



Palmerston North Bridge Club

Newsletter

Christmas 2022

President's Welcome

This final newsletter of 2022 will hopefully herald in some summer weather (I apologise if I seem to be a bit obsessed with the weather over the past two newsletters – but on the upside, my garden is absolutely blooming with all the rain). I am busy planning for my family Christmas – I expect most of you are too – and looking forward to a bit of time to relax and sit back.

I will keep my welcome short and sweet this month since there is a host of other news to fill the pages of this edition. I wanted to confirm with you the room reps and session hosts for next year. These roles within the Club are of huge importance and I know that everyone is very grateful to all our members who undertake these roles and do such a great job. Particularly I want to thank those members who are again undertaking the role – having done so for more than a few years.

Jenny Kelland remains session host for Friday – the table numbers for this session are reaching dizzying heights – very well done, Jenny! Angela Harper and Maxine Keay are again undertaking session host duties for Monday and Thursday evenings respectively – both are doing a fantastic job – and Andrea Bennett takes over from Jan Whyte as session host for Monday afternoon sessions. Thanks to Jan for her sterling work during 2022. Angela is also undertaking room rep duties for Monday evening and Annette Scanlon will again be room rep for daytime sessions (supported on Friday daytime sessions by Dan Lynch and Bryan Northcott).

Morgan Booker is again taking on the dual role of session host and room rep for the Gold/Platinum session on Tuesday evenings. This has been a particularly challenging role since our table numbers for this session were sometimes so low

that the competitions were cancelled. We have had 13+ pairs competing in the Championships this past month and Morgan has played a vital role in building the session to viability. Thank you, Morgan. I believe that maintaining a highly competitive session is crucial to support the Club philosophy to enable our members to grow their game to be the best they can.

Although, it's probably a good idea to move up through the ranks of Monday (Bronze and Silver) and Thursday (Multigrade) before diving into a Gold/Platinum session, please don't be afraid to take part in the Tuesday evening sessions when you are ready. Morgan has created a supportive and encouraging environment and you will find your bridge improves no end. When you have faced off against Grandmasters in a Club session, playing at A and B point national tournaments holds no fear!

I know many of you have enjoyed the monthly Tuesday evening improvers' sessions that Julie Bunnell has been taking. Many thanks to Julie for doing this but the Committee has recognised that most of the burden fell on her because our other senior players were playing in their own Tuesday evening competitions! Next year we will trial holding these monthly sessions on a Friday evening and extend them beyond topics for those just starting their bridge journey to those at intermediate level. Bob Hurley will be organising these and is very happy to arrange topics according to members' requests. For my part, my pianola statistics tell me I have to improve my defensive play so I will be looking to improve my opening leads and signalling to my partner. Again, please don't be shy and let us know what would be most helpful to you to support your game.

Finally, I am signalling – loud and clear – that although it has been my honour to represent the Club as President, I cannot take on the role again next year. Please think about whether or not you could be President – or talk with someone who you think would do a good job of it. There is plenty of space on the Honours Board recording our past Presidents and many of our members whose names are not yet on it! If you would like to talk with me in confidence about what the role involves and what I believe the key issues are for the coming few years, please don't hesitate to get in touch. I will be very happy to support a new President in whatever way they see fit.

Meanwhile, I hope to see as many of you as possible over the summer bridge sessions and send my very best wishes for a happy and healthy Christmas and New Year.

Denise Servante
President

Palmerston North Bridge Club Championship Winners 2022

Bronze: *Bryan Northcott Cup*

First- Sonia Smith & Julie Palenski
Runners up- Prue Drake & John Redmayne

Silver: *Rod Doherty Tray*

First- Grant Elliott & Julian Kissock
Runners up- Maxine Keay & Cindy Lowndes

Gold: *Culpan Tray*

First- Denise Servante & Martin Carryer
Runners up- Morgan Booker & Zheng Zhang

Platinum: *Doreen Millar Rosebowl*

First- Wayne Burrows & Jack James
Runners up- Alister Stuck & Bob Hurley

Memorial Trophies

Bronze: *Keith Rowland Cup*

Dianne Gardner & Judy Jenkins

Silver: *John Whibley Memorial Cup*

Malcolm Loudon & Maxine Keay

Gold: *Maude Nash Tray*

Carolyn Brodie & Anne Gordon

Platinum: *Jack Cliff Memorial Cup*

Bob Hurley & Sean Lynch

Handicap Events

Teams: *Stubbs Jewellers' Cup*

Tony Clear, Zheng Zhang,
Debbie Marcroft & Garry Hodge

Pairs: *Whitehead Trophy*

Elwi Beshlawi & Suzanne Carpenter

Silver Butler Tray:

