

“MAKING UP THE NUMBERS?”

Who were? Why, the North-South pairs, of course. They were there to defend, occasionally to have slam aspirations, to make a nuisance of themselves in a series of high-level competitive boards but generally, it just was not their night.

A couple forays to the slam level ended sadly, this being the unluckier of the two:

<u>Board 9</u>	♠ A K Q 8 6 5 3										
North Deals	♥ Q 9 7										
E-W Vul	♦ J 9										
	♣ A										
♠ 7	<table style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #008000; color: white; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto; text-align: center; font-size: 10px;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 9 4 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 10 8 4 3 2		♥ J 6									
♦ Q 7 3		♦ A 10 8 6									
♣ Q 6 4 2		♣ J 7 5									
	♠ 10										
	♥ A K 5										
	♦ K 5 4 2										
	♣ K 10 9 8 3										

Where was the 3-2 trump break when you needed it!

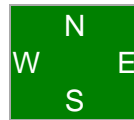
There were two interesting decisions for North-South at the 5 level. Try this one from the North seat:

	♠ —		
	♥ K Q J 9 8 3		
	♦ K J 9 7		
	♣ A Q 3		
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♥	3 ♠	Pass
4 ♠	4 NT	Pass	5 ♣
Dbl	?		

Well, you started the 5 level forays. You asked partner to choose. Are you going to respect their choice....or if not, what?

Then across the table to South:

Board 27
 South Deals
 None Vul



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

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1 ♠
2 ♥	Dbl	5 ♥	?

A hand very similar in style with the North hand above. What's to be done this time?

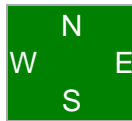
Back to Board 13. Do you respect partner's choice or offer him another minor suit? One advantage of passing is that partner could try diamonds themselves. Bidding diamonds left South with a really ugly choice next...but the safest choice of all was to return to your own long strong suit:

Board 13

North Deals
 Both Vul

♠ —
 ♥ K Q J 9 8 3
 ♦ K J 9 7
 ♣ A Q 3

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



♠ A K Q 10 9 8 4
 ♥ 7 5
 ♦ 4
 ♣ 7 5 2

♠ 7 6 5 2
 ♥ 4
 ♦ 5 3 2
 ♣ K J 10 8 6

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

5♥x would be “no walk in the park” and seems to require a finesse of the ♥10 for one down. This is not so unthinkable after East's pre-empt. It was certainly preferable to wallowing in 5♦x. 5♣x? After a spade lead, it looks like the defence should still prevail but there was no diamond ruff and hearts proved the “coming-home” suit for 11 tricks, the only score on the North-South side. Meanwhile, the defence needs to play trumps to beat East's 4♠ contract.

Too aggressive for North to compete at the 5 level? Well, only one South took it to the opposition on Board 27. The best action for South was a 5NT “Pick a minor, please, partner” though your own choice of 6♣ would have worked as well. Partner had definite preference!

		<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
<u>Board 27</u>	♠ 7 2				1 ♠
South Deals	♥ 4	2 ♥	Dbl	5 ♥	5 NT
None Vul	♦ 7 6 3 2	Pass	6 ♣	All pass	
	♣ A K 9 5 3 2				
♠ 10 3				♠ Q J 8 4	
♥ A K J 10 8 5				♥ Q 9 7 6 3 2	
♦ J 9				♦ K 8 4	
♣ J 8 6				♣ —	
				♠ A K 9 6 5	
				♥ —	
				♦ A Q 10 5	
				♣ Q 10 7 4	

Only Feitong and Gary Chen bid to this slam. One off doubled in 5♥ was hardly much compensation for missing slam, although with others taking the axe to 4♥ (not a good idea), even +100 was acceptable.

Come to think of it, North-South did have some important decisions to make as well. Just 3 of the 28 boards were played in part-score and then there was South’s black 7-6 hand...but you do not want to hear about that...so commonplace! It seems like the only one who did not join in the fun this evening was the director, Jeremy Fraser-Hoskin.



Richard Solomon