

The Achievable and The Unachievable



Here are two questions for you. We will pose a third later. You hold:

♠ T ♥ T762 ♦ 52 ♣ KJT532

and hear your left- hand opponent open a strong 20-21 2NT.

What is the final contract?

What is the best result your side could achieve on this board?

We could get very deep and meaningful about such a heading as the above but let's just keep the discussion centred on bridge deals. If we could all achieve what is practicably possible, then we would be stars. We do not have to drop singleton kings offside with 6 missing for no particular reason. Just bid, defend and play sensibly and our scores will rocket...upwards!

So, what do you bid with this fine collection as North after this sequence:

West	North	East	South
	1♦	Pass	1♥
Pass	?		

holding: ♠ AJ ♥A87 ♦ KQ98765 ♣ 4

As fine as that diamond suit is, it does take a bit of setting up unless partner has the ace or maybe the jack. We have a decent holding in partner's suit, too..good cards for a potential slam, even perhaps in 3NT apart from in clubs...but we do not worry about that suit much! I can stomach not rebidding a 6-card suit and raise hearts but not a decent 7 carder.

So, I chose the somewhat under-bid of 2♦. The opposition did not seem to want to bid. So, hopefully, when we can make game, partner will make another move. He did, and a very good one on this deal, too...2♠. I had my chance now, not just to bid to the heart game but to make a slam try in the process! How can a hand which a few seconds earlier was seemingly happy to play 2♦ now make a slam try in partner's suit? Just watch me!

West	North	East	South
	1♦	Pass	1♥
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♣	Pass	3NT
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

4TH suit forcing 3♣ followed by a pull to partner's major..too strong for an immediate jump to 4♥. Partner was unimpressed. We stayed in game.

Board 9
 North Deals
 E-W Vul

♠ A J
 ♥ A 8 7
 ♦ K Q 9 8 7 6 5
 ♣ 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ Q 10 9 4
 ♥ K Q 5 3
 ♦ J 10 4
 ♣ K 7

A club was led to the ace and a club returned. Partner was able to play a couple of rounds of trumps, then play a diamond, suffer a ruff but could then claim 10 tricks.

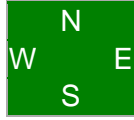
While you might take issue with that 2♠ (game-forcing?) bid (maybe 3♦ would better describe the hand), all seemed normal. However, how would you feel as South when you receive the ♣Q lead to your 3NT contract? Checking the vulnerability, perhaps to breathe a small sigh of relief that you will only concede 50's..probably a few of them!

Interestingly, all those who played this contract failed after receiving a club lead. Were they all blinded by that diamond suit because they seemed to look no further for 9 tricks? What chance has this contract on sensible defence? A club blockage, perhaps, but there is another way... no great chance, about 3% my calculator tells me. That, surely, is worth taking.

You need hearts 3-3 to provide 4 tricks and ♠K singleton or doubleton in the West hand (8% in isolation for the doubleton + a fraction for the singleton)...8% of 36%...yes round about 3%. Yet, that was achievable!

Board 9 ♠ A J

North Deals
E-W Vul

<p>♠ K 7 ♥ 10 9 6 ♦ 3 ♣ Q J 10 8 6 5 2</p>		<p>♥ A 8 7 ♦ K Q 9 8 7 6 5 ♣ 4</p> <p>♠ 8 6 5 3 2 ♥ J 4 2 ♦ A 2 ♣ A 9 3</p> <p>♠ Q 10 9 4 ♥ K Q 5 3 ♦ J 10 4 ♣ K 7</p>
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Whether you played in 4♥, 5♦ or 3NT, you should have achieved a plus score, those in 3NT suffering a few more palpitations along the way. No moaning about bad breaks or finesses that always fail. They do not!


I compare this to the player who held the following uninspiring collection later in the evening and who heard their left-hand opponent open a strong 20-21 2NT:

♠ T ♥ T762 ♦ 52 ♣ KJT532

Do you feel like calling for a caddy and go and make a coffee? Anyone can follow suit to whichever game or slam the opponents choose. So, back to our two questions. What was the final contract and what is the best result North-South could achieve on this board?

Hands up to anyone who did not play board 15 this week at Akarana who answered either 2NT x down 6 (+1400) or 6♣ making (+1370). In reality, this latter contract would surely be doubled..but you can win some brilliancy award for even suggesting that contract!

Board 15
South Deals
N-S Vul

<p>♠ A J 2 ♥ A K Q 8 5 ♦ K J 3 ♣ Q 4</p>		<p>♠ K Q 9 5 4 ♥ — ♦ A Q 8 7 6 ♣ A 8 6</p> <p>♠ 8 7 6 3 ♥ J 9 4 3 ♦ 10 9 4 ♣ 9 7</p> <p>♠ 10 ♥ 10 7 6 2 ♦ 5 2 ♣ K J 10 5 3 2</p>
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The question the South player asked afterwards was how do you bid to this slam after the 2NT opening? The answer is "you do not". We know that a

strong 1NT opening can sometimes be a pre-emptive bid which can keep the opponents out of perhaps game. Yet, how ridiculous..a strong 2NT to keep the opponents out of slam!

Even if North found a bid over 2NT, they would take some convincing that clubs should be trumps! So would South.

The reality was that in just about every case, 2NT was passed out with North leading a spade...a low one is best..and scoring +50 when West ran out of hearts to cash.

Do not worry about what you cannot achieve. Concentrate on what you can....like making 3NT on Board 5 above.

Richard Solomon