Wayne Stewart & Elwi Beshlawi

Myra Stubbs Teams:

Bob Hurley, Heather Simpson, Tony Clear & Denise Servante

Points Cups

Bronze: *Chaunia Milne Tray*

First- Prue Drake
Runner up- Kevin Conley

Silver: *Jack Cliff Memorial Cup*

First- Grant Elliott
Runner up- Elwi Beshlawi

Gold: *Joan Palmer Cup*

First- Carolyn Brodie
Runner up- Morgan Booker

Platinum: *Whitehead Cup*

First - Bob Hurley
Runner up- Carolyn Brodie

Monday: *Vera Rees Tray*

First- Ken Bateman
Runner up- Zheng Zhang

Melbourne Cup Day – Tuesday 1st November

Thanks to Annette Scanlon for this initiative and also for sourcing our new sponsor, Tracey Dench who very kindly donated the champagne for the after match. Tracey also presented Annette with well-deserved prize for best hat (pictured)! Many thanks to Gayle Leader who organised the sweepstakes, to Jenny Kelland for sourcing original colours and MC memorabilia to decorate the Club Rooms, to Lorraine for volunteering her services as Director and to all Club members for a delicious high tea. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon and so we've made it a regular feature of our events calendar.



Loveblock NZ Wide Pairs – Friday 11th November

Hokowhitu Bridge Club hosted the event and invited both Palmerston North and Feilding Bridge Club members to participate. Many thanks to Hokowhitu for a delicious supper and a well organised and fun event. Next year, Feilding Bridge Club will host the event for the three Clubs.

Hold the date: To mark the end of the Summer bridge season, we'll hold a BBQ in the Jubilee Courtyard on Monday, 30th January following the afternoon play session. More details to follow in the new year.

Christmas Cheer Tournament – Saturday, 3rd December

We had a(nother) fabulous Christmas Cheer tournament on 3rd December with 25 tables from around the region and the country. The Tournament sponsors were Palmerston North's Mitre 10 once again provided generous contributions to the top three pairs prizes – thank you again to Mitre 10 Mega for this ongoing support. The tournament itself ran very smoothly – thanks to Lorraine and her helpers, Andrea Bennett, Paul Orsborn and Denise Servante. The evening meal was catered for by Lynda Guthrie and Gayle Leader (and their helpers) and was a huge success with the meal being enjoyed by all. The winners were as follows: First- Anthony Ker / Alan Grant, Second - Scott Smith / Peter Ramsey and Third - Patrick D'Arcy / Adrienne Dale. A big thank you to all the volunteers (you know who you are) who helped make this event happen. An especially big thanks must go to Liz Burrows, who once again ensured that our reputation as holding the best Xmas Cheer Tournament in Aotearoa was upheld!

Fees and charges for 2023

Subscription rates for 2023 (same as 2022)

- Ordinary Home: \$120
- Ordinary Second: \$97
- Country Home: \$88
- Country Second: \$65
- Youth: \$66

New table money rates will apply from 1st February

- \$7.00 cash
- \$30 for a 5 x table card
- \$60 for a 10 x table card
- \$120 for a 20 x table card

Online payment is always preferred, please, to: 02 0727 0231184 00

Summer bridge

Is on Mondays from 1.15 and Thursdays from 7.15. A partner will be provided so just come along and keep your brains working over the summer. If you are happy to be a "spare" then please let Lorraine know.

Palmerston North Christmas Cheer 2022



Club and Tournaments Results

Congratulations to the following pairs who attained 70% or more in our club since the last newsletter:

Wayne Burrows

Jack James 75.00% Platinum champs

Morgan Booker

Jack James 73.32% Afternoon session

Wayne Burrows

Tony Clear 73.06% Melbourne Cup session

Tony Fayerman

Julian Kissock 70.95% Silver champs

And here are the players who have done well in recent tournaments.

