

## Tales of Akarana

### Triers “Rewarded”

26-30 high card points between your two hands are an awkward number to handle. On some days, you want to be in a cold slam while on others, you are picking up the mess of how many under-tricks you need to concede.

Somewhere in the middle lay a multitude of making 3NT and 4 of major contracts and our systems are generally geared to finding in which of those three games you should play. However, recently, I was introduced to a new bridge term or terms. (I have not been playing that long so that it is no surprise such new terms come my way!)



The terms are “serious slam try” and “mild slam try”. After a sequence like:

1♣      1♦

1NT

we play 3♦ as a slam try, without the terms “serious” or “mild” being mentioned. A slam try is a slam try and either co-operate, partner, or do not!

The problem I had was not knowing whether or not I wanted to make any slam try, holding:

♠ K86      ♥ K3      ♦ AT86542      ♣ J


with the above sequence where 1NT showed 15-17. Not the best 7 card suit, but good controls and a singleton in what could be partner’s long suit (1♣ is 3+). So, not wanting to try for slam, I opted

for the “safe” 3NT. I would have been rather disappointed to see what partner actually held:

♠ AT4     ♥ AQ72     ♦ J97     ♣ A85

### Triers Unrewarded

Those are pretty perfect cards for making 6♦ with just one diamond loser. "Never play partner for the perfect hand" the late and very wise Tony Taylor used to say. Look what happened when he, partner, actually held them as the “card God” had a nasty trick up his sleeve:

<u><b>Board 18</b></u>		
East Deals	♠ J 3 2	
N-S Vul	♥ 8	
	♦ K Q 3	
	♣ Q 7 6 4 3 2	
♠ K 8 6		♠ A 10 4
♥ K 3		♥ A Q 7 2
♦ A 10 8 6 5 4 2		♦ J 9 7
♣ J		♣ A 8 5
	♠ Q 9 7 5	
	♥ J 10 9 6 5 4	
	♦ —	
	♣ K 10 9	

Not only did the diamond break kill the slam but it also laid waste to 3NT, even after a heart lead from South. North soon gained the lead in diamonds and found the deadly club switch. Three down was not the kind of safety I was seeking!

I took some solace from the fact that had I made a slam try in diamonds, we would have reached 6♦ and lost 50 points instead. There is, however, no joy in being in the wrong contract on this board. Half of the 12 tables reached 6♦, one pair even being doubled for their trouble. Only one pair stayed in 5♦ while the rest were the “non triers” in 3NT.

Soon came the coffee break when system deficiencies can be cleared up. We came to the second match armed with a mild slam try bid available...and not in vain!

**Board 14**

East Deals

None Vul

♠ 10 6 ♥ 5 ♦ A Q J 9 5 3 ♣ K J 8 3		♠ K J 4 ♥ A K Q 3 ♦ K 6 2 ♣ Q 5 4
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<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		1 ♣	Pass
1 ♦	Pass	1 NT	Pass
2 ♦	Pass	2 ♥	Pass
3 ♦	Pass	4 ♦	Pass
4 ♥	Pass	5 ♣	Pass
5 ♦	All pass		

1NT showed again 15-17 (a point deducted for poor shape and pip cards). 2♦ was artificial and game forcing with 3♦ the newly invented “mild slam try”. With 18 and decent trump support, how could partner turn me down! 4♥ was Key Card and 5♣ (2 key cards without the ♦ Q) convinced me that bidding higher than 5♦ was not a good idea.

How wonderful....slam investigated without getting overboard. Really. Try 5♦ on a low spade lead. Not a pleasant thought. You could have been playing in the absolute safety of 3NT. Meanwhile, your “mild” slam try had got you into deep deep trouble! Time for another system chat at the end of the match. If only partner held the above hand on Board 18 instead of all those controls!

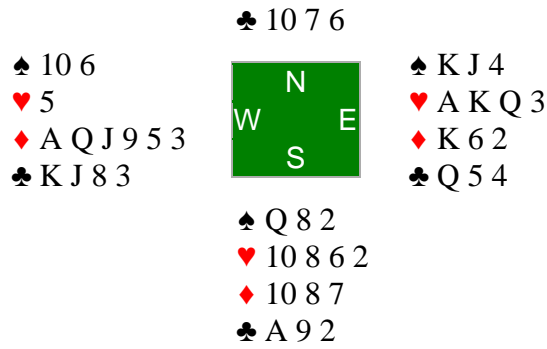
Yet, life was not that cruel. Triers who had to pull up short and a trier who went the whole way (6♦) were rewarded for their efforts:

***Board 14***

East Deals

None Vul

♠ A 9 7 5 3
♥ J 9 7 4
♦ 4



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		1 ♣	Pass
1 ♦	Pass	1 NT	Pass
2 ♦	Pass	2 ♥	Pass
3 ♦	Pass	4 ♦	Pass
4 ♥	Pass	5 ♣	Pass
5 ♦	All pass		

Several West players found themselves in 5 ♦ but none, to their relief, suffered a low spade lead. With the no-trump hand in dummy, this is not a silly lead. So, like others, I was able to record + 400, a mere loss of 2 imps. One lucky pair in slam escaped a spade lead altogether and made 12 rather fortunate tricks. Two others were not so lucky.

So, we will persevere with our new system tool (thanks, Mattie Brown for making me aware of the existence of this term) while others, perhaps, should check out a form of Blackwood. Over 5 ♦, partner paused for a discerningly long time wondering whether he had done the right thing in devaluing his 18 count but eventually bowed to what every partnership needs much more than a “mild slam try”, partnership trust.

*Richard Solomon*