

Margaret River Bridge #080109c02

Today's hand puts us in the dilemma of what to do with a strong hand when we don't have solid partnership understandings with overcalls. North and East pass, so South calls a spade (weak opening in third position). West knows that a game is on and has to decide what to bid to ensure their partner does not pass, leaving them in a part contract.

Dealer - North ♠K 4 3
Vul - EW ♥Q J 6 5 3
 ♦7 3
 ♣10 7 2

		N		
♠ -				♠8 7 6 2
♥AK 2	W		E	♥9 8 7
♦AKQ8 4 2				♦10 9 5
♣AJ 8 5		S		♣Q 9 4
				♠ AQJ 10 9 5
				♥10 4
				♦J 6
				♣K 6 3

Bidding

N	E	S	W
P	P	1S	5D
all pass			

Many partnerships have the understanding that a double at the one level is forcing partner to bid. Unfortunately in this case, North would go 2S and your partner would pass, allowing the opposition to realise that they have a fit in spades and giving West no extra information. West would still then have to make the 5D bid.

Given that the opposition have already indicated they have opening points, slam doesn't appear likely so I prefer the aggressive opening bid of 5D by West. North/South don't get a chance to communicate now and if they decide to make the sacrifice bid of 5S (doubled) they will regret it. If East had a reasonable hand with points in suits other than spades then they might consider going slam.

When to make a sacrifice bid is always a tricky decision. With this vulnerability, West will get 600 points for contract. NS can afford to go off three, doubled, and still be better off. Unfortunately the trump distribution means that NS can only make seven tricks and hence will go off four for a penalty of 800 points. A sacrifice is often good when all your points are in your own suit, meaning that you have little defence to opposition's bid.

As the cards lie, EW can make 12 tricks but it is extremely unlikely that they would ever be able to bid this since East would never give any encouragement to their partner. Can you see how to make 12 tricks?

As you look at the hand, EW have a loser in clubs and possibly a loser in hearts. If you can make the fourth club a trick you will be able to discard a losing heart from East and then trump the heart. After two leads of trumps you must assess your options. You only have one entry to dummy, which is your remaining trump. To waste this trump just so that you can get the opportunity to finesse the king of clubs, once, is not worthwhile since it means you will still lose a heart trick later. The best line of play is to lead up to the Queen of clubs hoping to drop the King. When this doesn't work, you then play out the clubs hoping for an even split. Many players have difficulty in accepting that they often must lose a trick to make other tricks. If you have to lose a trick, lose it when you still have controls in all the suits, so that you can get back to your hand to make your remaining tricks.

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