

SHAPELESS and SHAPELY.

Sometimes it is what is staring before our eyes. At other times, we have to imagine what it is our opponents might be bidding so aggressively on.

In the context of the above, two problems for you:

Board 12

West Deals
N-S Vul



♠ A 10 7 3
♥ J 9 4 2
♦ A J 9
♣ A 9

| <i>West</i> | <i>North</i> | <i>East</i> | <i>South</i> |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| Pass | 1 ♣ | Pass | 1 ♥ |
| Pass | 2 NT | Pass | 3 ♠ |
| Pass | 3 NT | Pass | ? |

2NT is 18-19 and your 3♠ showed 4-4 in the majors. **Where to from here?**

You reach 4♠ as West after the following sequence:

Board 10

East Deals
Both Vul

♠ A K 10 7 6 5
♥ J
♦ A 9
♣ K J 7 5



♠ Q 4 2
♥ K 6
♦ K Q 8 4 3 2
♣ 10 2

| <i>West</i> | <i>North</i> | <i>East</i> | <i>South</i> |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| | | Pass | Pass |
| 1 ♠ | 2 ♥ | Dbl | 3 ♥ |
| 3 ♠ | 4 ♥ | 4 ♠ | All pass |

North leads ♥10 to South's ace. South switches to ♣6 to North's ♣Q. North plays ♣A on which South plays ♣4. North now plays ♣9. **Plan the play.**

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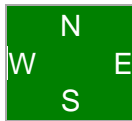
So how good is your 14 count opposite partner's 18-19? You have a few 9's and 10's but no great shape. Do you make the decision or let partner decide by raising to 4NT? His lack of aces might put him off but you know that. Only Candice Doyle made the decision for partner and passed 3NT. She really was right even though 6NT was makeable:

West North East South

Board 12

West Deals
N-S Vul

♠ Q 8 5
♥ A K
♦ K 8 3
♣ K Q J 7 6



♠ A 10 7 3
♥ J 9 4 2
♦ A J 9
♣ A 9

Pass 1 ♣ Pass 1 ♥
Pass 2 NT Pass 3 ♠
Pass 3 NT Pass 4 NT
Pass 6 NT All pass

Plan the play as North on the lead of the ♦ 6.

Shapely.

Back though to our other problem where you just have to believe the opponents are bidding on good shape as they bid up to 4♥ on their combined 14hcp. You had to believe that South had a doubleton club too. (Trusting the opponents: sometimes you must.)

So, the winning line was to ruff with ♠Q and take a first-round trump finesse by playing a spade to the 10. Scary but necessary to make 4♠. The opponents could make 4♥ maybe even 5♥!

Board 10

East Deals
Both Vul

♠ 9
♥ Q 10 9 8 7 3
♦ 6
♣ A Q 9 8 3



♠ A K 10 7 6 5
♥ J
♦ A 9
♣ K J 7 5

♠ J 8 3
♥ A 5 4 2
♦ J 10 7 5
♣ 6 4

♠ Q 4 2
♥ K 6
♦ K Q 8 4 3 2
♣ 10 2

| <i>West</i> | <i>North</i> | <i>East</i> | <i>South</i> |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| | | Pass | Pass |
| 1 ♠ | 2 ♥ | Dbl | 3 ♥ |
| 3 ♠ | 4 ♥ | 4 ♠ | All pass |

Shapeless.

What then if you made it to 6NT? You will need three spade tricks because West holds ♦QT42. Do you play West for ♠Kxx or East for two out of three missing high spade cards (KJ9) and a 3-3 or favourable 4-2 break? It sounds that the former is more likely but, as several declarers found out to their cost, it was not the winning play on the night.

Board 12

West Deals
N-S Vul

♠ Q 8 5
♥ A K
♦ K 8 3
♣ K Q J 7 6

♠ J 6 2
♥ 10 5 3
♦ Q 10 4 2
♣ 5 4 3



♠ K 9 4
♥ Q 8 7 6
♦ 7 6 5
♣ 10 8 2

♠ A 10 7 3
♥ J 9 4 2
♦ A J 9
♣ A 9

| <i>West</i> | <i>North</i> | <i>East</i> | <i>South</i> |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| Pass | 1 ♣ | Pass | 1 ♥ |
| Pass | 2 NT | Pass | 3 ♠ |
| Pass | 3 NT | Pass | 4 NT |
| Pass | 6 ♣ | Pass | 6 NT |

All pass

Two tables stayed out of slam. Three more made 12 tricks in slam. The rest of the North-Souths went minus. Candice's judgment proved correct. The fact that her partner made 4 overtricks (yes, 4!) is irrelevant. 6NT was no great contract and best to be avoided.

Richard Solomon