonds before ruffing. When declarer can see one singleton, there is a 68% chance the other three hands have a singleton (better than a finesse which is 50%). Distributional hands in declarer's hand or dummy often create distribution in an opponent's hand. I call this distributional echoes. So it is not unlikely that someone could have a doubleton diamond and a doubleton heart. One should play safely.

The result:

Seven spades makes seven for +1510. Nice grand!

Note:

What happens if West interferes with the bidding? How much do the opponents get for five hearts by West doubled?

Hint: With a forcing defense, down three is not even close to the correct answer.

Answer:

In five hearts doubled, West must ruff the spade opening lead and lose the king of trump. He loses the ace of clubs and must overruff the ruff of the king of clubs. He now loses the ace of trump and must ruff another spade. Declarer now has only one trump left and must kick out the ace and king of diamonds. Declarer will only win four trump and one diamond, down six vulnerable for -1700 (200, 500, 800, 1100, 1400, 1700).