

SUPERIOR SEX

Part 1

Narrated by Wally Watts

INTRODUCTION

The final event of the year in 'C' Grade. Simon, Vera, Wally, and Dolly have all had a wonderful time in their first eight months of bridge. All have done well enough to gain promotion to the B-Grade but this will be no fun event: they are all still very competitive and want to prove a point. The men, of course, think that they are the superior sex at bridge, while the girls are quite sure they are more intuitive, subtle, and disciplined. So they have decided to prove it one way or the other in this final event of the year, with Simon and Wally teaming up as partners, and Vera and Dolly.

As usual they start at the same table, and cut to see who sits where. Simon gets off on the right foot by cutting the ace of hearts and sits down as South when neither of the girls can find the ace of spades. No need for Wally to cut at all. So, it's Simon as South and Wally North, and Dolly West and Vera East.

Simon and Wally have decided to play ACOL, but Vera and Dolly like to keep things as simple as possible so will play SIMPLE, without any conventions whatsoever except for Gerber and Blackwood to ask for aces, and extended LANDY over the opponents' 1 No Trump opening. The boys, also, will play extended Landy with their Acol, as well as a few other more sophisticated things, but nevertheless nothing too fancy; after all, they don't want to confuse the other, less experienced, learners too much!

Playing two boards a table, these are the two that our pairs start off with:

BOARD 1 DLR N NIL VUL

♠ Q 9 7 6 3	
♥ A K 10 7 3 2	
♦ J 10	
♣	
♠ A K J 10 8 5	♠ 4 2
♥ J 6 5	♥ 9 8 4
♦ 2	♦ K Q 9 6
♣ 9 7 3	♣ Q 10 6 2
♠	
♥ Q	
♦ A 8 7 5 4 3	
♣ A K J 8 5 4	

This very first hand turns out to be a horror hand for Wally and Simon. Wally, with six hearts and five spades, has such a potentially great hand that he decides to open the bidding. However, he decides to treat it as a 5-5 and open 1S intending to rebid hearts. At least this way he won't have to reverse and give Simon the impression that he is stronger. Things take a nasty turn when Simon responds 2D, Wally rebids 2H, Simon 3C. This (a new suit at the Three level) is of course completely forcing so Wally bids 3H. Simon bids 4C. No, this is NOT asking for aces. He has such a great hand that despite the misfit, he thinks he would be extremely cowardly not to look for a slam opposite an opening bid, even IF Wally clearly has the majors and he the minors, and the 4C bid merely emphasises the shape of HIS hand. Wally would dearly like to bid 4H but surely he HAS to show Simon a genuine diamond preference, after all it sounds like Simon is looking for just that, so he bids 4D. Simon is still carried away and bids SIX diamonds.

Vera can hardly contain herself, but she knows that when opponents blunder their way, albeit freely, into a contract they won't make, she should keep quiet and wait for the sure plus. Plus the fact that from HER side she can't even be sure they can't make 6H, 6S, or 6NT!

(Hands repeated for convenience)

Board 1 DLR N NIL VUL

	♠ Q 9 7 6 3	
	♥ A K 10 7 3 2	
	♦ J 10	
	♣	
♠ A K J 10 8 5		♠ 4 2
♥ J 6 5		♥ 9 8 4
♦ 2		♦ K Q 9 6
♣ 9 7 3		♣ Q 10 6 2
	♠	
	♥ Q	
	♦ A 8 7 5 4 3	
	♣ A K J 8 5 4	

Dolly leads the KING of spades. NORMALLY, the girls lead the ACE from ace, king and others, but against a slam they lead the KING so that partner can give them a COUNT in the suit. This may be VITAL in a 'cashing up' situation. On THIS hand, Dolly knows that this won't be necessary since either SIMON will have a spade void, or Simon and Vera will have one each. Her analysis is spot on when Vera follows with the FOUR (HIGH-LOW to show an EVEN number of cards) but Simon ruffs. Dolly is expecting the contract to make but Vera has a shock in store, even though it doesn't turn out to be quite the shock that she expects it to be.

