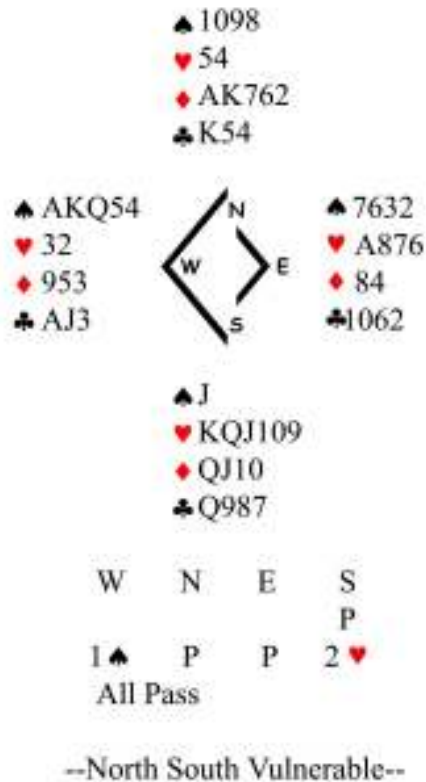


126. Five Card Majors

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When one picks up a balanced hand with 15 to 17 high card points, one opens one notrump. What about all the other hands that are 12 points or better?

Five-Card Majors:

We play a system called five card majors. In the past, an opening bid of one of a major (hearts or spades) showed a four-card suit or better. Today, this shows five cards in the major or longer and 12 to 21 points and often just 12 to 19 points.

The Bidding:

South would never consider a light opening because he has a lower ranking suit and is vulnerable. One has to recognize the limitations of these situations.

West has 14 high card points and five spades. He opens one spade. North passes and so does East. East needs a minimum, of 6 points to respond. Four-card support and five points including

an ace or king would also be enough to respond with a two spade bid, showing a real good five to nine points. Here East does not have even five points so he has nothing to say.

South cannot let the bidding pass out at such a low level and makes a balancing bid of two hearts which passes out. West would need a strong hand (18 points) to take further action when partner passes a direct bid.

The Opening Lead:

West should lead the ace of spades and force the declarer to ruff spades in the long trump hand. This is called tapping the declarer. The ace wins and West plays the queen.

The Play:

South throws a club on both the queen and king of spades and then ruffs the fourth spade in dummy. East will play the seven and six of spades first under partner's ace and queen to unblock spades.

South exits dummy with a heart and East wins the ace. A duck by East is not necessary because declarer does not have a heart to exit dummy. East exits a club which West wins and exits a spade. Declarer ruffs in his hand, draws trump and claims.

The result:

Two hearts making for +110

An alternate line of play:

Had South ruffed the second spade in his long trump hand, he would have to ruff another spade upon East winning the ace of trumps. East would also duck trump once to exhaust dummy of trump before winning the ace so as not to let declarer ruff a fourth round of spades in dummy.

Declarer will not be able to draw trump and will win four trump and two diamonds before East ruffs in with his last trump. East exits a spade and defense wins two trump, three spades and the ace of clubs before dummy wins the last trick with the king of clubs.

The result:

Two hearts down one for -100.

Notes:

-There was nothing declarer could do about losing three spades, but by pitching clubs, he ensures his contract.

-All the bridge columns may be viewed at <http://watsongallery.ca>.