Zelda Morris pairs	Jack James Pam Livingston	1 st
Interprovincial Open	Jack James Bob Hurley Wayne Burrows George Masters Russell Wilson Pam Livingston	2 nd
Interprovincial Intermediate	Anne Gordon Julie Bunnell Michael Hardman Hans van Bunnik	2 nd
Hawkes Bay Xmas Cheer	Liz Burrows Sandra Coleman Jack James Peter Ramsey	3 rd 4 th
PN Xmas Cheer	Jan Whyte Ken Bateman	4 th
Taupo Xmas Cheer	Tony Fayerman Jack James	4 th
Wellington Xmas Cheer	Morgan Booker Gayle Leader Liz Burrows Sandra Coleman	4 th 6 th
Waikanae Intermediate Pairs	Anne Gordon Julie Bunnell Debbie Marcroft Gary Hodge	1 st 2 nd

Gayle Leader

Tips and Conventions

When you have the advantage of favourable vulnerability make good use of it.

One way is to pre-empt at the 3 level with 6 card suits. Even if you could open a weak 2 at this vul consider opening at the 3 level. This gives your opponents little room to explore their best contract and mostly they will have to guess.

But when you open a weak 2 many play the convention Lebensohl and one of its uses is when partner doubles a weak 2. with 0 to 6, bid 2NT. Unless partner has a strong hand they must bid 3C which is pass or correct. With 7 to 10 bid 3 of a suit. Of course, with a good 10 or better cue or bid game.

A 2NT overcall shows (15)16-18 but a 3NT overcall has a much greater range and shape. Players generally have good agreements over 2NT including Puppet stayman (recommended) but not such good agreements over 3NT. Would your 4C be Gerber, your 4H natural?

Another way to take advantage of fav. vul. Is to open light in 3rd position. Opening 1S on KQJ9x and nothing else is perfect. If you play the Drury convention partner can bid 2C asking about the quality of the opening and rebidding 2S says poor hand. You also want partner to lead spades, another reason to open 1S.

Be aggressive with your overcalls. A good method is at favourable vulnerability all your jump overcalls are pre-emptive and can be quite weak. Again, bid 3 rather than 2 with KQJ10xx.

Your opponents will be reluctant to double you at the 3 level as they must take you 4 light to beat their making game.

Puppet stayman is a good method whenever partner bids a strong 2NT which could be an overcall 15-18 or opening 20-22 etc. Responses to 3C are: 3D (I have a 4 card major, maybe both), 3H (five hearts), 3S (five spades) 3NT (no 4 or 5 card major): After the 3D bid responder bids the major they DON'T have, responder can show both majors by bidding 4D.

Bob Hurley

A Ghost of Christmas Past

Christmas is often a time when we might think about the past and about characters we knew many years ago. Just for fun I looked back through my old articles for the Palmerston North newsletter and came across a few for (wait for it) 1995!. What was the state of your bridge in that year? Some of the names mentioned triggered memories, others I had completely forgotten. Amongst the latter was a certain Dutch guy called Wen who enlivened our club for a short time during that year. Here is an interview that I conducted with the venerable gentleman that I hope you find interesting, followed by an article called 'Percentage Play' that he wrote at the time.

You may have noticed a genial but intense bearded gentleman with a pronounced Dutch accent playing at the club for a couple of months during the winter. This was Wen van Kersbergen who was over from the Netherlands working at Massey. He plays regularly in his home country and took the opportunity to keep his hand in by playing at our club. Obviously, coming part way through the year he had to play a variety of systems with a range of partners but this did not seem to faze him.

Casual conversations had revealed interesting differences between bridge as played in Holland and the way that we play it. I decided it would be a good idea to interview him so he could tell about bridge in his own country and share his opinions about the game as he has observed it over here.

RK: The Dutch were world champions last year, and usually do well in the European Championships. Since Holland has a small population [16 million] compared with many of the countries it competes against, what is the secret of this success?

WvK: Bridge is very popular in Holland and a very large number of men and women play, perhaps one hundred thousand active participants in the game. In fact, bridge is the third most popular game in the country following soccer and tennis. Take my home town of Gouda (home of the famous cheese), it has a population much the same size as Palmerston North and yet there are about 20 bridge clubs in the area, all well patronised.

RK: Bridge is often seen as predominantly a game for more mature people in New Zealand, with a relatively small number of young participants. Is the same true in your country?

WvK: There are a much greater number of younger players in Holland and there are active programmes to promote the game in schools. For example, there are championships for children in the range 13 to 16 and even for 10 to 12 year olds. In fact, I learned bridge at school when I was 12.

RK: I understand you had some success at the game as a university student.

WvK: Yes. We have a national championship for 16 to 24 year olds and I was twice in a team that came second.

RK: Tell us something about the club organization over there. Obviously, at the Palmerston North Club we have graded nights so that people can play against opponents of a similar standard. Is the same true in your home town?

