

SIMPLE SLAM BIDDING AND PLAY

Chapter 11

THE GERBER AND NO TRUMP SYNDROME

Here are two hands from a recent teams match. The first one :

You are South and pick up this pretty little collection:

Dir S ALL VUL

♠ K 7
♥ A 7
♦ A K Q 10 9 8 6
♣ K 7

Fortunately for you, you're playing good old fashioned Acol and have no problem with your opening bid: TWO DIAMONDS. Partner responds TWO HEARTS, which if you still remember something about old fashioned Acol, is a POSITIVE response and shows a 5+ card heart suit. You rebid 3D and partner bids 3H. The inference from that is that partner has either a VERY good FIVE card heart suit or a QUITE good SIX card or longer heart suit. So, what's your next move?

If you belong to the 'Gerber Syndrome' group for ace asking, you'll bid 4C, a thought at which I personally shudder. But whether you bid 4C or 4NT, I can tell you that partner will show, if possible, one ace and one king, though one ace should ALSO tell you the king is there as well, else where did the POSITIVE response come from?

Then, if you belong to the 'NT Syndrome' slam bidders, you'll simply bid 6NT when you find that partner has an ace and a king. After all, what other slams ARE there but for No Trumps?? I may be being facetious here, but I really am quite aghast at the number of slams that I see bid in 6NT, something like 80%. Since there are FIVE denominations to choose from, and since a LOT of the 6NT slams turn out to be quite hopeless, what does THAT say about our slam bidding?

But back to THIS hand. Now that you have found that partner has one ace and one king, whether you do this by bidding 4C then 5C (once more, SHUDDER...) or by bidding 4NT then drawing the clear inference that partner ALSO has a king (no, NOT by asking for kings with 5NT!!), WHAT is your final decision?

These are the things that should be going through your mind:

1. A SLAM pretty well HAS to be bid. I have a great diamond suit and partner has a good heart suit of which I have the ACE. Partner's heart response and rebid should pretty well guarantee that they have something like KING QUEEN to six.
2. If a slam is to be bid, WHICH? 6D? 6H? 6NT?
3. If PARTNER plays the slam in 6H, not only are you getting the disadvantage of an inferior declarer but worse still, the LEAD could be going through your Kx in whichever suit partner does NOT have the ace, IF the opponent on lead picks the right suit AND does not have the ace in it.
4. Against THAT, if there IS a loser in EITHER hearts or diamonds and you choose the suit that you DO have the loser in as trumps, you will go DOWN in the slam. Choose the suit WITHOUT a loser and you will probably be able to establish the other suit with a ruff.
5. But, if EITHER of the red suits break, you may not NEED the other suit at all! Twelve tricks may come to you one way or another, especially if the lead comes ROUND to whichever of your kings is unprotected, if indeed partner does not have the queen to offer that protection.

Now that you have gone through this thought process, what is your final decision?