

Tuesday, October 8, 2013

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH TANNAH HIRSCH & BOB JONES

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WHAT'S YOUR PREFERENCE?

Neither vulnerable. East deals.

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

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

The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
1♦	2♣	Dbl	2♥
Pass	3♣	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Opening lead: Five of ♦

West's double was negative, not penalty, to show the majors. The defense routinely starts with ace, king and a diamond ruff. That powerful heart suit is looming in the dummy, so it is important for West to shift to a spade while he still has the ace of clubs. West thought it was too dangerous to lead from his king of spades, so he led a heart instead. Declarer played the queen from dummy and ruffed out East's king, then led the king of trump. West won his ace and now shifted to a spade,

but it was too late. Declarer won the ace, ruffed a heart (establishing the suit), cashed the queen of clubs drawing trump and played a club to dummy's ten to discard all three of his remaining spades on the good hearts.

We sympathize with West's aversion to playing from his king of spades. The fault for this hand truly lies with East. When East cashed his ace and king of diamonds, he knew from partner's high-low that he could ruff the third diamond. Whenever you lead a card that you know your partner will ruff, the card you play is a Suit Preference Signal! This means that you disregard the trump suit and tell partner which of the other two suits you would like him to play. East can see that nothing can happen to his potential heart trick and he wants partner to shift to a spade in case they have a trick in that suit. East should lead the jack of diamonds for partner to ruff, his highest known diamond. That play asks for a shift to the higher ranking of the two remaining suits, after excluding the trump suit.

Declarer has no winning line of play after a spade shift.

(Tannah Hirsch welcomes readers' responses sent in care of this newspaper or to Tannah Hirsch c/o Tribune Content Agency, LLC., 16650 Westgrove Dr., Suite 175, Addison, TX 75001. E-mail responses may be sent to gorenbridge@aol.com.)

Wednesday, October 9, 2013

GOREN BRIDGE

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WHEN YOU KNOW IT ALL

East-West vulnerable. South deals.

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

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

The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
2♦	3♣	Pass	4♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Opening lead: Ace of ♦

This hand came up in a recent duplicate pairs game. The defense usually started with three rounds of diamonds, making it easy for declarer. East could then draw four rounds of trump and pass the jack of hearts into North, endplaying him in hearts and clubs. At trick three, declarer knew where all the missing high cards were. South was known to have ace, king, queen and jack of diamonds. With as much as another queen, he would have opened one diamond, not two diamonds.

If South shifts to a club at trick three, declarer can win the ace, draw trump and then run the jack of hearts into North for the same endplay.

What if South shifts to a heart at trick three? If declarer plays the ace, he has no chance. The club finesse can't possibly be right. He has to duck the heart.

Upon winning the heart, North can't play a heart or a club, so he has to play a spade. East draws trump. A second heart finesse is hopeless, as he knows the other honor is offside. He could still make his bid by ruffing out the queen of clubs, but the odds are that North will have more than three clubs. That would be a poor line of play. Is there anything better? Yes!

East should cash dummy's ace of hearts (known as the Vienna Coup) before drawing trump and then cash every one of his trumps, leaving this ending:

♥ Q
♣ Q 8 6

♣ A K J ♥ J 10
 ♣ 5

♦ J
♣ 9 3

North still has to discard on the last trump. Curses! No matter what he discards, East has the rest of the tricks.

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Thursday, October 10, 2013

GOREN BRIDGE

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WHEN EXPERTS FINESSE

North-South vulnerable. East deals.

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

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

The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
1♦	2♣	2♥	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♦	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Opening lead: Jack of ♠

"When I make a 50 percent play, I expect it to succeed eight or nine times out of ten." — The Hideous Hog

Good players take more winning finesses than bad players. Are they luckier? Of course not! Let's look at how an expert approaches a finesse.

With the vulnerability keeping the opponents mostly silent, East-West reached a contract of four hearts. The defense started with ace, king and a spade ruff. After drawing trumps,

West just had a two-way guess for the queen of diamonds to make his contract. Is this a pure 50-50 guess? Not for a good player it isn't.