Simon, finding himself in a hopeless contract, does the best he can under the circumstances: he ruffs the king of spades in hand, and cashes the queen of hearts; then follows the ace of clubs, king of clubs and a club ruff, then two top hearts and when a spade is ruffed in hand followed by another club ruff, Simon and Vera both have only trumps left, Simon A 8 7 5 and Vera the K Q 9 6. Strange hand when the LAST FOUR cards in declarer's hand are trumps and not a single round of trumps has yet been led! When a spade is led from dummy, whatever Vera does, all she can make is two tricks. She ruffs with the nine, but Simon overruffs and leads the eight. Vera can take this or leave it but she makes just two trumps tricks anyway. In a way, Simon is lucky because had he been in just FIVE diamonds, he would almost certainly have played it differently and STILL gone down one in his contract.

"Well played, Simon. Making five," Vera is about to be somewhat sarcastic, "what a pity you were in SIX".

Wally is most apologetic. "Sorry, Simon, I should not have opened, or if I did I should have opened 1H which is more sensible. I might then have played it in 4H."

Simon does not want to start the session off with an argument, in fact suggests that 4H would NOT have made since a SPADE lead forces dummy to ruff, thereby promoting a trump for West. "In fact, I doubt if ANY game contract will be making, the way declarer play is around here."

As it turns out, he is quite right, but because the BIDDING is also pretty substandard, quite a few pairs are lower than they should be and score 140 or 110 in hearts, or 130 in diamonds, so the end result is 8/20 match points for the boys, 12 for the girls. But THEY don't know that at this stage of course, and Vera knows she would NOT have led a spade against 4H and thinks 4H will probably make on a CLUB lead, giving declarer a 'free' finesse of the jack. Both the girls are in a buoyant mood for the next hand.

BOARD 2 DLR E NS VUL

	♠ A 9 7 2	
	♥ A K 9 5 4 3	
	♦ K 4	
	♣ 9	
♠ J 6		♠ K 5 4
♥ Q 2		♥ 7
♦ J 10 7 5		♦ A Q 6 3 2
♣ K 8 7 6 4		♣ A 5 3 2
	♠ Q 10 8 3	
	♥ J 10 8 6	
	♦ 9 8	
	♣ Q J 10	

Vera opens 1D and Dolly raises to 2D. Wally comes in with 2H and Vera bids 3C. This doesn't mean an awful lot, but she's willing to 'push' to 3D and may as well show her clubs along the way. Simon has a poor hand but he DOES have heart support and Wally has come in, Vulnerable, at the Two level, so the least Simon can do is to compete to 3H. Dolly has both of Vera's suits, but absolutely no defence against even FOUR hearts, so she passes, hoping that Wally does also. But Wally is made of sterner stuff and soldiers on to 4H. Now, when the bidding is passed back to Dolly, she comes to life and bids 5C. Wally PASSES. BECAUSE their opponents have 'sacrificed', Wally does NOT have to make the decision. He knows that Simon will either DOUBLE, or press on to 5H. You don't EVER pass a hand out and let the opponents play in a sacrifice bid WITHOUT doubling them. Simon DOES double. Not only does he have a certain club trick, his hand is certainly not much use for pushing on to 5H. He was expecting the worst in FOUR!

There's nothing to the play: Simon leads the jack of hearts and Wally plays his two top hearts, Vera ruffing the second. She then plays ace of clubs and a club to the king, disappointed when Wally shows out, then runs the jack of diamonds and keeps on with the diamonds. Simon ruffs the third one and tries a spade, but Wally can only make the ace and that is two down for +300 to them.

"Hard to say whether you found a good sacrifice or not, Dolly," says Simon. "That I suppose depends on whether you would have led a diamond or not. People here DO lead off their aces even from THAT holding but would YOU have, even THOUGH Vera had supported your diamonds? But even if you lead the ace of CLUBS, 4H makes. In fact the only way to defeat 4H is NOT to lead a diamond, and for West to get in on the FIRST round of clubs, and that means either East UNDERLEADING the ace or West COVERING when the queen is led; since dummy also has the jack AND ten, there seems to be no reason for West to cover the first OR second time does there? Wally would certainly have guessed the SPADES correctly since Vera had opened the bidding, so I'M sure WALLY would have made, but will OTHERS bid and make 4H?"

