

## Bidding Practice Deals 1 -- Annotated

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These are the **ANSWERS**. If you turn the page and read, you may have a good time, but the intent is for you to:

1. Get the associated files, one for East and one for West, and bid these hands with your partner. (Follow any instructions for bidding by the opponents.)
2. Write down the auction for each deal. Make useful notes on bids. This will give you the option to bid multiple deals before analyzing them, or to go back and revisit deals later.
3. Use this document to look up the deals. You may not agree with my conclusions -- or I may not have firm conclusions -- but you should understand and agree with partner on the topics.

These 26 deals were selected from about about as many sessions played by Gary Schwartz and the author in A/X, Open, or top bracket regional pair games during 2024 at tournaments in Warwick RI, Charlotte NC, and Birmingham AL. All deals have been rotated to make the bidding partnership East-West. Usually, the author was one of the bidders; if so, the rotation makes his seat East. The boards have been renumbered, but dealership and vulnerability is as dealt and rotated. The scoring is *matchpoints* on all deals.

The deals have been selected as interesting bidding problems. Just as in a duplicate bridge game, the issues come in no particular order. More deal sets are planned. These deals are intended to support my book, *EZ Expert Bidding Tools*, but should be useful to test your partnership's actual methods.

As initially published, this work has been reviewed only by the author. Please send comments on anything you find here to **pete dot 3nt at gmail dot com** -- they will be appreciated.

Thanks, and Enjoy!

# 2024 BHM Thu PM 5: Slow Raise?

## Board 1

North Deals

N-S Vul

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

EW 5♠; EW 5♥; EW 3N; EW 1♦; Par -450: EW 4♥+1; EW 4♠+1

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	Pass
1 ♠	Pass	1 NT <sup>1</sup>	Pass
3 ♥	Pass	3 ♠	Pass
4 ♥ <sup>2</sup>	Pass	4 ♠	All pass

1. Forcing, starting a slow-down raise.

2. Fifth heart (finding the best game takes priority over slam).

Lead: ♦ 2

Opening 2 ♣ with a two-suiter requires at least game in hand, since each new suit is forcing. (Even then, it runs the risk of the opponents being at the five-level before we get to name a suit.) With four losers, the West hand is not strong enough to drive to game in responder's choice of suits.

Opening 1 ♠, the jump shift to 3 ♥ may be made on four hearts; as usual, East should have 4-card support to raise opener's second suit. cannot raise them. The partnership should discuss what 3 ♠ and 4 ♠ by responder mean here. Without discussion, the default depends on whether we play fast arrival in other situations. If so, this is a 4 ♠ bid; if not, we bid 3 ♠, as shown. 3 ♠ could be real support - a slow-down raise or 3-card limit raise - or it could be a false preference with a doubleton, or maybe a singleton with 5-5 minors. (A picture bid of 4 ♠ might provide two top honors [♠ K & ♥ K here], with no other controls.)

The author sat East and chose the immediate raise to 2 ♠. The ♦ 10 and ♣ 9 support their queens, so this hand is likely to provide two winners in support of spades. This is clearly a marginal constructive raise. In order to lay down a slam opposite a 2 ♠ raise, West would need to find partner with at least ♠ K, ♥ K, and ♣ K. This is well over a minimum, so a simple jump to 4 ♠ is sensible. If West tries for slam, East should not cooperate on he actual hand.

Ignoring the lie of the cards, how would you plan the play in 4 ♠ by West? South wins the opening lead with the ♦ A and returns a diamond.

(Ding-ding-ding, why not a club return?) Nothing good will come from leading clubs from hand, but it might from leading spades. How about this: ruff and lead a small spade toward dummy. So long as trumps split, we cash the ♠ A (losing one or two trumps), discard two clubs on hearts and ruff the ♣ J. When the ♠ K comes down, we exhaust trumps and lead the ♣ Q from dummy....

2024 BHM Thu PM #18: Heavy Invite

**Board 2**

East Deals

N-S Vul

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

	♠ 9 8 5	
	♥ K Q 9 7 5	
	♦ Q J 5	
	♣ 5 3	

EW 4♠; EW 2N; NS 2♥; EW 3♦; Par -420: EW 4♠=

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
1 ♠	Pass	1 NT	Pass
3 ♠	Pass	4 ♠	All pass
4 ♠ by West			
Lead: ♠ 2			

West has a nice, solid game invitation, with five losers, With four losers, we would jump to 4 ♠; with six losers (take away an ace), and a meek 2 ♠ rebid is better. Since we play heavy invites, as East we look for any excuse to bid on. In addition to our minimal 6 HCP, we have a doubleton, the ♠ 10, and the ♦ 10-9, so we bid the game.

What's our best line of play, without looking at the lie of the cards?

We could go down, losing one heart, two diamonds, and one club. However, the diamond suit may handle one or more of our losers. So we win in hand and lead a diamond.... It's routine to lead high from a doubleton, unblocking, just in case. That's not the issue here. What we want is the card that looks most like a singleton, and that's the ♦ 6. If North does not play the ace, we assume that they do not have it, and put in the ten. (The stronger the North player is, the less this inference is worth, of course. However, even a star does not want to lose an ace at matchpoints.)

South's normal play is to win with a random quack, so as not to tip declarer's next play. We top South's ♥ K with the ace and lead another diamond. The 67% "restricted choice" play is the ♦ 9, losing to the queen, and down we go. I've won a lot of matchpoints lining up restricted choice plays, but not this time. If the restricted choice play does work, we are going to need either 3-3 diamonds or the club finesse.

This is matchpoints, where overtricks can be everything. If we rise with the king the second time, and it wins, we ruff the suit good, pull trump ending on dummy, discard two losers, and take the club finesse for a chance at a second overtrick. Greedy, greedy, greedy.

