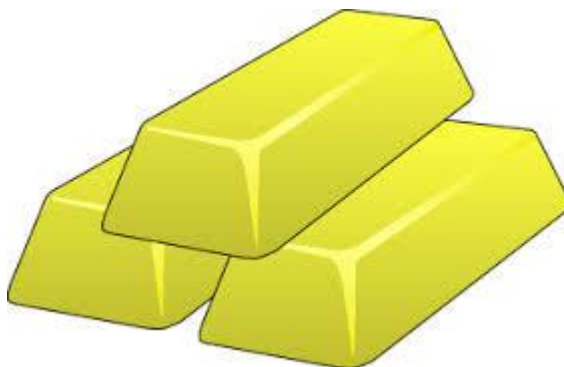


Four Points & Support: Too much to pass, too little to bid.

There would not be a problem if you held 4 high card points and no support for partner's major or maybe not if you held 4 card support along with your 4 count. Bergen, at least, offers you a way to bid legitimately with "both 4's".



So, did the majority just have to write off their missed game on bad luck or will the same bidding sequence occur the next time the North-South cards appear?

Board 5

North Deals
N-S Vul

♠ K 8 2
♥ 7 6 2
♦ K 7 6
♣ K 7 4 2

♠ A Q 9 6 3
♥ A K J 8
♦ A Q 5
♣ 5



♠ J 10 4
♥ 10 9
♦ 10 9
♣ Q J 9 8 6 3

♠ 7 5
♥ Q 5 4 3
♦ J 8 4 3 2
♣ A 10

West North East South
1 ♠ All pass

If East held ♠K82 and led a trump at trick 1, you might find a defence to beat 4♠ but it is still a mighty good contract. Despite a fistful of 10's and 9s, it is hard to get too enthusiastic about the South hand. Only two auctions got beyond the 1 level. I suspect that North might have found a more optimistic opening bid like 2NT in those two cases.

The North hand is not balanced but does have potential if a major fit can be found. 2NT or its equivalent bids are open to criticism, too, but the optimist in me has more than a little sympathy for them.

There was nothing the defence could do on the above hand. Nor was it indeed critical at all bar one table on the following board when spades were also the contract with dummy having three trumps and four high card points once more.

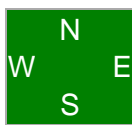
West North East South

Board 25

North Deals
E-W Vul

♠ 5 4
♥ 9 7 6 2
♦ J 8 5
♣ K 6 4 2

♠ 10 8 6
♥ J 10 8 5
♦ 9 3
♣ Q J 7 5



♠ 3 2
♥ A K 4
♦ K 10 7 6
♣ A 10 9 3

♠ A K Q J 9 7
♥ Q 3
♦ A Q 4 2
♣ 8

	Pass	1 ♠	Dbl
2 ♠	Pass	4 ♠	All pass

If you are not going to bid following your partner's 1♠ opening, then perhaps an opponent's take-out double should not be the reason to raise to the 2 level. West, obviously, disagreed with their partner raising to game and hopeful of a rather better dummy after 4♠ received the ♥A lead.

However, 4♠ proved rather awkward to defeat. Signalling was crucial. If the ♥A asked for attitude, then North must discourage. South appears to have four defensive tricks but if they cash three of them, then declarer will soon find that the diamond finesse will be unnecessary.

It is imperative that North gets to indicate where their solitary high-card is. Thus, playing reverse signals, North plays ♥7 at trick 1, discouraging. South must switch and with no clear indication, plays a trump... but soon sees declarer play a second heart to their queen and their ace. Which card did North play? ♥2 would be a good idea, trying to suggest a club switch. The defence is still hard as South has to lead a low club. As long as North wins the first round of clubs, East will have to resort to the losing diamond finesse to try to make their contract, whether North continues clubs or else finds the diamond switch.

Another way to beat 4♠ is to lead a trump at trick one and continue this passive defence when South wins the first round of hearts.

Four points, three trumps...two games made, one unbeatable and the other requiring careful defence to have it beaten. Maybe those queens and jacks are worth their weight after all. They were in these two 4-counts this week.



Richard Solomon