Simon's words turn out to be somewhat prophetic. Even though 4H SHOULD be bid, and the sacrifice SHOULD score well, only FOUR out of the other eleven pairs have bid and made 4H, and all made because East led the ace of diamonds. +300 is worth 12/20 match points to the boys. The girls SHOULD have had the better of the two boards but have, as they find out at the post mortem, ended up dead even. All of them agree: hardly justice!

Let Wally now take up the rest of the story.

BOARD 3 DLR S EW VUL

♠ A		
♥ 10 9 7 6 4 3		
♦ 10		
♣ K J 8 5 2		
♠ Q J 9 8 7		♠ 10 6 5 2
♥ K J 8		♥ Q 5
♦ K Q 8 2		♦ 9 7 5 4
♣ A		♣ Q 9 3
	♠ K 4 3	
	♥ A 2	
	♦ A J 6 3	
	♣ 10 7 6 4	

Simon opened 1NT and the lady on his left bid 2S. Clearly, she did not believe in punishing the Weak No Trump, having enough to double (which is what Dolly did when THEY played the board). Wally, despite only an 8 count, had great shape and competed with 3H and that was the end of it. He lost the obvious four tricks and thought nothing more of it. When Dolly doubled South's 1NT, North bid 2H and after two passes Dolly really didn't know what to do. As it happens it didn't matter, but she decided to bid 2S and North now tried 3C. She had enough to compete and had managed to bid BOTH her suits in a competitive situation. South PASSED, with four clubs in her hand, and this time declarer lost the obvious THREE tricks.

+140 was worth 19/20 match points to Wally and Simon, whereas -130 was worth FOUR match points only to Dolly and Vera. An amazing number of Wests had 'bought' the hand in 2S and made Two, some even Three. Bad luck for the girls, good bidding by the boys. The North hand is CLEARLY good enough, on shape, to compete to the three level opposite a 1NT opener from partner and an overcall OR double from West.

BOARD 15 DLR S NS VUL

	♠ Q 8 6 5	
	♥	
	♦ 7 5 4 3	
	♣ 9 7 6 5 3	
♠ 10 9 7		♠ K 4 2
♥ A J 9 7 2		♥ K 10 8 4
♦ 10 9 8		♦ A K 6
♣ K Q		♣ A 10 8
	♠ A J 3	
	♥ Q 6 5 3	
	♦ Q J 2	
	♣ J 4 2	

Against Simon and Vera, East opened 1H, was raised to 3H and ended up in 4H, like everybody else. Simon led the QUEEN of diamonds, the standard lead from such a holding. Declarer won in hand and in their hurry to unblock the club suit played the king and queen from dummy before touching any trumps at all, THEN led a heart from dummy. When Wally showed out, declarer won in hand and cashed the ace of clubs discarding a spade from dummy. Then it was an easy matter to play the rest of the hearts through Simon until his queen appeared. Declarer then seemed to have ANOTHER brainstorm, and led off the ace of diamonds and gave Simon the lead with the jack. All he had left was the A J 3 of spades and he had to concede a spade trick to declarer as well. Despite Simon's best efforts, declarer made FIVE, a score equalled ONLY once, but BEATEN, would you believe, by the usual NO TRUMP PHANTOM, an East who received the TWO of diamonds lead and consequently, of course, led hearts from dummy and found out how to play THEM as well. This HAD to be quite stupid bidding AND stupid play, but it DOES happen in C-Grade!

