

Learning Points – 5 or 6 You Decide

by Steve Moese (Mike Purcell ed.)

April 30, 2010

Declarer Play LEVEL: Intermediate

East Deals None Vul MPs	♠ 1065 ♥ K9 ♦ AK4 ♣ KQJ97	Steve
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Tuesday Evening STaC, April 27, 2010, Cincinnati Bridge Association Bridge Center, 2860 Cooper Road, Cincinnati, OH 45241 (513) 631-8070 . My partner is Mrs. Barbara Levinson.

♠	N	♠
♥	W 14 E	♥
♦	S	♦
♣		♣
	♠	
	♥	
	♦	
	♣	

The Bidding

You've drawn a 3=2=5=3 balanced 16 HCP 1N opener in 4th seat. Partner opens 1♥ passed to you. Playing 2/1 Game Force the 2♣ response is easy – game forcing and natural. East's double suggests a sacrifice in the remaining 2 suits. A risky bid if partner can redouble – here for penalties – the rewards are tremendous. Partner does not redouble and the auction continues...Partner's 3♣ raise is a pleasant surprise, and a pause for thought.

Barbara

East	South	West	North
Pass	1♥	Pass	2♣
Double	3♣	Pass	3♦ ¹
Pass	4♣	Pass	????

You try 3♦ thinking that a positional ♠ stopper in partner's hand is all that's needed for 3N. Control bidding when a minor has been bid and raised is either a search for NT or a slam try. Remember – "Game before Slam". Here there's no indication so far that we have enough strength for a small slam.

Partner's 4♣ bid is revealing. We play Fast Arrival. This means jumping to game (using up bidding space) is weak while lower bids are successively stronger. 4♣ should show a good hand with 4♣s or more and no ♠ stopper. Indeed I would expect partner to bid 5♣ directly with 2=5=2=4 or 3=5=1=4 minimums. Partner has extras. In fact partner should have a hand where a redouble of 2♣ might not score enough – the first slam hint. Since partner raised ♣s we can expect good trumps and *useful* shape. With lesser trumps, passing East's double (Forcing) is best. With unhelpful shape (spade length) I would expect partner to bid 3♥ not 4♣.

What should North do now?

- 4♦ won't help South know what we need.
- 4♥ sounds too much like a preference on 2 cards (likely to be passed by partner), and not a control bid on the way to 5 or 6 ♣s.
- 4♠ is out of the question – South already denied a ♠ stopper by bypassing both 3♠ and 3N, so this bid misrepresents our holdings.
- 4N is RKB 1430 and any hand with 2 key cards will force us to play in 6♣. North needs South to have 2 key cards **and** 2nd round control of ♠s. *Note: Partner cannot be empty in ♠s and have only 1 key card and an opening hand. (Try it!).* We shouldn't fear the 5♦ response (0 key cards) based on the bidding.

There is an old saw – when the decision is close bid 6 of a minor because 12 tricks don't require much more than 11 do. But let's not depend on old saws.

East Deals None Vul MPs	♠ 1065 ♥ K9 ♦ AK4 ♣ KQJ97	Steve												
♠ J987 ♥ 108765 ♦ 83 ♣ 102	<table border="1"> <tr> <td></td> <td>N</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>W</td> <td>1</td> <td>E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>4</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N		W	1	E		4			S		♠ AK432 ♥ 2 ♦ J9765 ♣ 84
	N													
W	1	E												
	4													
	S													
	♠ Q ♥ AQJ43 ♦ Q102 ♣ A653	Barbara												

NS: 3N, 4♥, 6♣

The ribbon of inference for North is: Partner failed to redouble 2♣, raised ♣s to the 3 level over the double, failed to bid 3♥, 3♠, 3N or 5♣ and chose to rebid 4♣ fast arrival this is a big bid). The value South likely has is useful shortness. Play partner for 1=5=3=4. Back conviction with action - bid 6♣.

The Play

East led the ♠A as expected and partner tabled the perfect hand for the contract and the auction. Trick 2 declarer claimed – 4♥ tricks, 3♦ tricks and 5♣ tricks. Even a 4-0 ♣ split could not get in the way. 6♣ making 6 for 920 was top board.

NS Pair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
MPs	7	4.5	4.5	0	4.5			2	1	4.5	8
Score	450	420	420	-100	420			400	-50	420	920

Post Mortem

Visualization helps the “5 or 6” decision. North knew partner held 9 cards in ♥s and ♣s. That left 4 cards in ♦s and ♠s. The only relevant question was what shape in the pointed suits best fit partner’s bidding. While 1=3 is less probable than 2=2 (1=3 and 3=1 are together more probable than 2=2), South could not imagine partner bidding 4♣ on either of these holdings (5♣ is more on target). With a hand wanting to stop short of game, South would bid 3♥ and not 4♣.

When opponent’s double in our strong auction, a redouble takes on special importance. Bypassing the redouble must mean bigger things are possible.

A useful treatment and convention for minor suit auctions:

- 1) **Opener’s jump shift** after responder’s 2/1 Natural Game Force is a **mini-splinter raise** for responder’s suit. This shows 12-15 HCP, 4+ trumps, 2nd round control or better of the 2 side suits, and 0/1 card in the strain named. With 16 or more, jump one more level (or keep the bidding open one more round).
- 2) **Minorwood** – 4 of the agreed minor is not an invitation nor an attempt to play at 4 when in a GF auction with an agreed minor suit. Instead treat these calls as RKB, using your favorite response scheme adjusted for the new starting point. Be sure to agree that both 4N and 5 of the agreed minor by the Asker are always to play in a Minorwood sequence.
- 3) **1430 RKB** – Consider this approach because it opens up more opportunity to use the Queen Ask and is more forgiving when searching for a minor suit slam (see Minorwood above).

Learning Points

1. Be aware of partner’s options after opponent’s double. Inferences abound.
2. Be clear about jumps to game – are they fast arrival or good hand with no outside controls?
3. Visualize what partner might have that’s consistent with the auction. This might help you narrow your choices and find a winning bid.

Key Words: Raise instead of redouble strong auction, Visualization, Jump shift splinters after 2/1 GF, Minorwood