WvK: Not quite. Each of the two bridge clubs to which I belong has just one evening a week when they play. In each case, there are four levels or divisions and each partnership has to play in their designated division. At the end of the season, pairs are promoted and relegated, just like a soccer league.

RK: We organize things on a rather less formal basis. Do you think that is reasonable?

WvK: For social bridge, yes. But for competitive bridge, no. Your Senior Reserve, for example, has such a wide range of abilities that there is a high random factor there.

RK: In any one grade in which you play, how many tables would you typically have?

WvK: Seven or eight.

RK: And how is play organized?

WvK: Unlike the Palmerston North club we always play a Howell movement. We play 7 tables with 4 hands a table. This means, of course, that you don't play everyone in the room, but this balances out over a competition of 6 weeks. It is less demanding for the director to have to call moves every half hour rather than every fourteen minutes. In fact, most of our directors also play.

RK: When I played in Britain (a long time ago!) they used to bid verbally, although they have probably changed now. Here, we write down bids on a pad. Do you use a similar method in Holland?

WvK: No. We use bidding boxes. Each box has cards numbered 1 to 7 and also cards with the suits on. To make a bid, the player takes the appropriate cards out of the box and places them on the table. We also have various other cards such as stop and alert ones. Also we have one for calling the director. So if there has been some breach of the rules a player can wave this around until the director comes.

RK: About alerts. Do you alert the same bids that we do?

WvK: No. In fact, of course, alerts aren't specifically used for conventional bids, they indicate unusual ones. If everyone normally plays a particular convention then that is not alertable. For example, since almost everyone in Holland plays transfers over a one or two no trump opening you do not alert transfer bids. If you were not using a transfer then you would have to

alert it. Also, since most people play a strong no trump, a weak no trump has to be alerted. Even weak twos in a major would have to be alerted since nearly everyone plays a multi-two diamond to indicate such a hand.

RK: Do partnerships use a lot of gadgets tacked on to their basic system?

WvK: Yes, there are many popular conventions. As well as the 'multi', many players use inverted minors, Roman Keycard Blackwood, splinter bids and so on.

RK: Tell us a little more about general styles of bidding. Over here, both Acol and Standard American are widely played with Precision being quite popular amongst advanced players.

WvK: The vast majority of players (perhaps 80%) use Acol, or at least the Dutch version of it. We generally play a strong no trump now-a-days. At a high level, good players can quickly spot an opportunity to double a weak no trump for easy points. It is too dangerous.

RK: This is surprising since, at least in Britain and New Zealand, one of the main distinctions between Acol and other systems is the weak no trump. If you take that away, the only other main difference between Acol and, let us say, Standard American is the use of 4 card majors in Acol.

WvK: In fact, some Dutch players play 5 card majors as well.

RK: So how does this system differ from Standard American?

WvK: Probably very little!

RK: Do many people play Precision Club?

WvK: Not many at all, even at the higher levels. Another strong club system, the Italian Blue Club, was popular about ten years ago. But this was because Benito Garozzo, the famous Italian player, was the trainer of the Dutch team at that time. So, for a while, all the top players in the country played the Blue Club. But when Garozzo went, his system went with him.

RK: You have been over here for two months, what is your impression of the game as you have observed it? For example, what do you think of the range of different competitions we play?

WvK: Most of them are similar to ones we play in Holland. The one exception is rotational teams, which I haven't come across before. I enjoyed playing that, it was great fun. It is also interesting to see how much players over here switch partners. In Holland, we tend to stay with the same partner for a whole year, and maybe, many years.

RK: What is your overall appraisal of our club?

WvK: Although the standard of play is fine, it seems to me that the bidding is somewhat conservative. The weak no-trump, Gerber, simple weak twos, and so on have been discarded a while back in Holland.

All-in-all, I have really enjoyed playing here, and the standard is very similar to that in Gouda, certainly at the top level. Your flexibility makes it easier for someone like myself to come in for two months and to play some interesting bridge.

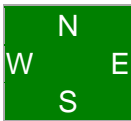
RK: Well, thank you Wen for sharing those thoughts. Hopefully, if any of our members happen to be visiting Gouda you will be able to arrange a game for them.

WvK: I certainly will!

Ray Kemp.

Percentage Play

Sometimes when there are two plausible alternative lines of play it is best to estimate the likelihoods of each and take the more promising one. Here is an example taken from a teams match where I played with Ray Kemp.