(hands repeated for convenience)

Board 15 DLR S NS VUL

	♠ Q 8 6 5	
	♥	
	♦ 7 5 4 3	
	♣ 9 7 6 5 3	
♠ 10 9 7		♠ K 4 2
♥ A J 9 7 2		♥ K 10 8 4
♦ 10 9 8		♦ A K 6
♣ K Q		♣ A 10 8
	♠ A J 3	
	♥ Q 6 5 3	
	♦ Q J 2	
	♣ J 4 2	

Against Dolly and Vera, South opened! With 1NT. The dear old lady had miscounted, easy enough to do, or was it that she'd cunningly done so on purpose, being NOT vulnerable against VULNERABLE opponents? We'll never know.

When this was passed round to Vera, she DOUBLED and after two passes North, with relief, bid 2C, which of course, after a DOUBLE of 1NT, was TO PLAY and NOT Stayman. Vera had nothing much in reserve for her double, so passed, but Dolly came to life with THREE hearts. She knew they had close enough to game values. Vera MAY have been a little short of her required minimum of 15 points to double 1NT, being 'fourth in hand', but Dolly's ten points made game a good bet and doubling 2C did not look attractive. Even if she HAD, would Vera think her double was for PENALTIES or for TAKEOUT? So, the bid of 3H elicited a raise to game from Vera, and Dolly became declarer from the West seat.

North led a club and Dolly found a different way to come to eleven tricks. With all the strength being marked in the South hand, and North almost certainly having five clubs, there was NO guesswork in the trump suit to start with, and Dolly was able to draw trumps, finessing against South's queen, play off AKQ of clubs discarding a DIAMOND, then ace, king, and ruff a diamond in hand with her last trump. With the last three cards left in her hand, dummy's AND South's all being spades (POINT count wise North could only have the JACK of spades, Dolly thought when she counted the points), Dolly played the ten of spades, knowing that whether North covered or not, she would either make the NINE, or KING if SOUTH had to lead round to it.

So, it was Dolly and the declarer against the boys who were the only two to make FIVE, 3/22 match points to Simon and Wally and 19/22 for the girls!

BOARD 16 DLR W EW VUL

	♠ A K Q 9 7	
	♥ K Q J 8	
	♦ 10	
	♣ 10 7 2	
♠ J 10 5 2		♠ 8 6 4
♥ 10 7 2		♥ 4 3
♦ J 6 5 4		♦ A K 9
♣ 8 4		♣ K Q J 9 5
	♠ 3	
	♥ A 9 6 5	
	♦ Q 8 7 3 2	
	♣ A 6 3	

Wally opened 1S and East overcalled 2C. Simon DOUBLED. The boys play TAKEOUT doubles up to 2S, in ANY sequence. Simon COULD have bid 2D which, being a 'free' bid, shows a hand of at least a ten count and four or more diamonds, normally at least FIVE, but he preferred to double because that pretty well GUARANTEED at least a four card HEART suit, though the takeout double of 2C does NOT require ten or more points. West passed and Wally had a good enough hand to JUMP TO 3H. Simon raised to game.

East led the ace of diamonds, and when West played the FIVE, read this as showing four and switched to the king of clubs. Winning the ace of clubs, Wally drew trumps in three rounds and played three rounds of spades, discarding clubs, then ruffed a spade in dummy and a diamond back to hand. He cashed the good spade but lost the last two tricks, making four.

That was worth 15/22 match points.

Against Vera and Dolly, North opened 1S, Vera overcalled 2C and South bid 2D. When North rebid 2H, South raised to Three and North happily bid game.

Vera started off the same way as East had against Wally, and also noted Dolly's FIVE. This was either high-low from a DOUBLETON or second from the bottom and a FOUR card suit. She decided it had to be the latter, and switched to the king of clubs. North, a dithery looking lady of average age, won the ace of clubs and, doing a bit of real dithering, eventually led dummy's spade and then played two more rounds of spades, discarding dummy's two clubs. STILL not drawing trumps, the dithery lady now led a club which she ruffed in dummy, then ruffed a diamond in hand. Now she ruffed a spade with dummy's nine of trumps while Vera discarded a club and Dolly helplessly followed suit. Another diamond was ruffed in hand and the fifth spade ruffed with dummy's last trump, the ace.