# 2024 BHM Wed PM #6: Spades!

## Board 3

North Deals

N-S Vul

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

EW 5♠; NS 1N; NS 1♥; NS 1♦; EW 1♣; Par -450: EW 4♠+1

West	North	East	South
	Pass	3 ♠	Pass
4 ♠	All pass		
4 ♠ by East			
Lead: ♠ A			

After North passes, no way we should pass as East. Playing the rule of 2-3-4, our preempt promises down four in hand, at favorable vulnerability. We should take five spade tricks, for down four. We might also take the fourth club or another spade (as on this deal), so a 3 ♠ bid is a little heavy, even with no honor tricks.

Over a preempt at 3 ♠, the opponents cannot declare below the level of game (with or without a bonus). Accordingly, after a double, advancer is likely to pass with modest values. Such pressures are higher after a 4 ♠ opening, and the double of 4 ♠ is often for penalties. (It's standard to play takeout through 4 ♥, but experts extend that to 4 ♠.) Basically, a spade preempt has a unilateral aspect to it.

The main purpose of a preemptive bid is to steal bidding space. When the opponents bid over the preempt, they have to find their way without that space. At matchpoints, a major goal is to cause the opponents to make the last guess, such as bidding over our preempt, trying for slam, etc. Yes, we may save - but we want partner involved in that decision.

All this argues for a 3 ♠ opening bid, although 4 ♠ is reasonable.

Over 3 ♠, West has an automatic 4 ♠ bid, with 4 1/2 quick tricks and some pushers. Over a 5-trick East, game should be, at worst, on the diamond finesse.

Over 4 ♠, West may pass, but we could miss a slam opposite many hands, including

♠ A J 10 8 7 5 4 3 ♥ - ♦ 7 ♣ K 7 5 2

Spades are different. Asking for keycards over 4 ♠ makes a lot of sense.

# 2024 BHM Wed PM #7: Non-Support

## Board 4

East Deals

Both Vul

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

EW 3♠; EW 2N; EW 2♣; EW 1♥; EW 1♦; Par -140: EW 1♠+2

West	North	East	South
		1 ♣	Pass
1 ♠	2 ♥	Dbl <sup>1</sup>	Pass
2 ♠	All pass		

1. Takeout, with a good hand.

2 ♠ by West

Made 3 — EW +140

Most pairs play support doubles nowadays, and they can work well. This deal is an infrequent case where the support double is a liability.

As East, we open 1 ♣, planning to reverse into diamonds. We have the strength for a 1 NT opening, but with 2-2 majors, partner's use of our crawling Stayman could produce a disaster. In an unimpeded auction, partner's bid and rebid of their major over our 2 ♦ would be non-forcing, showing five spades -- and we would pass -- a solid plan. [*This non-standard agreement is described in EZ-Expert Bidding tools.*]

However, when North sticks their oar in, we don't want to reverse to 3 ♦, but we would like to show our values. We double for takeout with a good hand -- often we would have 3-card support, but we don't promise that -- if we hold a lesser hand with 3-card support, we have the option of a 3-card raise. When partner rebids their spades, we have an easy pass, a minor detour on the way to our best contract, a 68% second session, and winning this regional pairs event in Birmingham AL.

Pairs playing support doubles could pass, defending 2 ♥ for only 100 points. Nobody did that, but two pairs played an inferior 2 NT contract, and one went down in 3 ♠. Clearly, not everyone overcalled on the North hand.

Note that Eric Rodwell, multiple world champion and the inventor of the support double, was a Precision player. The convention is particularly suited to Precision, because opener either shows a good hand by opening 1 ♣ or does not have a good hand -- the need to show "takeout, with a good hand" does not arise.

2024 BHM Tue PM #23: Major Suits

**Board 5**  
South Deals  
Both Vul

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

W

S

N  
E  
S

♠ J 10 5

♥ Q 6 3

♦ A 7 5 4

♣ J 10 3

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

NS 3♣; NS 1♠; EW 1♥; NS 1♦; Par +110: NS 2♣+1

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			3 ♣

Dbl            All pass  
3 ♣× by South  
Lead: ♦ 2  
Made 3 — NS +670

Pass. PASS. **PASS!**

Major suits and a couple of aces are nice. Acting directly over a 3-bid promises 15 points! Just pass, accept our -110, and move on.

If we overcall, we should be set 200, if they forget to double. If we choose the more flexible takeout double, East should pass with 9 HCP and no long suit, expecting to collect at least 200.

Another likely result from acting on this hand: partner has slightly better hand, jumps to game, and goes down there -- when we would set 3 ♣.

# 2024 BHM Wed AM #5: Hearts!

## Board 6

North Deals

N-S Vul

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

EW 6♥; EW 2♠; EW 3♣; EW 1N; EW 1♦; Par -980: EW 6♥=

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1 ♥	2 ♦
Pass	3 ♦	4 ♥	All pass
4 ♥ by East			
Made 6 — EW +480			

As East, we ostensibly have a 3-loser hand. However, if partner is broke, we have to lead from hand and may lose a trump and two tricks in each black suit. Also, we might play better in spades or clubs, so we open one heart (not two clubs).

South overcalls the opening bid with 2 ♦. West keeps the bidding open with a pass, and North applies pressure with a 3 ♦ raise. As East, our hand is too good for a mere 3 ♥ bid; we jump to game and declare 4 ♥. In situations like this, we need to assume partner has a little help. (This time, West would reopen with 3 ♥, but West would not do that with only a doubleton heart.)

