## "Game Forcing" Bids? Tales of Akarana



## "Game Forcing" Bids?

Two pieces of interesting hand evaluation thrust partnerships up into the slam zone... but would they drive on to too high a level?

Let's see:

The first board offered both partners a chance to value their hands. Let's take the second piece of evaluation first:

This is your hand as North and this is the bidding so far:

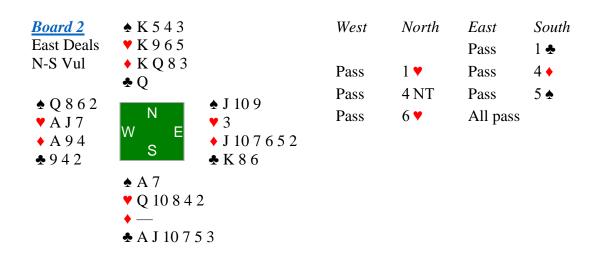
<b>♠</b> K543	West	North	East	South
<b>♥</b> K965				1.
♦ KQ83	Pass	1♥	Pass	4 🔷
<b>♣</b> Q	Pass	?		

4 ◆ is a splinter...and before my mail-box is inundated with questions as to why you, North, did not bid 1 ◆ first time round (as you should with a game-going responding hand), let's just say North had their reasons!

That's part A to the question. Part B is would your answer be any different if 4♦ guaranteed a void?

We know that a holding of KQxx is not great opposite a singleton or a void but does that mean you should sign-off here? Signing off would mean that were partner to hold ♠ A7 ♥ AQT8 ♦ 6 ♣AKT753, they would have to sign off as well. You responded on a six count, including wasted diamond honours. Can partner even risk the five level?

Well, even leaving aside those diamond honours, you have got more than a six count and have a card of huge potential value, that \*Q. With you at the wheel, every suit is protected at trick 1. Opposite what might be a singleton diamond, it may be a marginal decision. Opposite a void, I feel one just has to move. The only drawback this time was that a Key Card response took you into the slam zone:



"Thanks for the extra heart, partner" but we were still left with the problem of finding the ♥J. Not one of the 8 declarers found this card successfully. For three of them, it proved very expensive as they were in 6♥.

What then of that 4 ♦ bid? I believe there are times where you can force to game without having to make a game force bid. Such an occasion is where you have minimal points. With both opponents quiet, surely North will have enough high card strength to raise to game over 3 ♥? You may argue that 3 ♥ from South on their second turn would have sent North slamwards too. Maybe but North could have expected more than 11 hcps for the game force. Yes, even a 12 count would have helped...that ♥J! You do not need to guess from which compass seat I was viewing this board..and perhaps had hearts broken 2-2, the discussion might have revolved around reaching rather than avoiding this slam.

On then to the next decision. and you are South:

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# AQ704				
<b>♥</b> T5	West	North	East	South
♦ A4				1♠
♣ A853	Pass	2♦	Pass	?

You have a nice 14 count and opposite partner's presumed 10+ (you are playing Acol), you know that you are heading to game. Do you let partner in on the secret or do you make a "hold your breath that partner bids again" 2♠ call? There is a third kind of in-between bid, whichever no-trump bid shows 15-

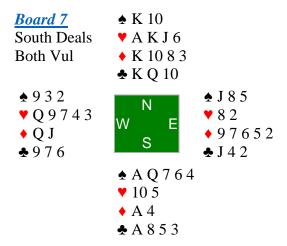
17 balanced. Yes, only 14, but you have just said you want to be in game. So, call it 15.

What's your choice? The downside of a no-trump bid is your lack of a heart hold. Indeed, if you decide on upgrading by one point, then should you bid 3... and then get rather nervous as the bidding proceeds:

West	North	East	South	
			1♠	<sup>1</sup> 4 <sup>th</sup> suit forcing
Pass	2♦	Pass	3♣	<sup>2</sup> 0 or 3 key cards in support of
Pass	3 <b>∨</b> ¹	Pass	3♠	spades. It's no time to lie!
Pass	4NT	Pass	<b>5</b> ♦ <sup>2</sup>	<sup>3</sup> Asks for ♠Q and outside kings
Pass	5 <b>∀</b> ³	Pass	$5NT^4$	<sup>4</sup> "Yes" to the ♠Q but "no" to
Pass	7NT	All Pass		outside kings.

and partner looks at your dummy after a low heart lead....and does not claim!

Indeed, after the ♥8 lead, the play was extremely drawn out but, this time,
every card was where the declarer wanted it!



After West inserted the ♥Q at trick 1, the declarer ended with 16 tricks! It was definitely correct to bid 3♣ this time but the lie of the cards is, as we know to our frequent cost, not always that friendly.

Richard Solomon