

Learning Points – Stumbling into a Grand Slam the Easy Way

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by Steve Moese; edited by Mike Purcell

N Deals	♠ K10973			
EW Vul	♥ 1072			
	♦ 10876			
Steve	♣ 7			Mike
♠ A862		N		♠ Q5
♥ 943				♥ AKQJ6
♦ KQJ4		W 25 E		♦ A2
♣ Q6			S	♣ AKJ4
	♠ J4			Duplimate:
	♥ 85			EW: 7N, 7♥
	♦ 953			
	♣ 1098532			

January 13, 2009. Tuesday Evening Open Pairs, Rob Weidenfeld, Director, Cincinnati Bridge Association Bridge Center, 2860 Cooper Road, Cincinnati, OH 45241 (513) 631-8070 . 19 Tables across 2 sections.

Conventional wisdom says that you don't bid grand slams at match point pairs unless you can count 13 tricks (or you are sure most of the field will be there). This is a study in bidding considerations – and how mistakes don't always get in the way of success.

The Bidding

Don't be off-put by our Precision auction. We'll cover the standard approach below.

North	East	South	West
Pass	1♣ ¹	Pass	2♣ ²
Pass	4♣ ³	Pass	4♠ ⁴
Pass	7N	Passed Out	

South leads ♠ J

- 1 = 16 HCP+, any shape (not 16-17 or 23-24 Balanced)
- 2 = 8+ HCP, at least 1 4 card major. May be 4M5m31
- 3=What's you C holding? 3= How many controls
- 22+ HCP (A=2, K=1)
- 4 = Hx or xxx 4 = 4 Controls

We had a mistake that happened to be harmless. Holding 8 top controls and 24 HCP East inquired about top controls immediately. There are 12 A/K controls in the deck. Typically 10 are enough for a small slam, and 11 might enable a grand slam with suit length and good Q's and J's. As East bid and heard the auction, EW owned all 12 controls. East's 2Q and 2 J's along with 5 ♥ should enable 13 tricks in NT.

West misunderstood East's 2nd bid to be a strong two bid in ♣, asking for West's specific ♣ holding. Thinking he was showing the ♣Qx (or ♣xxx) West replied to a different conversation. The irony here is that West's actual holding made the missing ♠K irrelevant to the final contract.

2/1 Game Force and Standard auctions would follow a path somewhat like this. Blackwood here is only partly useful – knowing about K's and Q's is important to the final decision and cue bidding started early enough can tell you what you need. If you employ Blackwood instead of high level cue bidding then West will likely face the final decision – do we have enough tricks for grand slam? Holding 5 cover cards (1♠, 3♦, 1♣) YES should be the resounding answer. Opener rates to have only 4 losers, right?

North	East	South	West
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♥	Pass	2N
Pass	3♣	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♠
Pass	5♣	Pass	5♦
Pass	5♥	Pass	6♣
Pass	7N	Passed Out	

The Play

Zzzzzzzz..... 14 tricks off the top. Surprisingly, 7N+7 and +2220 scored 7.5 of 8 Match Points.

Bd 11	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9
MP	0	7.5	2.5	2.5	7.5	2.5	5.5	2.5	5.5
Score	710	2220	1460	1460	2220	1460	1470	1460	1470

Post Mortem

West forgot the mnemonic for what East's bid meant. When the Italians developed the asking bid set for Blue Team club, they named them by the Greek alphabet. The sequence defines precedence. 4♣ was

either β asking top controls or ζ asking the specific \clubsuit holding. Since β comes before ζ , it had to be β !!
Won't get this one wrong next time partner!

Partner's bidding choice worked out OK. If West was broke and answered $4\spadesuit$, East could choose to bid $4\heartsuit$ or $4N$ to play. We have tools to involve partner in a more scientific exploration that on less helpful hands might keep us out of trouble. Give West the right 6 HCP and a slam might be possible, but biddable only through a strong 2-type Precision ζ -ask auction.

Learning Pointers:

- 1) Complex bidding systems can lead to memory errors. We can only hope they are as harmless as this one turned out.
- 2) Responder should count cover cards (high honors in suits partner is known to hold) when choosing to place the level of the final contract.
- 3) Often the Q's and J's determine whether a grand slam is right or not. Cuebidding Q's is feasible as long as you show A's and K's 1st.
- 4) Blackwood serves to keep us OUT of slam missing cashable Aces. Cue bidding might make it easier to decide if a grand slam is on.