3 ♦ doubled is the best spot. It's important to avoid a secondary takeout double with a void, because partner counts on at least one card when considering a penalty pass. Even if East does double, a pass is risky by West, with no actual trump tricks. Congratulations if you scooped up your +500 or +800.

If South does not overcall, our unimpeded auction is better:

1 ♥ - 1 NT; 3 ♣ - 3 ♥; 3 ♠ - 4 ♥; Pass

There are occasional hands with no aces or kings and six HCP where it's correct to pass an opening bid. Experts rarely pass an opening bid holding an ace, especially with 3-card support for a major and a ruffing value. West starts a slow-down raise with 1 NT. The auction proceeds to game with West brushing off East's 3 ♠ slam try.

The play in 4 ♥ is easy: ruff the opening diamond lead, take two trumps, and, using the ♣ A and a club ruff as entries, lead up to the spades twice. This is about a 20% slam, needing the trump split (40%) and the spade finesse (50%).

2024 BHM Wed AM #15: Passed Hand

**Board 7**  
South Deals  
N-S Vul

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

NS 3♦; EW 3♣; EW 1N; EW 1♥; Par +100; EW 4♣×-1

West	North	East	South
			Pass
Pass	Pass	1 ♣	1 ♠
2 NT	All pass		
2 NT by West			
Down 1 — EW -50			

East has 15 mediocre Pearson points (12 HCP plus 3 spades). As it turns out, this would be a great time to move on to the next board. However, as East we add a point for greed and open the bidding :-}

Suppose West, playing heavy invites and light accepts, goes low at 1 NT. If the opponents pass, we should get our positive score. Sorry, that won't happen: South will bid 2 ♦, and they will play 2 ♦ or 3 ♦, -110 for us, even if West competes with 3 ♣.

However, if West jumps to 2 NT over 1 ♠, everyone should pass, and we might minimize our negative score, as happened at the table.



## 2024 BHM Wed AM #23: Jump Raise Mixed

**Board 8**

West Deals

Both Vul

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

EW 3N; EW 5♦; EW 5♣; NS 2♥; NS 1♠; Par -600; EW 5♣=; EW 5♦=

West	North	East	South
1 ♦	1 ♥	2 ♦	Pass
3 ♣	Pass	3 ♦	Pass
3 ♠	Pass	4 ♦	Pass
5 ♦	All pass		
5 ♦ by West			
Made 5 — EW +600			

The West hand has three losers and a poor diamond suit, not close to game-in-hand in partner's choice of our suits. Furthermore, the opponents will find it easy to get in our way. We open 1 ♦.

Over North's 1 ♥ overcall, East's 2 ♦ raise shows 6 to 10 HCP with 4-card support. It says nothing about a heart stopper. A free bid of 1 NT is a priority with a balanced hand and a stopper, but it also shows 8 to 10 HCP. Some play that a free raise of opener's minor shows the same values, but that's old-fashioned.

The author was sitting South, where some players would make a preemptive jump raise of 3 ♥, even vulnerable on this garbage. All our jump raises are mixed, about 7-9 HCP with 4-card support (longer for a minor-suit opening). It seemed the opponents were more likely than partner to profit from knowing about our heart fit, a useful concept, but possibly not best on this deal. At the table, the opponents proved unable to stop below 6 ♦. Partner established a spade winner on the opening lead and cashed it upon winning the ♦ K.

The point of this hand is to play exactly 5 ♦ (or an unlikely 5 ♣). On the face of it, this is almost a 50% slam on a spade lead, depending on the diamond finesse with trumps no worse than 3-1. However, that finesse is into the vulnerable overcaller, who is also likely to hold both top spades, as South could not scrape up a raise with a 10-card fit. East's ♥ A provides a useless discard, while either pointy king would have made slam cold.

West's first three bids above strongly suggest heart shortness. West also did not find asking for keycards useful, increasing the chance of a void. Of course, West could be asking for a heart stopper, but East's hand does not look like a 3 NT bid. That would be something like

♠ 8 5 ♥ Q 10 5 ♦ K 10 7 5 ♣ J 9 7 4

If East does try 3 NT and West passes, South's automatic heart lead requires expert, perhaps double-dummy, declarer play for a ninth trick. However, when East can do no more than bid diamonds a third time, West subsides in 5 ♦.

**Board 9**

South Deals

N-S Vul

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

West	North	East	South
2 NT <sup>1</sup>	Pass	3 ♣ <sup>2</sup>	Pass
3 ♥	Pass	3 ♠ <sup>3</sup>	Pass
4 ♠ <sup>4</sup>	Pass	5 ♣ <sup>5</sup>	Pass
5 ♠ <sup>6</sup>	Pass	7 ♥	All pass

1. 20+ to 22- HCP.
2. Standard Stayman.
3. 4+ hearts and slam interest.
4. RKB hearts (kickback).
5. 1 or 4 keycards (3014).
6. We have them all; asks for specific kings.

7 ♥ by West

Made 7 — EW +1510

Our 2 NT opening is half a point better than the standard 20-21. Standard players open 2 ♣ and rebid 2 NT, after which the same systems would apply. However, for us, the West hand is about the best possible, while for a 2 ♣ opener, it's about the worst. While the continuations are the same, their application should differ on this deal.

When East shows slam interest over a 2 NT opening bid, West plans to bid slam holding the best possible hand, and asks for keycards. Finding we have them all, West duly clues partner in. East knows West has all four aces, the ♥ Q, and three or four additional HCP among ♠ K, ♦ Q-J, and ♣ J. We want to be in the grand slam if opener has the ♠ K. This West hand looks more like a 4 ♣ cue-bid than driving to slam:

♠ A 5 ♥ A Q 6 3 ♦ A Q J 9 ♣ A J 7

Considering this, 7 ♥ is a good bid over 5 ♠. An interesting invention would be 6 ♠, ostensibly showing grand slam interest with only the ♠ K. Looking at the ♠ K, West should understand that East is *asking* for the ♠ K. Without that card, West takes the bid at face value (no minor-suit kings) and retreats to 6 NT, a fine spot.

