

Learning Points – A Good Slam II

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Slams Level: Intermediate

♠ AJ4
♥ Q9
♦ K1098532
♣ A

Tuesday Night Club Game, August 16, 2011, Mr. Rob Weidenfeld, Director. Cincinnati Bridge Association Bridge Center, 2860 Cooper Road, Cincinnati, OH 45241 (513) 631-8070. Ron Babcock is my partner. We play Precision.
 ←Your hand, North, 4th seat, NS vulnerable.

Bidding

East	South	West	North
1♣	1N!!	Pass	???

Time to think. This hand should play in NT or ♦s, nowhere else. Partner has 14-16 Balanced HCP and 6-7 Losers. North's hand has 6 losers initially. However the ♥Q is a likely cover card (so it might not be a loser) and the 7-card ♦ suit reduces losers by 1. 5 losers opposite 7 losers means we rate to make 12 tricks in ♦s. *The scientific approach:* transfer to ♦s (we play 1N systems "on" in competition and use 4-suit transfers) followed by control bids. Then RKB would reveal Key Cards and the ♦Q. Another approach would be to bid 6♦ outright. This has the benefit of telling opponents little. Our combined 30 HCP means a grand slam is not likely. While we get to in 6♦ either way, there is a small advantage to have East on lead to protect the majors. N bids 6♦.

The Play

East tables a hopeful ♠K. The ♠K lead appears threatening, but there is really only 1 line of play for this contract. Declarer wins the ♠A and leads ♦2 to the ♦A both following. Now the ♣3 reenters the closed hand and unblocks the ♣ suit. Declarer cashes the ♦K (both follow) and reenters the dummy with the ♥A. Now declarer pitches 2 ♠ losers and 1 ♥ loser on 3 rounds of ♣s. East ruffs the 4th round of ♣s with the ♦Q but the closed hand is high.

East Deals NS Vul IMPs	♠ AJ4 ♥ Q9 ♦ K1098532 ♣ A	←Steve
♠975 ♥J7542 ♦ 74 ♣1075	N W 18 E S	♠ KQ83 ♥ K106 ♦ QJ6 ♣ 982
Ron→	♠ 1062 ♥ A83 ♦ A ♣ KQJ643	N: 6♦, 6♣, 5N, 4♠, 3♥ S: 4N, 4♠, 5♦, 5♣

Post Mortem

Partner's 1NT overcall was creative! Partner held the number of losing tricks expected (6), ♣s stopped, and the minimum for the HCP we'd agreed (14-16 HCP). The least-worst bid often works out best. True, North expected a 9-card ♦ fit (subtracting one loser), but the singleton ♦A was sufficient to limit losers to one trump. A 2♣ overcall is not available and passing makes telling partner you have a 6-loser hand very difficult. It's not too surprising the field is in 3NT. The off-shape 1NT overcall made bidding the slam possible.

Contract	Scores		Matchpoints	
	N-S	E-W	N-S	E-W
6♦ N	1370		6.00	0.00
3NT N	720		5.00	1.00
3NT N	660		4.00	2.00
3NT S	630		2.00	4.00
3NT S	630		2.00	4.00
3NT S	630		2.00	4.00
3♦ N	170		0.00	6.00
5♣ S	100		0.00	4.00

Again the slam hinges on the 68% 3-2 ♦ split. Making 6 was worth all the matchpoints. Where the field is unlikely to bid slam, bid the safest strain. 6♦ offers chances (Major suit ruffs in North) that NT doesn't. Note: having East lead was worth the extra trick.

Learning Points

1. Sometimes an off-shape NT is a better description of your hand than a natural approach, especially with a trick-rich hand.
2. When holding a long suit and partner bids NT assume partner holds 2 cards in your suit and bid accordingly.
3. Losing Trick Count for trump contracts is valid when we have an 8+ card fit.

Keywords: Creative 1NT overcall, Losing Trick Count,