

## TALES OF AKARANA

### TOUGH TO BID...AND TO MAKE?

That's an obvious conclusion to draw from Board 12 at Akarana this week. Of the 11 tables in play, the correct contract was reached only five times and of those five, only two made their contract.

Back in "the good old days", one could open 2♦ with an "Acol Two", a strong hand but not strong enough for a game-forcing 2♣. There would be hardly anyone opening the West hand below in such a manner, even if you had a strong minor option for your "Multi". (That option tends to be a single-suited hand). Infrequency ruled out the use of such a strong bid. So, we can either over or under bid one's hand when opening. Our auction started:

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ A7	♠ KQJ632	1♦	1♥	1♠	Pass
♥ 4	♥ Q852	2♣ <sup>1</sup>	Pass	2♠	Pass
♦ AKQT74	♦ 3	?			
♣ AK42	♣ J9	<sup>1</sup> 100% forcing, 4+♣			

At that point, I endeavoured to show partner a good raise to 4♠ by bidding 3♥ and followed up partner's 3NT response with 4♠. It was not enough to excite partner and we played unspectacularly in the safe game.

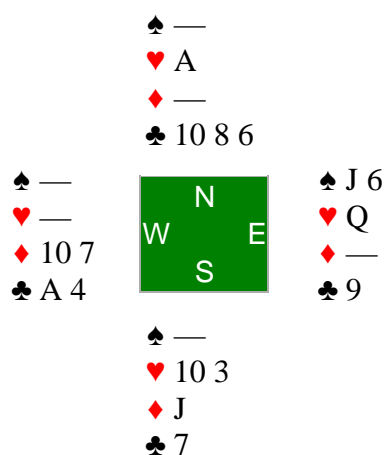
There seemed various options to get us higher. East can bid 5♠ over my 4♠, asking me to bid slam with a heart control (can East trust their partner to hold three aces? Probably.). I could have jumped to 5♠ over 3NT which would have left East uncertain of the heart situation. I could also have used key-card after the 2♠ bid or I could have splintered 4♥ over 2♠ allowing partner to use key-card.

Plenty of ways to reach 6♠ even without that "strong minor opening". Yet, what went wrong to cause three declarers to fail in their slam? All Souths led the ♥J to their partner's king. A second high heart gave the declarers a little headache:

<b>Board 12</b>		♠ 9 8	
North Deals		♥ A K 9 7 6	
None Vul		♦ 9	
		♣ 10 8 6 5 3	
♠ A 7			♠ K Q J 6 3 2
♥ 4			♥ Q 8 5 2
♦ A K Q 10 7 4			♦ 3
♣ A K 4 2			♣ J 9
		♠ 10 5 4	
		♥ J 10 3	
		♦ J 8 6 5 2	
		♣ Q 7	

Ruffing high would not have been a good idea had spades broken 4-1 but would have solved all East's problems here. How to return to hand to draw trumps if you ruffed low? Two top clubs would be fine as long as you ruffed the third one high...was that queen a false-card or a real warning? In theory, with only 6 clubs but 7 diamonds between the two hands, clubs are safer. So much for theory!

It looks also that East will be in difficulty should North return a low club at trick two...and East slots the ♣J. Now, declarer can draw trumps and play three rounds of diamonds, discarding two hearts. He ruffs a low diamond to hand. Yet, East should be fine as these cards remain:



As declarer now plays their two trumps and discards dummy's two diamonds, North is fine for their first discard but finds the second rather unpalatable leaving the ♣4 as declarer's likely 12<sup>th</sup> trick.

Well, that's what could have happened. Just like with the bidding, there were many ways to make the small spade slam but also some losing options. A board that left all bar two of the East-West pairs with a few thoughts that they should have done something a little differently.

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