7 NT scores best on this deal, as West has ♣ J instead of ♦ J. At the table, the author simply added up the HCP and stuck it in 6 NT (a 48% result). Five pairs played games or 6 ♥, five bid 7 NT (90%, an unwarranted risk for an extra 14%), and one bid the safer 7 ♥ (76%). The auction happens to be much better after a 2 ♣ opening:

2 ♣ - 2 ♦; 2 NT - 3 ♣; 3 ♥ - 3 ♠ [slam interest, ♥ are trump];  
 4 ♣ [control] - 4 ♠ [RKB]; 5 ♣ [1 or 4] - 5 ♦ [Q ask]; 5 ♠ [♠ K] - 7 ♥

2024 CLT Mon PM #11: Bergen 20

**Board 10**  
South Deals  
None Vul

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



EW 6N; EW 6♠; EW 6♣; EW 4♥; EW 5♦; Par -990: EW 6N=

West	North	East	South
			Pass
1 ♦	Pass	2 ♣ <sup>1</sup>	Pass
2 ♠ <sup>2</sup>	Pass	3 ♠	Pass
4 NT	Pass	5 ♦ <sup>3</sup>	Pass
5 ♥ <sup>4</sup>	Pass	6 ♣ <sup>5</sup>	Pass
6 ♠	All pass		

1. 2/1 forcing to game.
2. 4+ spades; if only 4, fewer than 5 diamonds.
3. 1 or 4 keycards (3014).
4. Do you have the ♠ Q?
5. Yes, and the ♣ K.

6 ♠ by West  
Made 6 — EW +980

East has a Bergen 20 (10 cards in the two longest suits and 10 HCP) plus the singleton queen in partner's suit. Since we would open the bidding on this hand, it's reasonable to respond a game-forcing 2 ♣. Opener's 2 ♠ bid is according to Plan A from my article "After One Diamond - Two Clubs." That article should appear as a new section in an update to *EZ-Expert Bidding Tools*.

Over responder's raise of spades, opener's hand looks great - West decides to bid a slam, so long as we have enough keycards.

East could reasonably choose a 1 ♠ response. Then the auction proceeds:

1 ♦ - 1 ♠; 4 ♠ - ?

Having decided to go low as East, it's probably best to live with that decision and pass 4 ♠. On the other hand, West has a prime 19 HCP, which is not unexpected. Many 18-point hands are only worth a jump to 3 ♠. Responding 1 ♠ is better for sorting out the best contract without forcing to game, but not so hot for slam.

This is only a fair slam, mostly depending on 3-2 splits in the black suits (68% each), ostensibly 46%. One even break makes the other more likely, so call it 50% (but both bad is more likely, too). If the opponents fail to lead a heart, we discard East's hearts and we might survive the loss of a trick in a black suit.

2024 CLT Tue PM #6: 3-6 Jump Rebid

**Board 11**  
North Deals  
N-S Vul

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

EW 6♣; EW 4N; EW 4♠; EW 4♥; Par -920: EW 6♣=

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	Pass
1 ♣	Pass	1 ♥	Pass
3 ♦ <sup>1</sup>	Pass	3 NT	All pass

1. exactly 3 hearts and 6 clubs; forcing to 3 ♥.

3 NT by East

Made 4 — EW +430

This time, West did not really need our fancy 3=6 jump reverse. A 3 ♣ jump rebid should work just fine. However, it could be crucial if East held:

♠ K 10 5 4 ♥ K J 8 7 3 ♦ J 3 ♣ 7 6 2

Furthermore, it means that opener's jump rebid of 3 ♣ asks responder *not* to bid hearts with the above hand. Responder only bids hearts over 3 ♣ with a 6-bagger. Instead, responder bids 3 ♠ on this hand, showing a spade stopper but highlighting the diamond problem.

We make 6 ♣ on this deal only because we can pin the ♥ 9. That's not enough to justify bidding this slam. 3 NT is the proper contract.

2024 CLT Tue AM #10: Bad Slam

**Board 12**  
East Deals  
Both Vul

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

EW 6N; EW 6♠; EW 4♥; EW 5♦; EW 5♣; Par -1440: EW 6N=

West	North	East	South
		2 NT	Pass
3 ♠ <sup>1</sup>	Pass	3 NT <sup>2</sup>	Pass
4 ♦ <sup>3</sup>	Pass	4 ♥ <sup>4</sup>	Pass
4 ♠ <sup>5</sup>	Pass	4 NT <sup>6</sup>	All pass

1. Relay to 3 NT.
2. Required relay.
3. RKB ♣ (crosswood).
4. 0 or 3 keycards (3014).
5. Do you have the ♣ Q?
6. No.

4 NT by East

Made 5 — EW +660

Note that, when East holds ♣ Q-8 instead of ♣ 8-6, two finesses keep clubs to one loser much of the time.

In 6 NT, we can take the diamond finesse and squeeze North, because South cannot help defend either minor. This is not a great slam. I don't remember the actual play, but I may have established clubs for 11 tricks without the diamond finesse. Not knowing the goal is the ongoing problem of playing matchpoints.

A better auction might be to invite in clubs, rather than blast:

2 NT - 3 ♣; 3 ♠ - 4 ♣ [natural invitation]; ?

With minimum strength and the worst possible club holding, opener signs off in 4 NT. 4 ♥ or 4 ♠ would be a cue-bid in support of clubs, definitely the wrong message, so we don't get to offer to play in spades -- unless we jump to 5 ♠ and partner reads it correctly.

