

Preempts work! We failed to find one of the routes to the good slam on this hand. If you don't care why, skip to the bottom. This is a play problem.

Andrew chose a strong reverse at his second turn. Had the overcall been  $1 \clubsuit$ , Andrew would have had an automatic support double, showing 3-card heart support. Without support doubles, that double shows a good hand, often with three hearts. That's what the double of  $2 \clubsuit$  would mean; I would again cue bid  $3 \clubsuit$ . When Andrew bid  $4 \heartsuit$ , definitely with three hearts, it would be keycard time.

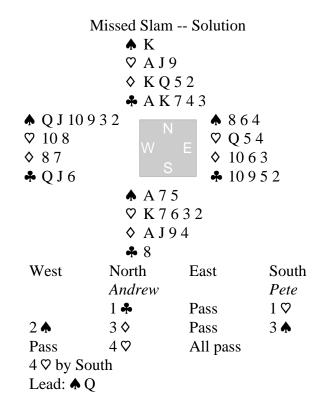
Over 3  $\diamond$ , there was a chance that if I bid 3  $\heartsuit$ , I would play there; so I cue bid 3  $\clubsuit$ . (At after a 2-level reverse, we would play my 2  $\heartsuit$  as showing five cards, but non-forcing. This is a fine, non-standard agreement.)

A better choice than 3  $\bigstar$  would have been 4  $\diamondsuit$ , surely forcing (or perhaps 5 NT, pick a slam). I was deterred, because sometimes people bid a chunky minor suit fragment, perhaps with  $\diamondsuit$  K-Q-5 and  $\clubsuit$  A-K-7-4-3-2. I should have done it anyhow. Then when partner volunteered 4  $\heartsuit$ , I would have believed him, and asked for key cards. Andrew bid 4  $\heartsuit$  because he had planned to all along, bidding out his shape. However, I feared he bid it because I coerced him with 3  $\bigstar$ . If he held  $\heartsuit$  A-9, for example, that was plenty high in hearts - but 6  $\diamondsuit$  would have been an even better contract.

Instead of passing 4  $\heartsuit$ , 5 NT would have been much better by me. If Andrew picked clubs, I would convert to diamonds, and Andrew would either pass or convert to hearts. While we both had better choices along the way, I think the clearly worst call was my pass of four hearts. Bad things are more likely to happen when we are in uncharted waters.

So here we are in four-only-hearts, playing matchpoint pairs. Plan the play.

*Board 10* North Deals Both Vul



The heart slam is not cold. Having missed the slam, our best hope for a good score is that slam goes down. We have eight side-suit tricks, so the entire play revolves around the five potential heart tricks.

Some declarers may cash the  $\heartsuit$  K and lead a trump toward dummy, planning to finesse. If East started with  $\heartsuit$  Q-10-x-x, those declarers go down in slam. West preempted, so that is quite possible.

We can hold the trump losers to one, if West started with the singleton  $\heartsuit$  8, 10 or Q. We win the  $\bigstar$  K and lead the  $\heartsuit$  A. East plays small, and West does play the eight! Now we lead the  $\heartsuit$  J, and run it when East again plays low.\* West contributes the 10, and we take all the tricks. We did not beat any slammers, but our +710 beat almost everybody else, for a 51% score.

\* In my short time in graduate school at Johns Hopkins, several rules were attributed to a fellow I never met. Thompson's third rule was, *never cover with the queen of trumps*. Covering here can never help, because partner's lone remaining heart will appear on this trick. Declarer could be fishing, having started with  $\heartsuit$  K-10-7-6-3-2; covering would give the show away. Of course, never say never: East makes the obvious cover from  $\heartsuit$  Q-10-x.