Ray		Wen
♠ J 5		♠ A K 8 4
♥ Q J 9 4		♥ A K 8 7
♦ A 9 6 5		♦ Q 8 3
♣ 7 5 4		♣ 6 3

I was declarer, sitting East, in a contract of four hearts. South led a small diamond which was taken by North with the king. North switched to clubs and I had to ruff the third round of the suit. Now I have to make the rest of the tricks from the following position:

		
♠ J 5		♠ A K 8 4
♥ Q J 9 4		♥ A K 8
♦ A 9 6		♦ Q 8
♣ -		♣ -

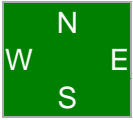
At this time, I see two alternative strategies:

- (i) Play for the remaining four diamonds to be distributed 2-2, and hearts no worse than 4-1.
- (ii) Ruff two spades in dummy.

The question is, of course, which strategy has the better chance to succeed? The probability of the first one I estimated to be 35% and I was pretty sure that this estimate was quite accurate. The second one was more complicated to work out. It will succeed if the hearts are distributed no worse than 3-2 and the spades no worse than 4-3, and in roughly 40% of the distributions: hearts 3-2 and spades 5-2. I estimated that together, this second set of distributions accumulated to about 50%.

Of course, I chose the second strategy, but you must be very careful with the order in which the tricks are played. The first problem is that you cannot start by drawing trumps because you need the trumps for communication. So, you start with the two high spades and if South follows the third spade, ruff with ♥9! (North could have started with two spades without ♥T.

Now you have to return to the hand with a diamond. The reason is that if you don't, it may be impossible to return to your hand the next time to draw trumps if somebody has the chance to discard his last diamond on a spade. Ruffing the last spade high in dummy completes what might be called a 'pseudo dummy-dummy reversal'. I drew trumps and brought home the contract.

<p>♠ J 5 ♥ Q J 9 4 ♦ A 9 6 5 ♣ 7 5 4</p>		<p>♠ 10 9 7 ♥ 10 5 ♦ K J 10 2 ♣ A K J x</p>	<p>♠ A K 8 4 ♥ A K 8 7 ♦ Q 8 3 ♣ 6 3</p>
		<p>♠ Q 6 3 2 ♥ 6 3 2 ♦ 7 4 ♣ Q 10 9 8</p>	

Wen van Kersbergen


Play it again Slam

You are in a flaky six spades contract that looks even flakier once dummy goes down. You try to concentrate to make as many tricks as possible but things aren't going well and the opponents have already taken a trick. You are cross-ruffing the hand and by the end you have totally lost it. You can't even remember if there are any trumps left out. You need one more trick but only have the lowly four of diamonds to play. Miraculously, it is the last diamond, all the trumps have gone and you have made your contract! Your partner congratulates you on your supreme feat. She noticed how uncomfortable you looked and is relieved you actually got past the post.

You soak up the praise and try to pretend you were in control and knew what you were doing all along. You look at the projected scores on your mean machine and it tells you that the optimal contract is seven spades. You might have made all thirteen tricks! Your partner looks embarrassed, and the opponents look pleased. Has this happened to you? Well, maybe not quite in such an exaggerated fashion as the above scenario but I bet even the best players at the club occasionally get humbled by that dratted all-knowing machine.

The question is – what is your reaction? Or possibly more importantly what is the reaction of your partner? There are three possibilities. First, she could say nothing (the most sensible approach). Secondly, she could say something like “Goodness partner you *might* have made an overtrick” (this is true but hardly diplomat). Lastly, she might say “Goodness partner, you *should* have made an overtrick”. This last observation is not only unwise but probably far from the truth. I think we are all aware that the computer looks at all the hands and checks through millions of possible plays in a few seconds, effectively showing the result that even a top expert might struggle to achieve. Its like watching a fork-lift truck pick up a large piano and asking why your partner can't do the same.