Here's an incredible auction that lands in 6 ♠, the top spot on this deal:

2 NT - 4 NT; 5 ♠ [accepts with 5-bagger] - 6 ♣; 6 ♠ [great spades] - Pass

**Board 13**

West Deals

N-S Vul

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

EW 5♠; EW 5♣; NS 2♥; EW 1N; NS 1♦; Par -450; EW 4♠+1

West	North	East	South
1 ♠	Pass	2 NT <sup>1</sup>	Pass
3 ♣ <sup>2</sup>	Pass	4 ♠	All pass

1. Limit raise or better (Swedish Jacoby).

2. Small opening hand.

At favorable vulnerability with a Bergen 20 (9 black cards and 11 dubious HCP) West has added a point for a spade suit. Matchpoints is a bidders game.

Some Easts would splinter to 4 ♥ on this hand, but we require 12 to 14 HCP for our "game splinter." Still, we plan to bid a game, with 13 points including the singleton and 4-card support. We respond 2 NT, which, for us, might only invite a game. (Playing standard Jacoby with our enhanced responses, 2 NT is still best.)

South should resist the temptation to enter the bidding for two reasons: the vulnerability and the wasted values. East-West have announced a probable majority of the HCP, and our minority includes the ♠ Q and ♣ J. If the opponents have 22 and we have 13, partner is likely to have at most 5. At equal vulnerability against a game-forcing 2 NT, it would make sense to get a heart lead holding:

♠ 6 5 ♥ A K J 9 6 ♦ Q J 9 7 ♣ 10 7

East-West may have little to do but settle into their spade game -- especially if opener's double shows a singleton.

Opener settles the deal by rebidding 3 ♣. As many experts do, we play 3 ♣ shows a small hand, about 12 to 14 HCP. (Our other enhanced responses are NLMH5 bids showing a stronger hand. The first four steps no, low, medium, or high shortness; higher bids show a 5-card suit with two of the top three honors.)

As responder, over 3 ♣, we bid 4 ♠, end of auction. With only a limit raise, we would rebid 3 ♠, which opener might pass or raise. With slam interest, responder bids NLMH5, skipping 3 ♠. (If responder's 2 NT has forced to game, then there is no 3 ♠ limit raise bid to skip over.)

We have seen two NLMH5 situations; there are two more: when either partner bids 3 ♦, a No-shortness bid showing extra values. Yes, responder as well as opener gets to show shortness or a good 5-bagger -- only with slam interest.

These methods are quite consistent, especially when Jacoby 2 NT forces to game.

2024 Warwick Tue AM #17: Grand

**Board 14**

West Deals

None Vul

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

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	2 ♣	Pass
2 ♦ <sup>1</sup>	Pass	3 ♠ <sup>2</sup>	Pass
4 ♥ <sup>3</sup>	Pass	4 NT <sup>4</sup>	Pass
5 ♦ <sup>5</sup>	Pass	6 ♣ <sup>6</sup>	Pass
7 ♣ <sup>7</sup>	Pass	7 ♠	All pass

1. Positive (K or QQ), lacking a good suit.
2. Spades are trump, start bidding controls.
3. ♥ control, no ♣ or ♦ control.
4. Asking for keycards (RKB).
5. 1 or 4 (3014 responses).
6. Asking for third round club control.
7. Yes, a doubleton.

7 ♠ by East

Made 7 — EW +1510

This hand was bid by our opponents, whose auction was not memorable. All East-Wests took 13 tricks playing in spades. 4 ♠ scored 13 %; 6 ♠, 57 %; 6 ♠ doubled, 93%; 7 ♠, 100% (by Haven Sharaf & Louise Banner).

The auction above [1], would have accurately bid the grand slam using our methods. The key to this success is that West's 4 ♥ control bid denies holding a club or diamond control. Normally, it's a very bad idea to ask for keycards with a void, but here East knows that the only possible keycard for West is the ♥ A. It is necessary to ask, because 4 ♥ could have been the king (or an unlikely singleton). Of course, the doubleton control in clubs must be accompanied by two or more trumps. Otherwise, a trump lead, quite common at a grand slam, would erase that trick.

Auction [2] would be our first use in decades of the 4 NT opening, asking for specific aces. West responds 4 ♥, showing that ace, and we know the small slam is solid. However, anything we bid next sets the contract. We cannot find out about the third-round club control. The small slam is the wise choice; by bidding the grand we could lose the 57% already in the bag. We also gain no information if partner has only the ♦ A or no ace.

If we were permitted only one bid on this hand, it would surely be 6 ♠. Once we commit to a small slam, Auction [1] makes the most sense. The small slam makes if partner has ♥ A, the ♠ 7 and the ♦ A, the doubleton ♠ 7 and the ♥ K onside, the ♣ Q, a doubleton or shorter club with two trumps, or ♣ J-x-x(x) and the queen drops. We have lots of undeniable chances, and the opponents may make a mistake.

2024 Warwick Wed PM #4: 4-2 Fit

**Board 15**

West Deals

Both Vul

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

EW 5♥; EW 3N; EW 4♦; EW 4♣; EW 1♠; Par -650: EW 4♥+1

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 ♣	Pass	1 ♥	Pass
2 ♦	Pass	2 NT <sup>1</sup>	Pass
3 ♣ <sup>2</sup>	Pass	3 ♠ <sup>3</sup>	Pass
4 ♥	All pass		

1. Slow down bid, only 4 ♥, asks for 3 ♣ for sign-off or game-only.

2. As requested.

3. Shows and asks for Jxx or Qx (half a stopper).

4 ♥ by East

Made 5 — EW +650

At the table, West jumped in notrump and scored up +600 at 3 NT, when spades split. The opponents might not have led a spade, and we have 11 tricks once we get in.

