

TALES OF AKARANA

SPADES A ' PLENTY



After three weeks of Rubber Bridge, Akarana started its Teams and Swiss Pairs program with a lively night of Bridge this week. There were three interesting slams to be bid, only one of which stood a chance to be beaten. Yet, there were few “takers” at the six level.

The first two featured 8 card spade suits.

Board 12
 West Deals
 N-S Vul

♠ J 9		♠ A K Q 10 8 7 4 2
♥ A K 10 6 5		♥ 4 2
♦ 7 6		♦ 2
♣ A 8 6 2		♣ J 9

♠ 3
 ♥ J 9 8 3
 ♦ Q 8 5 4 3
 ♣ Q 7 4

♠ 6 5
 ♥ Q 7
 ♦ A K J 10 9
 ♣ K 10 5 3

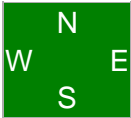
One pair reached 5S though the rest played at the 4 level. 6S needs a 4-2 or 3-3 heart break and is only threatened by a club switch at trick 2 if spades break 3-0 and hearts 4-2.

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	1♠	2♦
Pass	3♦	?	

With 3♠ now not a game-force, only a very optimistic East would launch comfortably into Blackwood and then “hope” their partner has a decent heart suit. Even then, most partners do not produce two trump entries when you have an almost solid 8 card suit of your own. This one may just be in the “too hard” basket.

Three East-West pairs did venture to 6♠ when it was West who held the “eight bagger”.

Board 8
 West Deals
 None Vul

♠ A Q J 8 6 5 4 2		♠ 10 9 7
♥ A 10		♥ Q 7
♦ —		♦ K J 8 2
♣ K 6 3		♣ A Q 10 4

♠ K 3
♥ 9 6 3
♦ A Q 10 7 4 3
♣ 7 2

West	North	East	South
1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass/2♦
3♠	Pass	4♣ cue	Pass
?			

Surely there will be no stopping now? West can use Roman Key Card and even the absence of the ♠K should not put West off. East’s club suit could be longer and stronger than it was though were North not to hold both heart honours, an initial heart lead and misguess by declarer would pile the pressure on West to take the winning view in trumps.

The small slam is cold on any lead, though the initial ♣9 might be a worry even if ♣10 wins trick one. After a diamond lead, West would

ruff and take the percentage trump play and play the ace. After losing a trump to South and winning the heart switch, a further 5 rounds of trumps will not leave North well placed, being unable to keep ♥K and four clubs in the four card ending.

On the final deal, South's 6 card spade suit was quite miniscule in comparison with the two previous trump suit. Yet, 12 tricks were there to be made on normal breaks. However, only three of the twelve pairs went beyond the 5 level:

Board 4
 West Deals
 Both Vul

♠ K 6 3		
♥ A 2		
♦ A K 8 5 2		
♣ A J 7		
♠ 10 9 5 4	<div style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>	♠ —
♥ K 8		♥ Q 10 9 7 6 5
♦ J 10 9 3		♦ 7 6 4
♣ 8 5 2		♣ K Q 10 4
		♠ A Q J 8 7 2
		♥ J 4 3
		♦ Q
		♣ 9 6 3

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♦	1♥	1♠
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♠
Pass	?		

With 2NT showing 18-19 balanced, South could just dredge up a mild slam-try by bidding 3♠. If they do that, their partner will do the rest by launching into Blackwood. Indeed, only absence of any side-suit kings will turn North off going higher. On the lead of a high heart, South needs to win to play ♦Q before giving up a heart.

A club switch will now see declarer have to play dummy's two top diamonds before playing a trump to hand, ruffing a heart and eventually drawing the remaining trumps. You would not want to

ruff the heart first in case West threw a diamond from an initial 3 card holding (not the case here).

Alternatively, if you need diamonds 4-3, simply win, play ♦ Q, trump to dummy and ruff a diamond, setting up the suit for 3 discards...12 tricks.

A weak jump overcall (2♥) would cramp the North-South bidding. While North would make a slow raise to 4♠ (via a 3♥ cue), South may not feel their hand good enough to try for slam.

22 spades in 3 hands with in each case partner having support if not a true fit but only 6 out of 36 pairs reached any of the three available slams. I am sure you would all have done better, wouldn't you?

Richard Solomon