

Learning Points – You Never Can Tell

by Steve Moese; edited by Mike Purcell

November 12, 2008

E Deals
None Vul

Pat			Steve
	N	♠ 10	
	W 14 E	♥ AKJ752	
	S	♦ A7	
		♣ KQ32	

Saturday November 8, 2008. Stratified Board a Match Flight B Teams Louisville KY – Elizabethtown IN Regional. Our team is Paul Pshesang and Joann Katz. My partner is Pat Dutson.

Board a Match is a team game that preserves many aspects of match point pairs. The single goal is to get any higher score than the team you face they boards you play together. Each board is scored win, tie, or loss against one other team. There is no scoring across the field. This means that a bad board is a loss, and a really bad board is still just a loss.

The Bidding

Pat and I are playing 2/1 Game Force in Hardy's style. Pat's raise to 5♥ typically promises a void. With extra trump length and shortness in a side suit he would have bid 4♥ at his first opportunity. South's raise to 5♠ is intriguing. The opponents are sound players. This appears to be a 20+ Trick hand (Law of Total Tricks). I now expect lots of distribution. Opponents would not bid 5 without a reasonable chance of making or a definite chance of sacrificing successfully. East's 6♥ bid is far from automatic.

East	South	West	North
1♥	Pass	2♥	4♠
Pass	Pass	5♥	Pass
Pass	5♠	Pass	Pass
6♥	Double	Passed Out	

South leads ♥10

The hand was almost bought for 5♥. With partner's bid it would appear all points are working (yes, I suspect partner has a ♠ void as unlikely as that appears with my singleton opposite). 6♥ might be the right action. First, it might make, and 2nd the opponents might bid on to 6♠ which looks to be a rich set for us. They can't have much in the side suits.

The Play

South's ♥ lead surprises. I had expected a side suit lead aimed at scoring a ruff in North's hand. Partner faces a very serviceable dummy. I would have greedily wanted a 4th trump perhaps, but this is just what partner represented.

Looks like we have no losers in trumps regardless of split, and no loser in spades after an early ruff. However we have an apparent loser in both minors. There are two ways to eliminate a loser here. One is to develop clubs. The other is to finesse in diamonds. East drew 2 rounds of trump ending in hand and ruffed the spade. Declarer chose the diamond finesse and eventually went down one. 6♥^X down 1 scored minus 100. Both partner and I were sure we lost the board. After all the bidding seemed pretty crazy on the surface.

Post Mortem

On reflection, Declarer should play ♣ 1st with the intent to throw the losing ♦ on the long ♣. The defense cannot thwart that plan by holding up the ♣A until declarer's last ♣ because the spade ruff is an entry to the good club. While there is a slim chance that the ♦ finesse would still be available it's unnecessary! The real difficulty is that declarer ruffed the ♠ prematurely. East should have left that 3rd trump in dummy for transportation once the ♣ situation was clear. That extra entry now makes the contract impregnable

E Deals			
None Vul			
Pat			Steve
♠ -	N	♠ 10	
♥ Q98	W 14 E	♥ AKJ752	
♦ QJ1042	S	♦ A7	
♣ J9754		♣ KQ32	

after the opening lead of a trump! The good news here is that South did not cash the ♣A 1st – a sure set awaits when partner can ruff the 1st or 2nd round of ♣.

E Deals
None Vul

♠ AK985432

♥ 64

♦ 965

Pat

♣ -

Steve

♠ -

♥ Q98

♦ QJ1042

♣ J9754

N

W 14 E

S

♠ 10

♥ AKJ752

♦ A7

♣ KQ32

♠ QJ76

♥ 103

♦ K83

♣ A1086

Deep Finesse

NS: 4♠

E 4♥; W 5♥;

EW: 4♦, 5♣

←**Here's the full deal.** Our partners bid to 4♠ and were allowed to play there, making 4 for Plus 420 and a win on the board!

You can never tell.

East was technically right that the ♦ finesse offered an a priori 50% chance, while the 2-2 ♣ split was at best a 40.7% chance. It turns out that was not the right comparison.

The penalty double by South should cause East to reconsider the rightness of the ♦ finesse in any case. A better plan would show that ♣ will run sufficiently with any ♣ break as long as the

♠ ruff entry is preserved in dummy. While making 6♥ doubled would not have changed the result on the board, it would have delivered a big emotional lift to our partnership.

Sometimes that's even more important to play for.....