We also have 11 tricks in hearts, since the ♥ 10 comes down. The above is a way to reach that contract. It would also be sensible for East, instead of bidding 3 ♠, to bid 3 NT, playing there. The singleton ♠ Q would produce a true stopper or the opponents may not be able to take five spades.

The bad game contract is 5 ♣, often reached after telling the opponents to lead three rounds of spades. After that start, the contract should fail, as declarer cannot enjoy all four hearts.



2024 Warwick Wed PM #16: Weak Jump Shift

**Board 16**

West Deals

E-W Vul

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

EW 5♥; EW 3♠; EW 4♣; EW 1N; NS 1♦; Par -650: EW 4♥+1

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	1 ♠	2 ♣	3 ♦

All pass

3 ♦ by South

Down 2 — NS -100

We played this one against GLM Disa Eythorsdottir. Her partner, Maureen McLaughlin, fixed us, but good, with that weak jump shift.

This time around, the action that keeps West in the auction after the WJS is for East to overcall 1 NT, which is rather sick. I don't think much of the WJS, either, but we were the ones with the 12% score.

2024 Warwick Thu AM #1: Fourth Seat

**Board 17**

North Deals

None Vul

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

EW 4♠; EW 2N; EW 1♥; EW 1♦; NS 1♣; Par -420; EW 4♠=

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	Pass
2 ♠	Pass	3 ♠	All pass
3 ♠ by West			
Lead: ♥ K			
Made 4 — EW +170			

"The fourth-seat 2-bid shows a good suit and an expectation of a positive score, but little chance for game. This is standard; Billy Miller says 11–13 HCP." -- *EZ-Expert Bidding Tools*

After three passes, West has too much chance for a spade partscore to pass the hand out. This is a Bergen 18: 9 excellent HCP and 9 black cards. We open 2 ♠ to deny interest in game, even though we have less than the expected strength.

Despite West's assertion, East may have the values to make game. Indeed, even on a trump lead, we get five trumps in hand, two ruffs in dummy, and three tops, for ten tricks!

Do you know of agreements people play in this situation? This author does not. Consider this plan:

- Opener's suit is trump (it's supposed to be good). If we don't like that suit, we pass.
- Therefore, we should play game tries, as if opener had just raised our own suit to the two level.

Accordingly, East should bid 3 ♣ over 2 ♠, a short suit game try in our relocated methods. With a sub-minimum, West signs off. That's OK: if we bid game, the mobile ♠ K will appear in the North hand :-)

However, give West this hand, and an excellent game should be reached:

♠ A J 10 7 5 3 ♥ 2 ♦ A 7 ♣ 7 4 3 2

Use these methods with caution. East's heavy limit raise of spades is what is required. The ♠ Q is, point-for-point, the best card in the deck. With an ace and a king in the side suits, we should have a game if opener has full values outside of clubs. Notice that the ♦ A fits with the ♦ K and is therefore more useful than the ♣ A would be.

## 2024 Warwick Thu AM #18: Jacoby 2 NT

**Board 18**  
East Deals  
N-S Vul

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

EW 6N; EW 6♠; EW 3♥; EW 4♣; EW 2♦; Par -990: EW 6N=

West	North	East	South
		1 ♠	Pass
2 NT <sup>1</sup>	Pass	3 ♦ <sup>2</sup>	Pass
3 ♥ <sup>3</sup>	Pass	3 ♠ <sup>4</sup>	Pass
4 NT <sup>5</sup>	Pass	5 ♠ <sup>6</sup>	Pass
6 ♠	All pass		

1. 4-Card limit raise or better (Swedish Jacoby).
2. Medium or large with no shortness, asks NLMH5.
3. No shortness (N).
4. Waiting (between serious 3 NT and a medium cue-bid).
5. Asking for keycards (RKB).
6. Two keycards with the ♠ Q.

6 ♠ by East

Lead: ♥ J

Made 6 — EW +980

Our Jacoby 2 NT methods are great for bidding or staying out of slams. Opener's first duty is to bid 3 ♣ on all small opening hands, whether holding shortness or not. With a small or medium hand, responder bids game, and the opponents get no further information. In our Swedish variation, responder bids 3 ♠ on an invitational hand and opener either passes or bids game. With slam interest, responder bids NLMH5 steps (skipping the Swedish 3 ♠): no, low, middle, or high shortness; any higher bid is natural, a 5-card suit with two of the top three honors.

With a medium+ hand, opener bids a NLMH5 3 ♦ (no shortness). Responder replies a NLMH5 3 ♥ (no shortness). We are in a game force, so there is no Swedish bid here.

We play Serious 3 NT here. With a clearly medium hand, East would make a courtesy bid of the cheapest first or second round control. With serious slam interest, East would bid 3 NT. If forced to choose, East would do the latter, but East has 3 ♠ available for this garden-variety balanced strong hand (18 to 19 HCP). East has as good a 14-count as possible, so decides to go serious. 3 NT would be correct with an uncontrolled suit, but West has them all covered, so 4 NT is correct. We come to rest in 6 ♠ with one feature missing.

Look how important the ♠ J turns out to be. Without it, West would make a courtesy bid of 4 ♣ instead of going serious over 3 ♠. With the ♠ J, East would have gone serious at 3 NT instead of marking time at 3 ♠. Further weaken the West hand to ♣ Q-8-4, and West would simply sign off in 4 ♠.

