

Evil Acol

06 : The Superclub

This deal came up recently. A few, and I mean a few, pairs bid the EW slam. Two bid 6S which should be the obvious slam to bid, and another two bid the inferior 6NT which needs specific cards with West. I noted that the two pairs who bid to 6NT must have simply punted it because I have seen little evidence that they are great bidders. So, let me give you two ways to bid the very good 6S slam.

Dealer E NS Vul

♠ 98
♥ A842
♦ Q10765
♣ 97

♠ 752
♥ QJ5
♦ K9843
♣ Q3

♠ AKQ104
♥ K106
♦ A
♣ AK82

♠ J63
♥ 973
♦ J2
♣ J10654

Firstly, the basic Acol way to do it. East opens 2C. That hand is good enough to force to game. Even if West has only a couple of useful cards, East would hope to make 4S, so a game forcing opening bid is warranted. West's response could be either 2D, which is a negative response, normally denying three controls (at least 'an ace and a king'), or if based on point count, 3D to show 8+ HCP and a five card diamond suit.

Let's say West responds with the negative 2D. East bids 2S, West bids 3D, which is a semi positive showing about 6 to 8 points, and then raises East's 3S bid to game. That should be enough for East to decide that West should have some good cards which will make the slam a good bet. If West gives a positive response of 3D, much easier, because then East bids 3S and West raises to 4S and East can now take control and ask for aces and bid 6S if West has none.

Now let us look at the “Evil Superclub” way of bidding this slam. East opens 1C, which could be either a normal 1C opening or a very big hand of 20+ HCP. West responds 1D, having no reason to bid anything else. East now bids 1H which shows the big hand. West now bids 2D, which shows a five card diamond suit and 3-5 HCP IF the 1D response was a forced bid, i.e. a negative of 0-5 HCP. 2S from East and now 2NT from West, showing values in the other suits and therefore likely to have more than a negative response, i.e. a normal 1D response in the first place. Then, when East bids 3C, 3S from West and there we go, EW have agreed to play in spades and East can now ask for aces and when West shows no aces, bid a confident 6S.

The biggest factor in bidding this slam is East recognising that he has such a good hand that any support from West should guarantee game, and a bit more support lead to slam. East should look at a number of things: if West has any spade support, the spade suit will have no likely losers and therefore should be trumps. Even three small spades with West will normally result in no spade losers unless they break 4-1 or worse. If spades are trumps, then East's two little clubs may not be losers if West has two clubs only. East's heart suit is the only problem and could have two losers, but when West can show some values by bidding No Trumps, the heart losers can be expected to be reduced, plus the possibility of a heart lead from South allowing the king to make.

Bidding is not simply about points, it is about assessment of winners and losers and the odds of winners making, or losers losing. In this example it really did not matter whether EW were playing basic Acol or the “Superclub Acol”, it still required intelligent assessment of the situation and communication between partners. However, the Superclub, because one hand is known to hold at least 20 HCP, works much better because there is more room for discussion, and discussion is what good bidding should be about.