

HAND OF THE MONTH FOR NEWER PLAYERS

February, 2015

Hands fitting well in two suits often play many tricks beyond what the high card strength suggests is possible. The capacity to explore for good fits is enhanced by many of the modern agreements such as cue bids to show specific controls, splinter bids, key card Blackwood, and others.

During a club game, my favorite partner and I enjoyed finding and making grand slam with the hands shown below with a combined 27 high card points.

	NORTH	
WEST	S A1086	EAST
S J95	H KJ105	S KQ432
H 43	D 876	H 872
D KQ543	C A9	D J92
C 1087		C J4
	SOUTH	
	S 7	
Vulnerable: None	H AQ96	
Dealer: South	D A10	
	C KQ6532	

Our Bidding:

South	West	North	East
1 club	pass	1 heart	pass
3 spades!	pass	4 clubs!!	pass
4 diamonds!!!	pass	4 spades!!!!	pass
4 notrump!!!!	pass	5 clubs	pass
5 notrump!!!!!!	pass	6 clubs	pass
7 hearts!!!!!!!!	all pass		

As can be seen, with the normal 3-2 breaks in hearts and clubs – better than a 50-50 probability – all thirteen tricks are easily made, three top trumps, six clubs, the spade and diamond aces, spade ruff in hand and diamond ruff in dummy (after discarding dummy's diamonds on the long clubs).

But what about all that complicated bidding? Easy, really!

- **1 club**, shows 13 + points, at least three clubs;
- **1 heart**, responder bids "up the line" when holding two four card majors; shows at least four hearts and at least six points;
- **3 spades**, a "splinter" showing a singleton or void in spades, at least four card heart support, the strength to commit the partnership to game even if North is a minimum, and slam interest; 2 spades would have been a strong jump shift with spades, the double jump to 3 spades has no natural meaning so it costs nothing to give it an artificial meaning, hence, the splinter. This hand was worth 17 points on the original evaluation, 15 in high cards and one each for the fifth and sixth clubs; with the known heart fit and spade shortness it should now be reevaluated up;
- **4 clubs**, with hearts now agreed as trumps, this must be a cue bid promising first round control of clubs; holding considerably more than a minimum for his original one-over-one response, North happily cooperates in the slam exploration; on the bidding so far, the good hearts and the club and spade aces all rate to be valuable holdings;
- **4 diamonds**, cue bid promising first round control of diamonds;
- **4 spades**, cue bid promising first round control of spades;
- **4 notrump**, key card Blackwood, South needs to know if North has the king of trumps in addition to the known club and spade aces;
- **5 clubs**, by partnership agreement showing zero or three key cards, the four aces and the king of trumps being the five key cards; since North is already known to have two aces, five clubs must promise three not zero; South has the other two aces, ergo, North has the king of hearts, the fifth key card;
- **5 notrump**, asking for kings, by implication promising possession of all five key cards; South already knows he is going to bid at least seven hearts, but seven notrump just might be possible if North has one more king;
- **6 clubs**, sorry, no more kings;
- **7 hearts!!!!** Piece of cake!

MORAL: Bridge is the greatest game in the world. Get a favorite partner – or two or three or more – and work on your partnership agreements. Satisfying results like this are the potential reward.