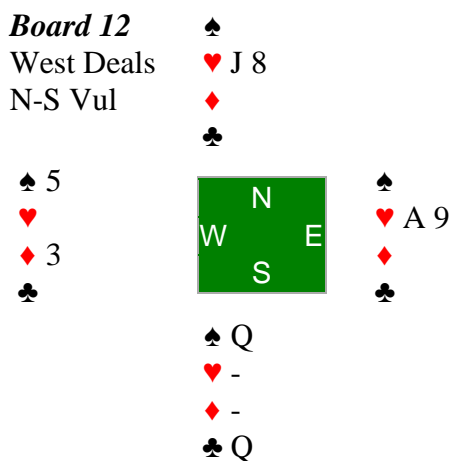
In two recent club sessions declarer was humbled by the computer's omnipotence and in both cases declarer was in a slam which ~~should~~ could have made but didn't. Here is the first example:

<p>Board 12 West Deals N-S Vul</p>		<p>♠ J 8 2 ♥ J 10 8 7 ♦ 9 7 6 4 ♣ 7 6</p>	<p>♠ A 10 7 4 ♥ A Q 9 6 4 2 ♦ J 5 ♣ K</p>
		<p>♠ K 6 5 ♥ K 5 ♦ A K 10 8 3 ♣ A J 10</p>	<p>♠ Q 9 3 ♥ 3 ♦ Q 2 ♣ Q 9 8 5 4 3 2</p>

We had already had one grand and one small slam during the session so were getting quite cocky. My partner was feeling particularly optimistic so put us into a seven hearts contract as East-West. I was sitting East and due to play the contract. As dummy went down after the lead of ♣3 I reflected (not for the first time) that declarer should be the person who makes the last bid not the first player to bid the trump suit.

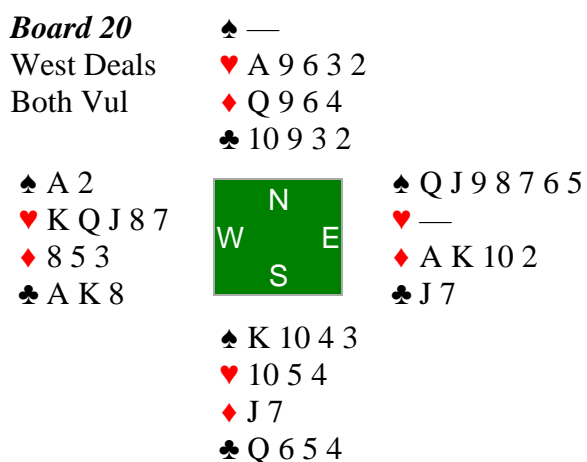
However, on appraisal it seemed like a reasonable contract. All I needed was a 3-2 trump split and the possibility of either finessing or bringing down ♦Q. As you can see one of my wishes came true but not the other. After finding out the bad trump split at trick three I went through the motions, but rued the fact that we could have been in a solid small slam. After going one down I looked at the result on the electronic guru and saw that we had achieved a zero board (not surprisingly) but also that we could have made the grand slam. Even double dummy do you have the faintest idea how we could have done that?

Deep finesse gives us the answer. What we must do after discovering the bad news about the trump suit is not to play on trumps anymore but to cash all our other winners. If North can ruff in on any of these early tricks then bad luck. However, in the current hand North has to follow in all the suits. Eventually we have to ruff a winning diamond from dummy just to reduce our trump suit to the same length as North. We get back to dummy with a spade and end up with this position:



As you can see, when declarer plays either card from dummy North has to play one of her trumps and East gets a free finesse. This is called a 'trump coup' and is a very satisfying way to make a contract. Who would have thought it? Not me on this occasion.

The second 'impossible' slam occurred one week later. This time we were the beneficiaries of a bad trump split.



Here, West is playing in six spades after a transfer and must think there is a good chance of making, particularly after the lead of ♥A. I am sitting South and when ♠Q is led from dummy I have learned from past mistakes and don't cover. A second spade honour from dummy and again I duck letting declarer's ace take air. West gives up the contract for one down. We sympathize with West for the bad trump break but the all-knowing machine tells us that he could have made the slam. Any ideas what to do?

The only way to make, double dummy, is to lead a low spade from dummy and just cover if South plays the ten or king. If South plays low, play ♠2! No expert would do this unless they had some indication that South has four spades – for example, if I had been foolish enough to double. The standard MP approach to maximizing the number of tricks made is, as one might expect, to run the queen around, and then play off the ace. A less obvious safety play, since there are no other losers is to play off the ace of spades to start with. This gives a 95% chance of losing only one trump trick. As the cards lie, neither approach works.

This deal is a little different from the previous one. In the heart slam, expert declarers would always make once the bad trump split had been discovered. The trump coup is a well-known technique for prizing out an opponent's trumps. In the second hand there is no way back once the bad trump split has been found. So, we might say the first contract *should* be made and the second one *could* be made. In either case, as dummy, I hope we would not say anything but just give declarer a sympathetic look and move on to the next board.

Ray Kemp



From the web