Finally, with only the king and queen of trumps left in her own hand, the dithery lady gasped: "Goodness, I think the last two tricks are mine!" She had made SIX, without ever drawing ANY rounds of trumps.

Since the C-Graders are ALWAYS taught that the FIRST thing you do is draw trumps, both Dolly and Vera assumed that it was just bad play until the dithery lady suddenly stopped looking so dithery and remarked: "Simple hand really. You COULD have switched to a trump after you led your ace of diamonds, which would have kept the contract to FOUR, but I can understand you switching to the club, which seemed logical enough. In any case, everybody ALWAYS draws trumps first, so you probably saw no reason not to expect ME to do the same."

When the girls told Simon and Wally about it later, Wally was ashamed to admit that HE hadn't seen the possibility of cross ruffing the last eight tricks, even THOUGH they ALL knew that while the FIRST rule of declarer play was to draw trumps, the SECOND rule was to draw trumps ONLY when it is right to do so!

BOARD 21 DLR N NS VUL

	♠ K 10 9 5 3	
	♥ A K J 10 8 4	
	♦ 10 5	
	♣	
♠ Q 8 7 6		♠ J 4 2
♥ 9 6 5 3		♥ Q 7
♦ Q 6 2		♦ K J 8 7
♣ 7 2		♣ K Q 10 4
	♠ A	
	♥ 2	
	♦ A 9 4 3	
	♣ A J 9 8 6 5 3	

Wally looked at his hand. Then he looked at it again. Hadn't he had that very same hand against the GIRLS the very first board they had played? He was about to call the director when he realised that it WASN'T the same hand at all. He'd only had a TEN count that time. THIS time, with his BRISTLING eleven count, he could DEFINITELY open, and also do so in his LONGEST and, fortunately, STRONGEST suit as well! But when Simon responded 2C, Wally rebid 2H. He wasn't enamoured with his club void opposite PARTNER'S suit. Simon bid 3D and Wally NOW bid 3S. Over Simon's 3NT Wally persisted with 4H, hoping that Simon might convert to 4S with three cards, or even two good ones, but Simon wasn't going to do THAT since Wally hadn't bid his shape properly. In any case, Simon had only one spade and one heart so he had nowhere to go and passed Wally's 4H.

East led a diamond and Wally very quickly assessed the situation and won the ace and immediately laid down the ace of clubs, discarding a diamond from hand, then the ace of spades followed by the two top hearts. When East's doubleton queen dropped, much to East's disgust, Wally took two more rounds of trumps and played on spades, conceding just two tricks. East was still disgusted.

"Why didn't you FINESSE the trumps?" he asked, "or haven't you learned yet HOW to finesse?"

"I HAVE learnt WHEN to finesse," Wally rejoined, somewhat sarcastically, "YOU may have the 'eight ever, nine never' rule implanted in YOUR head but I actually figured out, on THIS hand, that the ONLY case where finessing was going to gain was when WEST had PRECISELY three to the queen. With only one finesse available because of dummy's SINGLETON trump, why should I risk losing MORE tricks than necessary if YOU had a singleton or doubleton queen of trumps? Maybe YOU should practice YOUR finessing as well, or should I say your NON-FINESSING!"

West, clearly unimpressed by the two men and their little tete a tete, burst in with HER little bit of tuppence worth. "Maybe you should BOTH learn how to play the hand. If you are so clever with knowing NOT to finesse, Wally, then why didn't you use dummy's solitary trump for a more useful purpose than leading it to your ace? Had you taken the trouble to ruff a SPADE with it and then returned to hand to run the hearts you would have made SIX, or is THAT particular analysis a bit too difficult for you?"

Both Wally and East were left with their mouths agape.

Scores for the session: Wally and Simon 56.38%; Vera and Dolly 53.76%. Neither pair had played wonderfully but both had their moments, but bad luck had intervened and cut their scores to much lower than they should have been. In any case, they HAD all learned some useful lessons, especially when and when not to draw trumps and when and when not to finesse. As for bidding 6-5 hands, Wally will be having nightmares about them for the next week!