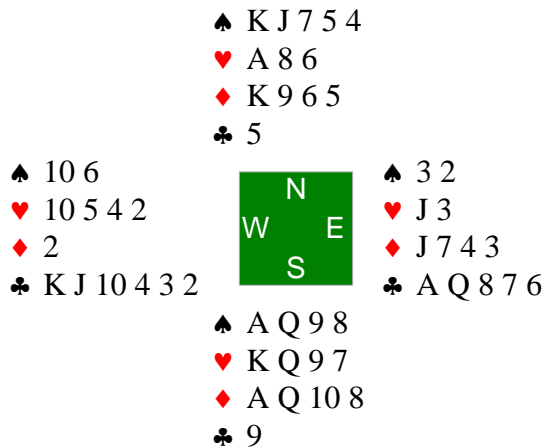


Board 3
 South Deals
 E-W Vul



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

Auction Commentary: South's 4 ♠ bid shows a hand that is strong enough to belong in game even opposite a cold minimum of 5 or 6 points. IT IS NOT A CLOSE-OUT BID. Read that again. Opener's rebid shows the strength of their hand, usually 19+ points. Responder uses that information to determine the appropriate level.

North has 11 HCP, a 5th spade and a singleton club, making their hand more than strong enough to investigate for slam. 4 NT asked for aces, 5 ♥ showed two, so North bids the slam.

Opening Lead: ♣ A. Against slams, it is often right to lead an ace if you have one, especially in an unbid suit. After cashing the Ace, East exits safely with a spade.

Play Commentary: Besides the club, the only possible loser is the 4th diamond. If one defender has 4 diamonds to the Jack, it will have to be finessed, unless the hearts will provide a discard. Who should we guess has that holding? Have you heard the term "vacant spaces"?

Vacant spaces is a fancy term for how much room is left in each hand for unknown cards. When we draw trumps, we find they are split 2-2. We then try the hearts, but they aren't splitting, with West holding 4 and East holding 2. Since West started with 2 spades and 4 hearts, they have 7 vacant spaces. East started with 2 spades and 2 hearts, so they have 9 vacant spaces. In general, the player with more vacant spaces is more likely to hold a missing card that we are looking for.

So, we play for East to be more likely to hold 4 diamonds to the Jack. We play one top diamond from the South hand, in case the diamonds are 5-0 to either side, and then a diamond to the King in the North hand. When West shows out, we can congratulate ourselves on finding the dangerous holding in the hand we played to have it, finesse the Jack, and score up our slam.

Board 7
 South Deals
 Both Vul

	♠ J 10 6 5										
	♥ K 8 7										
	♦ 6										
	♣ K Q 9 7 5										
♠ 8 4 3	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto; text-align: center; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K Q 7 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ J 10		♥ A 9 5 3 2									
♦ Q 5 4		♦ J 10 3									
♣ A 10 4 3 2		♣ J									
	♠ A 9										
	♥ Q 6 4										
	♦ A K 9 8 7 2										
	♣ 8 6										
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>								
			1 ♦								
Pass	1 ♠	Pass	2 ♦								
All pass											

Auction Commentary: North does not have the values to bid at the two-level, so they bid 1 ♠, even though it is not their longest suit. When South rebids 2 ♦, showing a 6-card suit and a minimal type hand, North MUST pass, even with a singleton diamond. Bids of 2 NT or 3 ♣ are forward going and show more values than North has. Do not fall into the trap of trying to save partner; you end up just digging a deeper hole. With a fit for diamonds, North can raise, to give South the opportunity to bid a game (3 NT) with a "maximum-minimum", or to prevent the opponents from competing with a heart fit.

Opening Lead: ♥ J. Promises the ♥ T.

Second Hand: Do not make the mistake of playing the King from dummy, second hand low!

Third Hand: Do not make the mistake of playing the Ace from the East hand. We know South has the ♥ Q because West led the ♥ J. The declarer is entitled to 1 heart trick, don't give them two. There is a temptation to win the Ace and return your singleton club. In general, you should resist this temptation, especially when you have a compelling reason not to try, in this case, that it gives up a heart trick.

Play Commentary: After winning the ♥ Q at trick 1, declarer needs to draw trump. Some players, after cashing the ♦ AK, are unwilling to continue trumps for fear that the defenders can cash two of them. This fear is misplaced, if one player has both remaining high trumps, they will always score them. However, if they are split, and we don't play another round of trumps, one defender might score a ruff, and they will take two trump tricks when they were entitled to only 1. After three rounds of diamonds, declarer has only 5 total possible losers, and they will make their contract.

Takeaway: Do not let the defenders make their trumps separately when you can avoid it.

Board 12
 West Deals
 N-S Vul

	♠ 9 8					
	♥ J 9 8 7					
	♦ 9 8					
	♣ A 10 8 5 2					
♠ A K 4 2	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ Q J 6	
N						
W E						
S						
♥ 2		♥ A K Q 4 3				
♦ K Q 10 7 3		♦ J 5 2				
♣ Q J 4		♣ 7 3				
	♠ 10 7 5 3					
	♥ 10 6 5					
	♦ A 6 4					
	♣ K 9 6					
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>			
1 ♦	Pass	1 ♥	Pass			
1 ♠	Pass	2 ♣	Pass			
3 NT	All pass					

Auction Commentary: East's 2 ♣ bid is "4th-suit forcing" (alert). It does not promise clubs! It is a forcing bid which asks opener to either show 3-card support for hearts or a stopper in the 4th suit. Jumping to 3 NT shows more than a minimum (15-17). With less, West would just bid 2 NT. Some players play that the 4th-suit bid creates a game force, and some play that it is forcing for only 1 round. It's important to discuss which you are playing with your partner.

Opening Lead: ♣ 5.

Third Hand: We play our highest club, the King, which wins the trick. With two clubs remaining, we return the higher one. If we had 3 or more, we would return our original 4th best.

Defensive Commentary: When partner returns the ♣ 9 at trick 2, we must execute the deadly hold-up play (you haven't forgotten, have you?) and contribute the ♣ 2, letting partner know we started with five ♣s. What if the ♣ Q is West's last ♣? If that's the case, then fire partner, as it couldn't be their last on the return of the ♣ 9. If South has no more ♣s, such is life, but if they do have one more, we have to let them keep it, so they can play it when they are able to win a trick. Otherwise, declarer will have no trouble setting up the ♦s.

Play Commentary: Here we are with 28 HCP, but, even after trying to fool North with the ♣ Q on the second trick, which North ducked, there is no legitimate route to 9 tricks. North was up to the challenge, what about South? We only need 1 ♦ trick, after all, so we play our heart to the dummy and lead the ♦ J. We are trying to make it look like we are missing more than the ♦ A so that South can be convinced to duck, just once, please?

Back to the Defense: Assuming partner has the ♣ A, they can have no other useful high cards. This will be the 9th trick if we don't grab it. Was partner up to the task before? Are you, now?

Takeaway: "Nice defense!" is the only appropriate response if your were beaten. It happens.