A good player will note that North started with five major suit cards (two spades and three hearts) and South started with six major suit cards (four spades and two hearts). He also knows, from the overcall, that South has at least five clubs to go with his six major suit cards. What good will this information do for him? It means that there are five unknown cards, or "empty spaces," in the North hand (two spades, three hearts and at most three clubs are known) and only two "empty spaces" in the South hand. Any missing diamond, at this point, is more likely to be found in the hand with the larger number of "empty spaces." This is a ratio of five to two on this hand, which is much better than 50-50.

Declarer should finesse against North for the missing queen of diamonds. He can then ruff a spade back to hand to repeat the finesse, discard a club on the last diamond, and bring home his game contract.

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Friday, October 11, 2013

GOREN BRIDGE

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KEEP YOUR WITS ABOUT YOU

Neither vulnerable. East deals.

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

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

The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
INT	Pass	2NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Opening lead: Nine of ♠

South accurately led a spade against two no trump. She chose to lead the nine from her solid sequence. While this was a reasonable choice, it didn't help North to know how many spades she had. Declarer ducked in dummy and North won the king. Looking at all four hands, he should return the jack of spades to unblock the suit. The defenders could then run the rest of the suit later when either

one of them won a red ace. North fell from grace by returning the five of spades and was horrified to see the queen fall from declarer. He realized too late that the suit was now hopelessly blocked.

If declarer had played on diamonds at this point he would have made two no trump. South would win her ace of diamonds but they could only cash the jack and ten of spades. South had no other entry to get to the fifth spade. Luckily for the defense, however, North was not the only one who couldn't see all four hands. East cashed the ace of clubs and was delighted to see the queen fall. He was in a rush to take his four club tricks and did so right away. North gratefully took this opportunity to discard his high spades, both the jack and the ten. Now when South eventually won her ace of diamond, her spades were the only ones remaining and she could easily cash them for down one.

The moral of this story is: When you err, don't give up. You might get a chance to fix it.

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Saturday, October 12, 2013

GOREN BRIDGE

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WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q 1 - Not vulnerable, as South, you hold:

♠ A K J 10 8 5 3 ♡ J 4 ♦ 7 ♣ A J 9

Right-hand opponent opens one heart. What action would you take?

Q 2 - Both vulnerable, as South, you hold:

♠ J 9 8 6 4 ♡ 9 ♦ 7 5 ♣ A Q 10 8 7

Partner opens one no trump and right-hand opponent passes. What is your plan?

Q 3 - Vulnerable vs. not vulnerable, as South, you hold:

♠ K 10 ♡ 9 8 3 ♦ 10 9 8 7 5 ♣ A J 3

Partner opens one spade, you bid one no trump and partner jumps to three spades. Are you a man or a mouse?

Q 4 - Neither vulnerable, as North, you hold:

♠ A 9 5 4 ♡ A K 9 6 5 ♦ K Q 5 ♣ 4

The bidding has proceeded:

NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1♦ 2♣ 2♥ Pass

?

What action would you take?

Q 5 - Both vulnerable, as South, you hold:

♠ 9 6 4 ♡ A J 8 2 ♦ Q 5 2 ♣ 5 3 2

With the opponents silent, partner opens two no trump. How do you proceed?

Q 6 - No one vulnerable, as South, you hold:

♠ A 7 6 5 2 ♡ K J 10 6 ♦ 10 ♣ K 7 3

The bidding has proceeded:

NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1♦ Pass 1♠ Pass
2♦ Pass 2♥ Pass
2NT Pass ?

Pass or raise? What is your choice?

Look for answers on Monday.

(Tannah Hirsch welcomes readers' responses to gorenbridge@aol.com.)

Sunday, October 13, 2013

GOREN BRIDGE

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A DIFFERENT VIEW

North-South vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH	
♠ A K 4 3	
♡ Q	
♦ 6 5 2	
♣ A K J 5 4	
WEST	
♠ Q J 10 9 8 7	EAST
♡ J 10 9	♠ 6 5 2
♦ K 10 4	♡ 8 7 5 4 2
♣ 3	♦ J 9 8
SOUTH	
♠ ---	♣ Q 8
♡ A K 6 3	
♦ A Q 7 3	
♣ 10 9 7 6 2	

The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♦	2♣	3♦	Pass
4♠	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♣	Pass	5NT	Pass
7♣	Pass	Pass	Pass

Opening lead: Two of ♠

There are several points here. First, what would you open with the South hand? If you choose one club, what would you re-bid after a one-spade response? No good answer to that one. This South opened one diamond, prepared to rebid two clubs over a one spade response. It was East who had the spades and he pre-empted to two spades. North bid three clubs and the South hand exploded! He had an enormous supporting hand for clubs and jumped to four spades. This was a Splinter Bid, showing a big club fit and spade shortness, at most one.

