

The Adventures of Boris the Improver

Board 11 from Monday 24th February. Our results. 3NT making 5NT 460, 3NT making 4NT 430, 5D making 6D 420, 3D making 5D 150 (twice), 3D making 4D 130, 6NT down 2 -100.

Analysis

With 28 hcp (high card points), between the two hands and a 6-3 fit in a minor, the partnership should definitely be in game. The question of which one is answered by looking at the scores. 3NT making 4NT is worth more than 5D making 6D. Playing pairs where even a small difference in the scores can make a big difference to the match points, it is clearly better to be playing in No Trumps. The situation is different when bidding a marginal slam where distribution may result in extra tricks. It is possible to make 6D, but impossible to make 6NT.

The bidding

Boris was South and opened one diamond. Lou bid two clubs and Boris noticed a surprised look and a little smile from George. He's got a club suit too thought Boris as he bid two diamonds. Lou looked a little disappointed. Her two club bid was to keep the bidding open and to see what Boris's rebid was. Reluctantly she bid three no trump. Boris reasoned that Lou must have a strong hand and be interested in a slam. Wanting to show his hand was more valuable played in diamonds he bid five diamonds to see just how interested she was. Lou took the bait and bid six diamonds. This became the final contract.

Lou		
♠ A 8 6		
♥ A K		
♦ K 9 2		
♣ K 9 8 3 2		
♠ T 7		♠ Q J 9 5 2
♥ Q 7 6 5 2		♥ T 9 4
♦ 8 7 6		♦ J
♣ 6 5 4		♣ A Q T 7
Michelle		George
	♠ K 4 3	
	♥ J 8 3	
	♦ A Q T 5 4 3	
	♣ J	
	Boris	

Contract 6D, lead ten of spades.

The play

Boris won the opening lead with the King of spades. He played off the Ace and King of diamonds and noticed the trumps had fallen 3-1. He next led a small club from dummy that George won with the Queen. He led back the Queen of spades. Boris won with the Ace in dummy and led the King of clubs. George covered with the Ace and Boris won the trick with the ten of diamonds. He next led a small diamond to the nine to get back to dummy. At trick eight Boris led the 9 of clubs. George differed. He wanted to play the ten but after he worked out it would be ruffed and two tricks set up in dummy, he played the 7 instead. Boris discarded the 4 of spades and then led the 3 of clubs which he ruffed taking out George's ten in the process. Boris claimed the rest. Queen of diamonds, Ace-King of hearts and the 8 of clubs. On a heart lead the play is a little different. The Ace of spades can be preserved as an entry after three rounds of clubs have been ruffed and a losing heart has been ruffed in dummy.

Given the choice this is the superior line of play but can't be used against a spade lead. Ruffing a heart as the final entry means there is still a trump left that will inevitably take a trick.

Hopefully Helpful Hints

On average players will play two hands on defence for every one they play as Declarer. Most players manage their cards well when they are dummy. Most instruction is based on Declarer play because it really has to come first. It is important to know what Declarer is trying to do before trying to devise a way to prevent it. There is also the importance of the defenders working together. This still leaves room for advice on opening leads and passive defence.

	Dummy	
	♠ A K 5 4	
	♥ Q T	
	♦ 9 8 7	
	♣ K T 6 3	
♠ T 9 7		♠ 6 3 2
♥ K 9 8 6		♥ 7 4 3 2
♦ K 6 5 3		♦ T 4 2
♣ 4 2		♣ 9 8 7
You	♠ Q J 8	
	♥ A J 5	
	♦ A Q J	
	♣ A Q J 5	
	Declarer	

What do you lead against six no trump? Any card you like as long as its black.

A small heart or diamond would be a reasonable lead against a lower level no trump contract. Your partner may have something in that suit to help you out and establish a trick for you. Against a slam there is little chance that your partner will have any useful cards and defeating the contract depends on you making both of your Kings. There is a good chance of this happening if Declarer is forced to take some finesses. What the defender on lead must try and do is avoid giving Declarer a free finesse.

Declarer has four tricks in spades and four in clubs no matter what the lead is. Declarer needs four tricks in the red suits to make the contract. On a heart lead the Queen goes up at trick one and wins the trick. Eight black tricks are played off with the Jack of hearts being discarded from hand. An unsuccessful diamond finesse is now taken, but it doesn't matter. Declarer takes the last three tricks with the Ace of hearts and the Ace and Queen of diamonds. Play is similar on a diamond lead. In either case four tricks are won in the red suits.

On a spade or club lead the contract is unmakeable. After a spade lead declarer is forced into taking a finesse. If by this time you have run out of black cards, you lead back the same suit. If for example they lead the Queen of hearts from dummy, after you have won the trick you lead back another heart. You do not give them a free finesse by leading a diamond. The same applies if a diamond finesse is taken. The principle behind passive defence is that you give Declarer tricks they already have and make them work for anything extra.

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