

Learning Points – What a Way to End the Day

by Steve Moese; edited by Mike Purcell

November 11, 2008

E Deals
None Vul

				←Mike
		N		
		W 14 E		
		S		
		♠ AKJ10		
		♥ AJ2		
		♦ A6		
		♣ KQ106		
Steve→				

Sunday November 9, 2008. Flight B Swiss Teams Louisville KY – Elizabeth IN Regional. Thanks to our teammates Jerry and Joann Katz with whom we have won many and lost several, and always enjoy competing as a team.

Finally, the 49th and last hand of the day and last one from 8 sessions in a row. It's Sunday evening and home is 2 hours away. After 3 days of average plus bridge (and couple of opportunities for wins squandered) we are in the last session of a 7x7 Swiss Teams event against competent opponents. This is an A/B/C event. We are a B team and we already have two losses – one to a weaker team in the very 1st match and one to a top Flight A team by 22 IMPS. With 107 Victory Points after the 6th round, we need a blitz to have any chance of finishing in the top 5.

East	South	West	North
Pass	1♣ ¹	Pass	1♦ ²
Pass	2N ³	Pass	3♣ ⁴
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠
	Passed Out		

Through the first six hands we have crafted enough of an edge that a win is likely, but will the margin be big enough? *Echoes of a 1st round loss against inferior competition in the Friday AM Compact Knock Outs still sting.*

West leads ♦K

- 1 = 16+ HCP Any Shape
- 2 = 0-7 HCP Any Shape
- 3 = 22-23 HCP Any Shape
- 4 = Stayman

Then this rock crusher shows up. Thanks. Things often go wrong with hands like these but what could hold us back here? Now's not the time for fatigue to set in. This hand could be a match breaker.

The Bidding

While Mike and I play Precision, this hand is one many 2/1 and Standard American Players handle in similar fashion. Opener's 2N rebid shows 22-23 HCP. Many Standard or 2/1 bidders would show the same hand by bidding 2C first (22+ HCP). Some would open 2NT using a 20-22 HCP range. Playing in the 4-4 ♠ fit will work where both hands have complementary shortness. Since North cannot have as many as 8 HCP nor distribution more wild than 5431 (and no 5 card major), prospects for small slam aren't even worth thinking about for South.

Standard & 2/1 Approach

East	South	West	North
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦ ¹
Pass	2N ²	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠

- 1 = Waiting or negative
- 2 = 22-24 HCP

The Play

Dummy turns up a bare minimum game bid with few bright prospects. In fact the hand patterns are mirrors distribution. → Bad news. When distributions match exactly in all suits, ruffing in either hand is impossible without some help from opponents. We are going to need a lot of help.

Ducking the ♦K is attractive since a lead by East might cause a premature decision in hearts. East plays the ♦5 and South the ♦6 West continues with the ♦J. That shows the ♦Q, and South must win this trick. East plays the ♦2 encouraging ♦. Before using the one and only entry to dummy, lets take stock. There are 5 possible losers, one in each suit, 2 in ♣. Cashing a high spade

				←Mike
		N		
		W 28 E		
		S		
		♠ 9632		
		♥ K34		
		♦ 78		
		♣ 9842		
		N		
		W 28 E		
		S		
		♠ AKJ10		
		♥ AJ2		
		♦ A6		
		♣ KQ106		
Steve→				

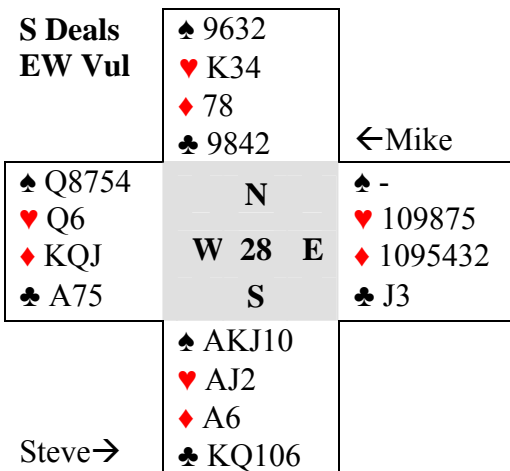
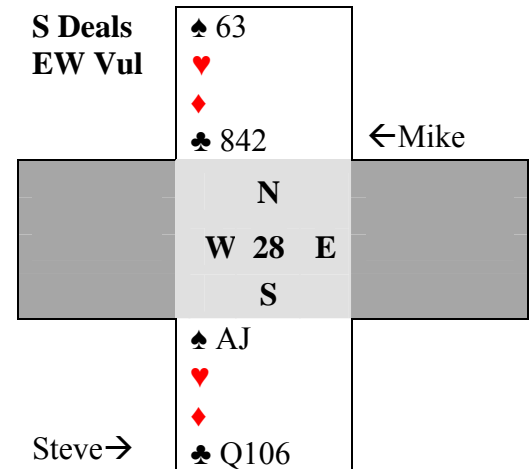
might drop a singleton ♠Q, and increase chances slightly if East started with a doubleton queen. South cashes the ♠K, West contributes the ♠4 North the ♠2 and East discards the ♥10. Ouch. Spades are breaking 5-0. We have to get help and luck just to hold this to down one. When in an apparently hopeless position, the only thing to do is assume the rest of the cards are right. South leads a small heart to dummy's ♥K opponents following low.

Finessing clubs is the only productive choice left from dummy's one and only entry. We need a doubleton honor with East to hold losers to 1 – a modest goal. Leading to the ♣K seems right – it's not clear East has the insight to duck with the ♣A. When East plays low on the ♣9, South plays the ♣K and West wins the ♣A. South can now hope West switches to a heart. West ponders the choice for a while, then places the ♦Q on the table. Finally a small edge. South uses this ruff-sluff opportunity to eliminate the ♥ guess by pitching a small ♥ from dummy and ruffing in hand while East follows. The ♥A fetches dummy's last ♥ and one from each opponent. A small ♥ to the board causes West to think – finally ruffing low. North overruffs gratefully.

With 5 tricks left the lead is in Dummy at this position →

A small club fells the ♣J from East South winning the ♣Q! The ♣10 must cash and the 4th ♣ will force West to ruff as s/he has only trumps left.

West stops for a few minutes staring at the ♣6. The ♠7 falls from West's hand and South shows the ♠AJ tenace. End plays are a wonderful thing.



Post Mortem

←Here's the full deal. Our opponents bid to 2NT on these cards, down 2 for minus 100. We don't know their auction. Passing with North's hand is conservative but not awful after a 22+ HCP 2♣ opening. Notice however that if the opening bid is a 20-22 HCP 2N, then responder has even less motivation to check for a spade fit. 20 opposite 3 is not enough for game. Similar uncertainty exists for those using 20+ as their 2♣ opener minimum strength.

Our 4♠ contract making 4 for plus 420 meant a gain of 11 IMPs on this hand. This delivered a 21 IMP win and 28 victory points out of 30. Our total of 135 Victory Points after the 7th session was enough for 3rd overall in B, missing 2nd by a single point!

Happily, Cincinnati Bridge Association members placed 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 6th in flight B!

Good to know the competition is quite keen back home.

Better still having friends on all four teams!!!