

ONE NIGHT STAND

Part 3

BOARD 18 DLR E NS VUL

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

After three passes, Wally opened 1NT and East then bid 2S! This turned out to be a not very successful manoeuvre. Everyone passed and despite the fact that declarer went just two down and lost 100, which would normally be a GOOD score when opponents were playing the contract, this WASN'T a success for them. There WERE better scores: a 2D by North making three and a 1NT making three. Whether East knew what he was doing or not is hard to know, but a bid of 2S over a 1NT opener and opposite a passed partner seems like suicide to ME!

Guru: I certainly would not recommend such a crazy bid on East's hand, but it DOES illustrate one thing, and that is that a lot of the time competing and losing 100 WILL be a good score. It just wasn't this time. But how to compete SAFELY is the important thing. East could have been DOUBLED had South had a few more points, and THAT would have been zero match points for sure. On THIS hand, it is over to WEST to initiate any competitive action. FIRSTLY, West had the opportunity 'third in hand' to get a bid in BEFORE North. With 4333 shape and an 11 count AND that CLUB holding, West can hardly go wrong by opening 1C. They are going to PASS whatever East bids, because EAST IS A PASSED HAND, and there is no longer a requirement to have a REBID. As it happens, North will probably not bid at all, and East will bid 1S which might become the final contract. North's assortment of garbage DOES come to a 12 count, but their hand is featureless and flat, and at the given vulnerability does NOT warrant coming into the auction. ONE spade by East, making the same number of tricks as were made against YOU in 2S, would make a HUGE difference to the match points, as you can see for yourself.

ALTERNATIVELY, had West chosen to PASS third in hand, North's 1NT opening would have been passed back to West, who could NOW come in with a DOUBLE. This is a repeat of the situation we saw in an earlier hand, where a passed hand doubles 1NT, NOT because they have a 15+ count but because they have a MAXIMUM PASS and don't want to pass the hand out. This time, East can bid 2C, after all they have four of them. But THEN, South can DOUBLE 2C for TAKEOUT if they play it that way, and NS will find the diamond fit and THAT does make three though the way the cards lie for NS is quite miraculous really, isn't it?

There are a lot of ifs and buts in a game of bridge, but I find as a rule that as long as YOU do your ifs and buts right, the full range of possibilities stops BEFORE your opponents can do THEIRS. In other words, whether you are sitting NS or EW on this hand, as long as YOU bid your hands to best advantage, you'll get a good score. This is particularly so the lower the standard of play.

You should therefore learn as many of the more unusual yet logical tricks of the trade, such as doubling a 1NT opening despite being a passed hand and NOT having more than an 11 count, because your opponents, unless they have been doing THEIR homework as well, will not have the right answers.

BOARD 19 DLR S EW VUL

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

I had a good hand for a change, and opened it 1S. Wally bid 1NT and I bid 3S. Wally passed, as did East. West led the three of diamonds, East winning the ace and returning the nine to my queen and West's king. West continued with the jack, but I ruffed. I now laid down the ace of spades and led another to the queen, followed by the jack of hearts. East won her ace and tried yet another diamond. I ruffed, removed the last trump from East and crossed to the ace of clubs and played a heart to my ten. When this held I claimed ten tricks and wasn't too pleased with Wally for not raising me to game.

Guru: His decision is certainly marginal, but then so too is the game. You will also note that it is VERY easy to botch up the play so that you DON'T make four. But back to the bidding, YOUR bidding was pretty well OK but I say 'pretty well' because even your jump rebid was marginal. It IS pretty well a standard jump rebid: a 16 count with a good 6 or 7 card suit. But if you play the 1NT response to a 1S opening as I do, it is likely to be VERY short on any real values, and certainly without much spade support. The 1NT response should therefore WARN you against overbidding, and on the basis of THAT, if you persist in rebidding 3S, Wally certainly has a good enough hand to go on to Four! But you see that in your particular competitions, there is no need to bid such marginal games, because even though you DID make four, many others failed to do so, and I can very easily see where they went wrong.

Clearly, if you are to make Four, the queen of hearts HAS to be in the East hand, which of course it is. But you need to be able to finesse against it AS WELL AS lose to the ace! Unless East covers the jack with the QUEEN when you lead it from table, you STILL have to get to table to finesse again.

Clearly, the other declarers had their priorities drummed into them, and FIRSTLY drew trumps, and THEN finessed the hearts. After crossing to the ace of clubs, they played the jack of hearts. East of course MIGHT have covered had they had the queen only, but with the ACE as well there is absolutely no point in either covering with the queen or in ducking altogether. So East did the logical thing and won the ace and led a diamond and all those declarers found that they could not get to table to play a heart and finesse again.

