


Normal Breaks do occur..... Normally!

You do not believe the above statement, do you? You have seen it all..bid a grand slam with 10 trumps missing the queen and find Qxx behind the AK. You have played in countless excellent games with 4 trumps in each hand and find a 5-0 break... and so the agonising tales go on. We seem to stop blaming computer dealt hands now because just about all our hands are dealt that way.

So, to Akarana, and a touch of overbidding, takes you to 6♦. Well, let's say it was your partner who was doing the over-bidding but it was you, North, who had the job of making this contract.

Board 7	♠ 7 6
South Deals	♥ Q J 10 7
Both Vul	♦ Q 6
	♣ K J 9 8 2
	
	♠ A Q J 5 3
	♥ —
	♦ A K 10 9 3 2
	♣ A 7

You reached 6♦ after your partner bid his suits rather vigorously. East leads a low heart. Ruffing seems best but there's a little work to be done especially in the spade suit. So, you cross to hand with a club to the king and take a spade finesse.

It would be rather handy if this was a successful finesse... but this is the real world! West's king wins with West returning a club. You are still alive but are living on the edge. You can cash a high spade and then ruff low hoping they break 3-3 or ruff high and then rely on a first-round diamond finesse.

A 4-2 break is more likely than a 3-3 break but we are now only talking about one defender having 4 spades, since West has already shown up with 3 spades.

On this night of "normal" breaks, you will be pleased to know that both lines worked:

Board 7
 South Deals
 Both Vul

♠ K 9 8	♠ 7 6	♠ 10 4 2
♥ A 9 8 4 3 2	♥ Q J 10 7	♥ K 6 5
♦ 5 4	♦ Q 6	♦ J 8 7
♣ 10 6	♣ K J 9 8 2	♣ Q 5 4 3

♠ A Q J 5 3
♥ —
♦ A K 10 9 3 2
♣ A 7

Normal break number 1.

A nice little selection problem for you next. You hold as West:

- ♠ AJ64
- ♥ -
- ♦ KT76
- ♣ AK976

The bidding starts off:

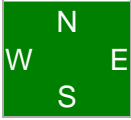
West	North	East	South
			Pass
1♣	3♥	Pass	4♥
?			

With three average looking suits, you have not come to pass this out...and so double, happy with partner's choice, whatever it is. Maybe you are slightly less happy when partner emerges with 5NT, "Pick a slam, please." It seems to be a choice between the minors, at least initially...and length seems to be a prime consideration. So, clubs it is.

They lead a top Heart and you feel relatively pleased if not ecstatic about dummy:

Board 19

South Deals
E-W Vul

♠ A J 6 4		♠ K 8 5
♥ —		♥ 9 8 7
♦ K 10 7 6		♦ A Q 8 3
♣ A K 9 7 6		♣ Q 10 4

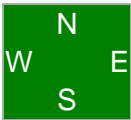
You have to ruff and breathe a small sigh when North follows to the first round of trumps. The world is a little better place when they contribute the ♣J on the second round. You draw the remaining trump (a low heart from North) and attack diamonds.

You have the ♦10 in a useful position as surely North has a shortage there. Yet, again, North contributes the jack on the second round. So, more diamonds and all that remains is to avoid two spade losers. So, you cash the ♠A and cross to the king in case North held Q doubleton... but not this time, as that suit breaks 3-3 with the ♠Q favouring anyone who had mistakenly gone to grand slam!

“Normal” break number 2. Maybe there is a lesson for North-South here. Do not make the opposition guess at too high a level when they are going to benefit from that guess. 4♥x was conceding 800 because there were no nasty surprises for the opposition. Had the opposition not bid so aggressively on a board where the breaks were “normal”, slam may have been missed. Save that pre-emption for when the breaks are a little more challenging.

Board 19

South Deals
E-W Vul

		♠ 9 7 3
♠ A J 6 4		♥ A K Q 10 6 2
♥ —		♦ J 2
♦ K 10 7 6		♣ J 2
♣ A K 9 7 6		♠ K 8 5
		♥ 9 8 7
		♦ A Q 8 3
		♣ Q 10 4
		♠ Q 10 2
		♥ J 5 4 3
		♦ 9 5 4
		♣ 8 5 3

As you see, the modern computers can deal quite friendly breaks too.

Richard Solomon