

## TALES OF AKARANA

### The Club Suit is not always short

How many clubs do you need to hold in your hand before you get to be declarer in a club contract? We always seem to look elsewhere though the suit did get a little look -in this week.

♠ A32

♥ 2

♦ AQ4

♣ Q96432

You open 1♣ (no matter how few you might be showing!) and hear left-hand opponent bid 1♠ and partner a forcing 2♥. It's going pretty badly for you so far! Everyone would surely agree that 3♣ from you (after a pass on your right) is the bid you now make..and partner is free to pass that.

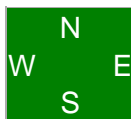
Yet, they do not. 3♦ is their next offering.

West	North	East	South
		1♣	1♠
2♥	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♦	Pass	?	

We know that you would be free to pass a 3♥ bid from partner but a change of suit? A one - round force? Game force? That beginners' book you last read 500 years ago said a new suit at the 3 level is certainly forcing (except when it is not!). So, what now?

I took the realistic view that we were heading for game and bid a 3♠ ask and partner closed the auction with 4♥. We lost too many tricks too quickly:

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



♠ K J 10 9 4  
 ♥ A 8 7 5  
 ♦ J 10  
 ♣ K 10

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

There were two hearts, a spade and a club to lose. Partner was heading for game though I feel 3♦ need only be forcing to 3♥. A shame I did not follow my belief. 9 tricks in hearts..10 in clubs but who wants 130 in the Teams environment when you can score 140! Only one club contract this time.

There were two on the next board when the club suit was much longer:

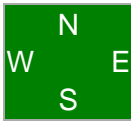
♠ K42  
 ♥ J  
 ♦ 6  
 ♣ AQ987642

Amazingly partner opened 1 of a black suit...1♠! On your right came 2♦ and it seemed that you really could mention your long suit at the 3 level. Partner bid a fairly unhelpful 3♠ and you made a slam try of 4♦ which elicited a 4♥ cue-bid from partner. While you can add 3 points for a singleton, I am not quite sure of the wisdom of adding 6 for 2 singletons..especially with only 3 trumps!

So, you do not overbid your hand and call 4♠ which ends the auction. Clubs is dummy once again! So much for the rule (my rule!) that one never puts down a good 8 card suit as a side suit in a trump contract. The exception to my rule!

**Board 7**

South Deals  
 Both Vul

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

The universal lead was a high heart. What to do? Playing Pairs, you might take the club finesse and on a blue-sky day (they all are at present), the clubs break 2-2 with the king on-side and spades 3-2 and you make 13 tricks. (Of course,

you could draw trumps and then take the club finesse...pretty low odds of success. Two questions, though:

a. Do you want to make 13 tricks even at Pairs? *The answer is surely no! Slam missed! Yet, ensuring your contract is made is good advice even at Pairs, certainly in Teams.*

b. Say the sky changes colour? What then?



Or in other words, down in 4♠! That fate befell several declarers.

The fact is you can afford to lose three tricks and you should not worry about losing one, even two cheap ones early because a lot of the time, you can recover. The club finesse worked but the spade break was not so kind:

**Board 7**  
 South Deals  
 Both Vul

♠ A Q J 6 5 ♥ A 6 2 ♦ 9 7 4 3 ♣ 3	<div style="background-color: green; color: white; padding: 5px; width: 40px; margin: 0 auto;">           N            W     E            S         </div>	♠ 8 ♥ K Q 5 4 ♦ K J 10 8 5 2 ♣ K J
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♠ 10 9 7 3 ♥ 10 9 8 7 3 ♦ A Q ♣ 10 5	♠ K 4 2 ♥ J ♦ 6 ♣ A Q 9 8 7 6 4 2
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West	North	East	South
			Pass
1 ♠	2 ♦	3 ♣	Pass
3 ♠	Pass	4 ♦	Pass
4 ♥	Pass	4 ♠	All pass

A successful club finesse was followed by a second club discarding a diamond. Two heart ruffs in dummy were all that were needed to make 10 tricks this time as clubs were played from dummy with South ruffing and West over-ruffing.

It was even easier for the 2 declarers in clubs who simply took the club finesse to make 12 tricks though 5♣ does seem to be the percentage contract.

The lead that does hold declarer to 10 tricks in 4♠, no matter what, is the club lead as declarer cannot finesse, draw trumps and enjoy the clubs. So, a good time for the “joking” ♣J lead. Even if declarer gets the lead right by finessing (with a sly glance at North as the queen holds!), they must play carefully to get their 10 tricks.

Three club contracts out of 16 so far. One more club suit to go. This deal produced an interesting bid:

North held:

♠ A852

♥ A654

♦ JT75

♣ T

and North saw this sequence:

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1♣
2♥ <sup>1</sup>	x	4♥	4NT
Pass	?		

<sup>1</sup> weak jump

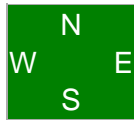
Two more questions:

What does 4NT mean?

What should you bid?

The answer to the first question may not straightaway give you the answer to the second. While there may be an argument some days for Blackwood, it is hard to imagine many 1 level openers simply needing to know how many key-cards/aces their partner had. A more practical answer is long clubs with a suit above clubs which in this case must be diamonds.

So, what should you bid? If your partner has 10 cards in the minors (they must surely have 6 clubs to take this action), your aces will immediately take care of 2 of their 3 major cards. Similarly, if we assume they have the ♣A, as any decent partner should, can they be relied upon for two of the top three diamonds? Fortune favoured the brave this evening:

<b>Board 21</b>		
North Deals	♠ A 8 5 2	
N-S Vul	♥ A 6 5 4	
	♦ J 10 7 5	
	♣ 10	
♠ Q J 9 7		♠ K 4 3
♥ Q J 10 9 2		♥ K 8 7 3
♦ 9 3		♦ A 8 6
♣ 5 2		♣ J 4 3
	♠ 10 6	
	♥ —	
	♦ K Q 4 2	
	♣ A K Q 9 8 7 6	

“Nice hand for a 14 count, partner” as 12 tricks rolled in in either minor suit. There were two pairs in slam, one in each minor with most of the rest in any of three making games including a somewhat unusual 9 trick 3NT.

Three pairs played in a club contract with the power of the 4-4 fit only required had there been a bad club break. A 4-1 diamond break might have beaten the club slam as well as causing some problems in 6♦.

Three club hands with 21 clubs and only declaring the contract 6 times out of 18. Seems we do not care that much about long club suits when deciding on trumps! However, in the second and third hands, the suit was very useful even if it was not trumps.

*Richard Solomon*