

TALES OF AKARANA

Making the best of a bad job

Whatever happened to [Hamman's Rule](#)? If 3NT is amongst your choice of makeable game contracts, then go for it....or words similar to that! It did not seem to be particularly true at Akarana this week. When 3NT was an option, there was a much more appealing place elsewhere!

How would you bid the following pair of hands?

Board 4

West Deals

Both Vul

♠ Q 3 2

♥ A 9 6

♦ Q 9 5 4

♣ A 6 3



♠ A J 9 6

♥ 5

♦ A J 2

♣ K Q 5 4 2

Say you open a weak 1NT. East will either transfer to clubs and bid a natural forcing 3♠ or use Stayman. The lack of a major opposite would worry East though you would need methods to discover whether your fears are justified and what you can do about it.

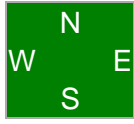
If you start with 1♦, the bidding could proceed either:

West	East		West	East
1♦	2♣	or	1♦	2♣
3♣			2NT (12-14)	

In both cases, East's next bid would be 3♠ and could bring 3NT from their partner. There it may lie.

North, who like their partner, had been silent led the ♥K AND as West, you would view dummy with some alarm. You have a choice of either of two finesses to take and which must be taken before you run your club suit, assuming it will run. You have nothing to go on as to which one will work...and all the time can see that with clubs breaking, you can afford for both finesses to fail...and still make 5♣.

So, you go through the motions of ducking two rounds of hearts...though West is persistent. It would not matter which finesse you chose, it was destined to fail...but luckily the same could not be said of the contract!

<p><u>Board 4</u></p> <p>West Deals</p> <p>Both Vul</p>	<p>♠ 8 5 4</p> <p>♥ K Q J 10 4 3</p> <p>♦ 10 3</p> <p>♣ 9 7</p>		<p>♠ A J 9 6</p> <p>♥ 5</p> <p>♦ A J 2</p> <p>♣ K Q 5 4 2</p>
<p>♠ Q 3 2</p> <p>♥ A 9 6</p> <p>♦ Q 9 5 4</p> <p>♣ A 6 3</p>	<p>♠ K 10 7</p> <p>♥ 8 7 2</p> <p>♦ K 8 7 6</p> <p>♣ J 10 8</p>		

I can understand why North would not bid over a 1NT opening though even if your stomach was not up to a weak jump when vulnerable (many weak such jumps have been made with nothing closely resembling “100 honours” in the suit!) then 1♥ seems a brave enough offering.

So, you survived, with a bit of basic play technique...equalling those who needed 11 tricks in clubs and just marginally losing to anyone who survived another potentially nasty game contract, 4♠.

There is a similarity in the play to the following hand. Step forward the Multi to make things a little difficult:


You hold as South: ♠KQ7 ♥QJT743 ♦AT ♣42 and with no-one vulnerable, hear:

West	North	East	South
2♦ ¹	3♦	3♥ ²	?

¹ Multi 2♦ ² Pass or Correct

Since East must have some hearts, you know West has 6 spades. What to bid? 5♦ seems a long off. What about doubling 3♠ when West bids it?

Our South decided to double 3♥ (fair call) but chose 3NT over West's spade bid. There was no singleton ♠J in dummy to help you along:

<u>Board 8</u>	♠ 6
West Deals	♥ A 8 2
None Vul	♦ K Q 9 8 5 2
	♣ K J 5
	
	♠ K Q 7
	♥ Q J 10 7 4 3
	♦ A 10
	♣ 4 2

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
2♦	3♦	3♥	Dbl
3♠	Pass	Pass	3 NT
All pass			

Wrong choice! You received the ♠2 lead (attitude..they love it!) which went to East's jack. Which card do you play at trick 1 and if you win the trick, at trick 2?


You may wish you were in 4♥ even if that contract is not cast-iron on a non-spade lead. You have 6 diamond tricks (you better had!) and at least one in each major suit. That does not equal 9...and you cannot run your diamonds first as you will be in the wrong hand to next make the winning play if you have one!

You have a choice: duck spades until the third round, cutting communications and praying that West does not hold the ♣A. This seems a reasonable approach as many pairs do not like opening weak 2 bids holding two aces. In theory, that means the opposition cannot make slam.)

Win trick 1 and make the correct play at trick 2. That cannot be a diamond. Either take a successful heart finesse or take the right view in clubs.

As it happens, only one of the above 3 lines would be successful. Which one would you take?

Board 8
 West Deals
 None Vul

♠ A 10 5 4 3 2 ♥ 5 ♦ 6 4 ♣ A 10 8 7		♠ 6 ♥ A 8 2 ♦ K Q 9 8 5 2 ♣ K J 5	♠ J 9 8 ♥ K 9 6 ♦ J 7 3 ♣ Q 9 6 3
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	♠ K Q 7 ♥ Q J 10 7 4 3 ♦ A 10 ♣ 4 2		
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<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
2♦	3♦	3♥	Dbl
3♠	Pass	Pass	3NT

All pass

I would not win to take the heart finesse though if I did win trick 1, I would lead ♥Q at trick 2, just in case West covers holding ♥Kx or is forced to cover without the “x”! The sight of the ♥K would add years

of stress –free time to your life! However, no heart finesse as East has shown probably a three card heart suit in the bidding.

So, win ♥A, back to ♦A and play a club. If you do this and do not see the ace, there is no choice to make. You have to win this trick and not let East in. So, a club to the king it has to be even if you think West cannot have two aces. Sometimes...well, just this time, they can!

Then, you will not mind missing 4♥, difficult on a diamond lead (spade switch when in with ♥K and then a low club from West. You might still be working out which club to play from dummy!) I think you would be unlucky if in 3NT, you ducked the first two rounds of spades. However, with a good 6 card major, missing top honours, 4♥ may have been a wiser choice than 3NT.

The problem here was in making your chosen contract. In both hands, you had to make an important decision before you ran your long suit. It could have been your lucky night as both inferior games could make.

Richard Solomon