North now bid Key Card Blackwood and South responded five

spades, showing two key cards (out of the four aces and the king of trumps) plus the queen of trumps. South showed the club queen because he knew they had at least a 10-card fit and the queen, if missing, rated to drop. North showed at least a five-card suit when he bid three clubs. Partner now bid five no trump, asking for kings. The five no trump bid also promised that the partnership held all the aces between them and all the high trumps. As such, it is an invitation to bid seven if South thinks he has the hand for it. South loved his hand as a supporting hand for clubs, so he bid seven clubs and the excellent grand slam was reached. North claimed shortly after the dummy came down.

In a recent duplicate, it was surprising to see that few pairs bid to even six clubs. Notice the effect of the opening bid decision. Due to the one-diamond opening, South became the supporting hand for clubs. Players who opened one club and got a strong raise from partner proceeded cautiously because of their weak trumps. As a supporting hand for partner's clubs, South went hog wild. Fair warning is in order. This one-diamond opening won't always work this well, but it was a huge triumph here.

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WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ ANSWERS

Q 1 - Not vulnerable, as South, you hold:

♠ A K J 10 8 5 3 ♠ **J 4** ◇ **7 ♣ A J 9**

Right-hand opponent opens one heart. What action would you take?

A - We would open the bidding with one spade, if we could. As an overcaller, a jump to four spades has much to recommend it. This shuts the left-hand opponent out from cheaply showing a fit and the opponents may not be able to judge the right level at which to compete. Bid four spades.

Q 2 - Both vulnerable, as South, you hold:

♠ J 9 8 6 4 ♠ **9** ◇ **7 5 ♣ A Q 10 8 7**

Partner opens one no trump and right-hand opponent passes. What is your plan?

A - With exciting distribution and a partner who is likely to have a decent fit for at least one of your suits, be aggressive with this hand and force to game. If transfers are played, bid two hearts, forcing two spades from partner and then introduce the club suit. Without transfers, make a forcing jump to three spades. After either sequence, pass three no trump by partner and hope the clubs will produce tricks for him.

Q 3 - Vulnerable vs. not vulnerable, as South, you hold:

♠ K 10 ♠ **9 8 3** ◇ **10 9 8 7 5 ♣ A J 3**

Partner opens one spade, you bid one no trump and partner jumps to three spades. Are you a man or a mouse?

A - Aces are always good and this king is precious. We would bid four spades even without the jack of clubs.

Q 4 - Neither vulnerable, as North, you hold:

♠ A 9 5 4 ♠ **A K 9 6 5** ◇ **K Q 5 ♣ 4**

The bidding has proceeded:
 NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
 1♦ 2♣ Pass
 ?

What action would you take?

A - You are certainly too good to pass. Your choices are a “need help” game try of two spades and a bold leap to four hearts. All the values in this hand seem to be working. If partner has wasted cards in clubs, you won’t do well, but your left-hand opponent has advertised those cards so be aggressive. Bid four hearts.

Q 5 - Both vulnerable, as South, you hold:

♠ 9 6 4 ♠ **A J 8 2** ◇ **Q 5 2 ♣ 5 3 2**

With the opponents silent, partner opens two no trump. How do you proceed?

A - Experts are in two camps about this. One camp says that your hand will produce nothing in suit play, so just raise to three no trump. The other camp is worried that partner’s hand might be better suited for suit play so they use Stayman to look for a four-four heart fit. This battle will not end soon. Bid three no trump.

Q 6 - No one vulnerable, as South, you hold:

♠ A 7 6 5 2 ♠ **Q K 10 6** ◇ **10 ♣ K 7 3**

The bidding has proceeded:
 NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
 1♦ Pass 1♣
 2♣ Pass 2♦
 2NT Pass ?

Pass or raise? What is your choice?

A - The ten of hearts is lovely and the ten in partner’s long suit is never bad. Bid three no trump.

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