

Learning Points – GNT 7NT when the Opponents Overcall?

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S Deals

Both Vul

♠ KQ
♥ AKQ8
♦ KJ102
♣ Q43

← Steve

Saturday Afternoon July 18, 2008. Grand National Teams Flight B Semi-Final Round. Special thanks to my District 11 teammates: Mike Purcell, Lorna Davis, Arun Goyal, Arachna Goyal and Vijay Vasudevan. My partner for this hand is Lorna Davis.

♠ 762	N	♠ J1098
♥ J6		♥ 9743
♦ Q864	W 23 E	♦ 9753
♣ J752	S	♣ 10

Lorna and I played 2/1 Game Force with a few gadgets to protect a weak responder's actions. We hadn't played as a partnership prior to this final quarter of the GNT's. Our opponents decided to make things interesting.

Lorna →

♠ A543
♥ 1052
♦ A
♣ AK986

Deep Finesse:
NS: 7♣, 6♠,
7N, 5♦, 7♥

The Bidding

West's psychic overcall had unexpected impact on what should have been a straightforward auction to slam. North's negative double is automatic, showing 4 hearts. South's 2♣ is the least of all evils, and North bids 4NT convinced there are 50 HCP in this deck. 5♦ showed 1 or 4 Key Cards. Since North held 3 kings, South must have 4 Key cards. There just aren't that many points elsewhere for partner's opening bid. North's 6NT came in part from reading too much into the 1♠ overcall, and to succumbing to fatigue.

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♠!!!	Double	Pass
2♣	Pass	4N	Pass
5♦ ¹	Pass	6N	Pass Out

East leads ♠ J

1 = 1 or 4 Keycards

The Play

North won the opening lead in hand, and led a small ♣ to dummy. The ♣10 from East was a significant card. Did it mean ♣J10 doubleton or was it a singleton? The hand might turn on the decision. Declarer fretted over missing 7NT. 35 HCP between the 2 hands meant it was likely both teams would bid slam. Declarer chose to play for the drop – purposefully going against the standard play. Restricted choice strongly suggests playing West for the ♣J and the remaining spots. When the ♣ situation developed as advertised, declarer pegged his hopes on a 3-3 heart break that wasn't going to happen. The opponents were able to win a ♣ and a ♠ for down one on a very makeable slam. We lost 17 Imps on the board that should have been a tie. ☹

Post Mortem

Credit North for compounding several errors on this hand:

- 1) Trust Partner's bidding, not your opponents. North knows that South has 4 key cards. North should think: 3 ♠, 3 ♥, 2 ♦, and 5 ♣ make 13 tricks. Since all Aces and Kings are counted, and since North owns 3 Q's and South has a 5 card ♣ suit, bidding 7 NT makes sense. Do it!
- 2) Having failed to bid 7 NT, North should work to make the best play under the circumstances. The right play to trick 2 is to finesse West for the ♣J. When that wins, 13 tricks are available off the top. Playing against the field is usually an all or nothing proposition.
- 3) Instead of adopting the false choice to test hearts when the ♣J does not drop doubleton, declarer should clear clubs and present the defense with their trick in that suit. This is the simplest way to make 6NT.
- 4) When tempted by a high risk strategy (playing for ♣J10 doubleton), go back to the plan for the hand. Declarer already counted 13 tricks. No need to deviate from logic. The best play for 5 ♣ tricks is the restricted choice finesse in ♣s at trick 2.

When fatigue sets in, it's doubly important to create a sound plan and take time to read the information from each trick. Go a breath more slowly, and you'll make it to the next caffeine break!