2024 Warwick Thu AM #23: Reverse

**Board 19**  
South Deals  
Both Vul

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



EW 4♠; EW 5♦; EW 1N; EW 1♥; NS 1♣; Par -620: EW 4♠=

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			Pass
1 ♦	2 ♣	Pass	Pass
2 ♥	Pass	2 ♠	Pass
3 ♦	Pass	4 ♦	Pass
4 ♠	All pass		
4 ♠ by East			
Made 4 — EW +620			

Here is an auction to the top spot. West offers 4 ♠ as an option on the way to 5 ♦, the latter being a much safer contract. East should probably push on to 5 ♦, as their spades may not be strong enough to play in a 5-2 fit.

2024 Warwick Fri AM #1: Picture Bid

**Board 20**

West Deals

None Vul

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

EW 6N; EW 6♥; EW 4♦; EW 2♠; EW 3♣; Par -990: EW 6N=

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 ♥	Pass	2 ♦	Pass
2 ♥ <sup>1</sup>	Pass	4 ♥ <sup>2</sup>	All pass

1. Catch-all (nothing better to bid).

2. Picture bid, four of the top six honors in bid suits, no side control.

4 ♥ by West

Lead: ♣ J

Made 6 — EW +480

East has the best possible top honors. West knows we have a certain club loser, and it looks likely we have another problem to deal with. A fitting honor in either red suit would be a big deal.

North wins the lead with the ♣ A and returns a club and West is in. West leads a heart to the ace and notes the fall of the ♥ J. They return to hand with a spade and take the 67% "restricted choice" finesse for the trump queen, making six.

From the bidding, West does not know that East has the best possible hand -- and even then it takes the correct play in trumps to bring home a slam.

## 2024 Warwick Fri AM #18: Higher-Longer

**Board 21**

North Deals

E-W Vul

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

EW 4♠; EW 4♣; EW 1N; NS 1♥; NS 1♦; Par -620: EW 4♠=

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1 ♦
Pass	1 ♥	2 ♦ <sup>1</sup>	2 ♥
3 ♣	Pass	Pass	3 ♥

All pass

1. At least four spades and five clubs (lower-longer cue-bid).

3 ♥ by North

Down 1 — NS -50

Bidding in the sandwich position, between opponents who have bid different suits, can be dangerous. They have not shown a fit, so we may not have one -- and they may have the majority of the points -- but we cannot afford to stay silent with shape.

At the time we played this deal, we were playing the *lower-longer cue-bid*, which often does not supply a fifth spade. We had two other two-suited options: double, which could be 4-4 or with a fifth spade, and 2 NT, which forces us to the three level to show 5-5.

We have since switched to the *high-five cue-bid*, also called *higher-longer*. This cue-bid of opener's minor shows at five cards (possibly more) in the high suit, and at least four cards in the lower suit. (The name higher-longer facilitates discussion by associating the bid to the same situation as an alternative to lower-longer.)

The primary target is the unbid major. Playing higher-longer, we would have a similar auction, except that West would take the push to 3 ♠, with a double fit and knowing East has five spades. (This is a partscore deal that makes game on the club split and the lucky lie of the spades.)

Playing higher-longer, we still have 2 NT for 5-5 with better suit texture. Unless doubler has a huge hand, the takeout double promises *exactly* four spades and at least four clubs. It appears that higher-longer is more likely to make an important difference in a partscore battle, defining the length of intervenor's major suit. Here, it lets us claim the master suit and win the board.

The most important requirement for an overcall in one of the unbid suits (or in responder's major suit) is a strong suit, usually at least six cards. If we don't have that suit, then we have our two-suited options. Our last chance with a lesser suit is the possibility of backing into the auction, if the opponents find a fit but stop at the two level.

2024 Warwick Fri AM #20: Slow-Down Raise

**Board 22**  
South Deals  
Both Vul

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

EW 3♥; EW 1N; NS 2♦; NS 1♠; Par -140; EW 2♥+1

West	North	East	South
			Pass
1 ♥	Pass	1 NT <sup>1</sup>	Pass
2 NT	Pass	3 ♥ <sup>2</sup>	All pass

1. Starting a slow-down raise, lacking two sure winners.

2. Slow-down raise.

3 ♥ by West

Made 3 — EW +140

A 4 ♥ contract depends mostly on the club finesse. (Our doubleton and fourth trump tamp down the risks of bad breaks.) Game is a practical 50%, so we *don't care* whether we bid this game or not -- until we see who has the ♣ K.

However, if we raise to 2 ♥ instead of the slow-down raise, that will affect other hands for opener. They might make a game try, expecting to be safe at the 3-level with our purported two winners, and go down. In essence, the constructive single raise is an invitation, and we play heavy invites.

We are *good* because we can often stop at the two level on those other deals. We are *lucky* on this don't-care deal that game happens to fail, when another responder makes a single raise and opener jumps to game. In the long run, good play wins, and luck evens out.

## 2024 Warwick Fri PM #10: Diamond Slam

**Board 23**

East Deals

Both Vul

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

EW 6♦; W 4♥; EW 3N; E 3♥; EW 2♠; EW 3♣; Par -1370: EW 6♦=

West	North	East	South
		1 ♦	Pass
1 ♠	Pass	2 ♥ <sup>1</sup>	Pass
3 ♣ <sup>2</sup>	Pass	3 ♥ <sup>3</sup>	Pass
4 ♦	Pass	4 ♥	Pass
5 ♦	All pass		

1. Strong reverse.
2. Natural and forcing.
3. At least 5=6 shape.

5 ♦ by East

Lead: ♣ 7

Made 5 — EW +600

5 ♦ is a nice solid contract, which might be reached by the auction above. 6 ♦ can be made by taking two clubs (discarding one heart), coming to hand with the ♠ A, and leading the ♦ 10 for an x-ray-vision finesse. South does not cover, as it's only an inconvenience if the trick must be won on dummy. Declarer ruffs a heart, pulls trump and claims. I would expect just about nobody to finesse on the first round in that direction. However, if we have to lose two trumps, we still make five. Game in hearts or notrump appears to require picking the diamond as well - and we would still need a ninth trick at notrump (assuming the ♠ A is gone before the ♦ A...).

