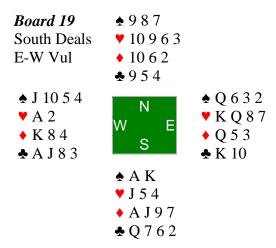
TALES OF AKARANA

Forcing and Invitational Bids

25 hcp between the two hands, a 4-4 spade fit, and not one of the 12 East-West pairs made it to the almost cold 4♠ game. Four will claim some dispensation as they reached and made 3NT, a contract which relied on the opening bidder holding 4 not 5 diamonds, though for the rest it was a very sad board. What happened?



Six pairs got caught by a big pre-empt. Before you waste too much time looking for a 7 or 6 or 5 card suit in the North or South hands, the "pre-empt" was South's strong 15-17 1NT which turned West then East to stone. The way forward for East was to show both majors in the pass-out seat. That must wake West up and with the DK well placed and a more than useful ♣A and ♥A, a shot at game should be possible. Alas, these six pairs defeated 1NT by 3 or 4 tricks, which did not compare in 50's very well with the 600 or 620 they had lost.

Where South opened a minor, in our case 1♦, West has no good bid available but East has an easy take-out double. This created a situation of both players knowing that the other had a decent hand .. but how strong?

West	North	East	South
			1♦
Pass	Pass	X	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♥	Pass
?			

2 ♦ was certainly forcing, but for one round, to suit agreement or to game? I was not sure and so pressed the accelerator with 3 ♠.
Partner was asked and described my bid as a splinter which looked like disaster was about to strike..but emerged with what he may have thought was a forcing, "waiting" 3NT bid....and I could see no reason to move anywhere, the end of a fairly unconfident sequence.
I am told 2 ♠ would have been forcing too. Would your partnership have been confident of that?

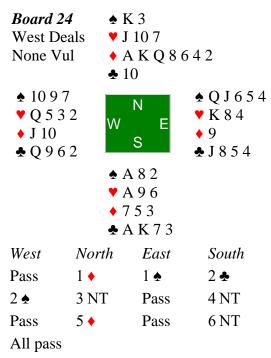
The other two pairs got stranded in 2NT.

An invitational raise may have helped half the North-South pairs on the following board. As South, would you bid again in the following sequence:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♦	1 🖍	2*
2♠	3NT	Pass	?

South held: ♠A82 ♥A96 ♦753 ♣ AK73 and neither side was vulnerable.

What has North got? Certainly not a weak no-trump even if one's opening 1NT was strong. Maybe 15-17 balanced if you open a weak 1NT...or maybe not. Surely you could make 4NT opposite whatever partner might have...and do not believe that those frivolous non vulnerable opponents could have much at all:



3NT looks a reasonable shot on those North cards, with partner showing 10+ with clubs. When partner invites, you have a very nice source of tricks but perhaps a little concerned about controls in the other suits. So, good advice from GeO is that when you accept an invitation like the above but are worried about aces, respond 5♣ with no aces or 5♠ with one. If your partner cannot add up to a combined three, he can sign off in 5NT. On the above deal, South would be happy to accept with the only problem in the play being playing for the unlikely overtrick.

A useful bid..that quantitative raise.

Richard Solomon