

Tales of the Absurd: Do you want to play in hearts?

How else can one describe a couple of boards from this week's play? No fancy squeezes or end-plays this time. It's all in what we bid and how much...which usually means too much!

It also helps if you hold the master- suit, something North players ruefully acknowledge when they picked up the following:

♠ - ♥ AKQJT98 ♦ A7643 ♣ 10

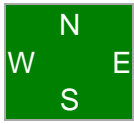
I was able to observe first-hand a typical "marriage tester" sequence started by North with 1♣ Precision. Indeed, it was a happily married couple (and they still are!) who did all the bidding:

North	South
1♣ (Precision style)	1♠
2♥	2♠
3♦	3♠
4♥	4♠

at which point, North, wisely, gave up. Draw trumps and come home on the hearts? Not quite:

Board 29
North Deals
Both Vul

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



In a sense, our married pair had more chance than most to stop in 4♥ as a natural sequence might go:

North South

1♥

1♠

2♦

4♠

but who wants to play 4♥ anyway? Partner said he would lead a trump against 4♥ but a more normal club lead and trump switch would work as well for the defence.

Deal Master Pro was in fine form against 4♠..low club lead to the jack, three more clubs and another ruffed with ♠T and over-ruffed. The defence is still due two trump tricks...down 3! Well, we did beat 4♠ one trick!

There is no point in playing 4♥ anyway, unless the defence kindly leads two top clubs. So, the battle of the majors ended quite peacefully....flat board.

A few boards later came “the battle of one major”. I dedicate this board to my good friend Carol De Luca who systemically opens 2NT on flat 19-20 point hands.

I held in first seat: ♠ JT2 ♥ AKQ76 ♦ A4 ♣ AJ5

I counted 19, saw a good five card suit, a “10” and plenty of controls. Upgrade time...2NT (20-21 balanced). I was amazed by what happened next:

West	North	East	South
2NT	3♥!	x	Pass

My second bid was not hard to find. The heart distribution was interesting:

Board 36
 West Deals
 Both Vul

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

♠ K 9 8 4
♥ —
♦ J 9 8
♣ K Q 9 8 7 6

I have never seen a hand where it is right to disturb a strong 2NT opening...and I still have not! Even 8 tricks in no-trumps would be an almost impossible ask for East-West. Meanwhile, +800 proved adequate compensation for the missed and dubious part-score.



At the other table, West did not find the heart break to his liking when he attempted to play in 2♥.

As I said, a strange night and too much bidding.

Richard Solomon