East has a choice of initial plans. With 16 HCP, it's clear to open 1 ♦ and reverse into hearts. However, turn the ♥ A or K into a small heart, and it makes sense to open 1 ♥ and rebid 2 ♦, as if 5-5.

West has a choice of initial plans. A 2 ♣ response might be effective, immediately establishing a game force. The problem is, opener will often bid 2 ♥; our 2 ♠ then could be spades, but could merely deny a better bid. Let's get the 5-card spade suit in now, even though we may need some shenanigans to force to game.

Over the 2 ♥ reverse, 3 ♦ would be West's strongest possible bid. Over that, East would ask for keycards with 4 ♣ (crosswood); finding one, East would place the contract in 6 ♦.

♦ Q-6-3, accompanied by one ace and a void in opener's heart suit, does not support West's strongest possible bid; ♦ Q-J-3 might, and ♦ Q-6-4-3 would. When West makes a natural force at 3 ♣ and a belated preference to diamonds, the mediocre slam can be avoided.



# 2024 Warwick Sun AM #4: Buying a Problem

## Board 24

West Deals

Both Vul

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

NS 3♠; E 3♣; W 2♣; EW 1♥; EW 1♦; Par +140: NS 3♠=

West	North	East	South
1 ♥	Pass	1 NT <sup>1</sup>	2 ♠

All pass

1. Starting a slow-down raise.

2 ♠ by South

Lead: ♦ K

Made 4 — NS +170

The great Edgar Kaplan might have opened 1 ♥ on this hand, inspiring my partner to do so. His center-hand-opponent (yours truly) did not hurt him for this. However, the short-heart opening cramped partner's own style during the bidding. Over South's 2 ♠, we have agreed to play opener's double as takeout with a good hand; however, West cannot risk playing 3 ♥ in a 4-3 or 4-2 fit and therefore passed. The auction may also have been a factor our yielding an overtrick on defense. Playing a 5-card-major system, opening a 4-card major is an action with multiple ways to lose. Instead:

1 ♦ - (Pass) - 1 NT - (2 ♠)

Now West has an easy good-hand takeout double, and we might buy the contract for 3 ♣.

West has six opening-bid plans to choose from:

1. Pass -- this hand is too good to pass.
2. Open 1 ♦ and rebid 1 NT over a 1 ♠ response -- promises two spades; responder will rebid ♠ 6-5-4-3-2.
3. Open 1 ♦ and plan to rebid 2 ♦ -- short a diamond, but my choice with this good suit.
4. Open 1 ♦ and plan to rebid 2 ♣ -- perhaps with ♦ A-J-9-3-2 and ♣ K-Q-9.
5. Open 1 ♦ and reverse to 2 ♥ -- marginal; clubs and hearts are both scruffy; either jack would help much.
6. Open 1 ♥ and plan to rebid 2 ♦ -- partner will routinely stick us in 2 ♥ with a small doubleton.

Over a 1 ♠ response, some partnerships permit opener to rebid 1 NT with a singleton spade. This ripples through the system: responder needs six spades or a chunky five to rebid them, whether immediately or after new minor forcing.

2024 Warwick Sun AM #5: Club Invitation

**Board 25**  
North Deals  
N-S Vul

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

EW 4♥; EW 5♦; EW 2N; EW 2♣; Par -420: EW 4♥=

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1 ♥	Pass
2 ♣	Pass	2 ♦	Pass
3 ♣ <sup>1</sup>	All pass		

1. Non-forcing.

3 ♣ by West

Down 1 — EW -50

*The better part of valor is discretion, in the which better part I have saved my life.* -- Falstaff, after deserting the battle, *Henry IV Part 1*.

Most pairs should get to 3 ♣ via an invitational jump shift over the 1 ♥ opening. That situation is similar, but East won't have shown a diamond suit. In either case, it's standard that any bid by opener is forcing.

Is East strong enough to bid on? Yes, with double dummy play; however, even 3 ♦ went down, in practice, and most of the higher contracts were two down. Our pass was worth 74%.

In the manner of S. J. Simon, when the balance of the information indicates a misfit, stop bidding.

2024 Warwick Sun AM #11: Higher Longer

**Board 26**  
South Deals  
None Vul

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

NS 4♠; NS 4♣; NS 2N; E 2♥; W 1♥; EW 1♦; Par +420: NS 4♠=

West	North	East	South
			1 ♣
Pass	1 ♠	Dbl	Rdbl <sup>1</sup>
Pass	3 ♠	All pass	

1. 3-card spade support.

3 ♠ by North

Made 4 — NS +170

At the time this board was played, we were playing the cue-bid of 2 ♣ as showing at least five diamonds and four hearts, a *lower-longer cue-bid*. We have since flipped this to the *high-five* or *higher-longer cue-bid*, which we would have used on this hand.

In theory, the system makes little difference on this deal, but the opponents get different information. First, on the actual auction, we double with both 4=5 and 4=4. On the latter shape, better high card values are needed. As a result, our system basically told declarer to run the singleton through ♣ K, instead of finessing across trump. With a shape-showing high-five 2 ♣, the implication of high cards would not be as strong. Our -170 was worth 34%, while the defenders who scored -140 got 66%.