When you took just two rounds of trumps ending in dummy and led a heart, did YOU know that there was still another trump out and that you were going to be short of entries, or did you just end up in dummy by mistake? No, don't answer that one, I'm sure you are well aware of the need to do what you HAVE to do while you have the entries, and that drawing ALL the trumps is NOT always the first thing you should do!

BOARD 20 DLR W ALL VUL

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

West opened 1D and Wally doubled. East bid 2D and I went straight to 4S. Everyone passed. West led the king of clubs and CONTINUED with the ace despite seeing dummy! After ruffing and drawing trumps I ran all my trumps and East discarded a heart! I now made an overtrick though it didn't matter at all since we were the only ones in game apart from a hapless pair that were three down in 4H. Declarer HAD got a nasty break but surely they could have done better than THAT? I was also most surprised to see all the EW pairs being allowed to play in some low level diamond contracts.

Guru: Your opponents' defence was certainly less than inspired, to say the least. In fact it was absolutely ABOMINABLE. West's continuation of the high club was quite stupid, as in fact was East's later discard of a HEART when the heart suit is there for everyone to see. Can't East TELL that the jack won't take a trick the moment they discard a small one?

This is actually a VERY interesting hand and it shows just what the difference between the grades is. In the A-Grade grade, virtually all NS pairs would end up in 4H or 4S, depending on the bidding. BUT, a lot of EW pairs would SACRIFICE in 5D which, doubled, would be a score of 200 to NS. Let's look at how the bidding at a higher level of play might go.

After West's opening of 1D and North's Takeout Double, East would bid THREE DIAMONDS, playing the 'Truscott' convention. South has enough strength and shape in their majors to be in game opposite a takeout double of 1D, so would either bid direct to 4S or might bid 4D as a cue bid asking NORTH to bid THEIR better major (they have guaranteed at least ONE four card major by the double of 1D, unless they have much more STRENGTH which South knows they CAN'T from the EW bidding and South's own point count). Over 4D, North would bid 4H, and when passed to West, West might take the sacrifice in 5D.

Over a direct 4S from South, West would no doubt IMMEDIATELY bid 5D because the DIAMOND support and West's excellent side suit makes it near certain that there will be no more than four losers in 5D, a certain gain if 4S or 4H makes. That indeed seems likely from the WEST hand and EAST'S bid of 3D, because West can't expect more than one diamond trick and two club tricks in normal circumstances.

My personal preference on the South hand is to bid FOUR SPADES rather than look for a heart fit. While a 4-4 fit GENERALLY will play better, the spade suit should provide better protection against a bad break in EITHER of the majors.

If EW defend PROPERLY, both 4S and 4H are NOT easy contracts to make, but should nevertheless be makeable with careful declarer play, which I won't go into at the moment. Suffice to say that there ARE variations in both defence and declarer play that I can see leading to interesting possibilities.

Maybe you can include this hand in another story that discusses defence and declarer play specifically!

BOARD 21 DLR N NIL VUL

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

Wally passed and East opened 2S. Not many people play WEAK twos in our grade, so I assumed that it was a strong bid. In any case, I had little of interest in my hand though I did note that I would have had a perfect WEAK 2H opening had the bidding got as far as me. I passed, and WEST ALSO passed, so that was the final contract. Being on lead I asked about the strength of the 2S opening and was told that it was, in fact, 'weak'. I led the king of hearts and when dummy went down, decided that it had to be not just weak but HELPLESS for West to have passed! Declarer duly made Four and admonished West for not bidding game with THAT hand.

Guru: The trouble with playing WEAK TWOS is that people find it very difficult to evaluate their hands properly, both for opening Weak Twos and responding to them. So many open hands which are FAR too good for a Weak Two, others open a Weak Two when they are far too WEAK. Responders seem to have the same trouble, some racing off looking for slams when they should pass, others not bidding even game when they have a hand like West's, though opposite a NORMAL weak 2S there is no GUARANTEE that the West hand will provide enough to make game.

EW, if they play Weak Twos, should have SOME sort of forcing bid, generally 2NT, to ASK opener about whether they are weak or strong for the range of their Weak Two.

Of course it helps if you stick to within my guidelines for 'playing trick' strength when preempting. Thus, East should have FIVE, possibly six, playing tricks at the given vulnerability. WEST can count at least FOUR more tricks because East has clearly NOT allowed for the king or queen of spades or ace of diamonds, and the minor kings and club suit should produce at least one trick.

Being at MOST one trick short of game, West should make an inquiry with 2NT and East show a MAXIMUM for their opening because of their singleton club and good heart and diamond cards. Whatever method of responses they use ('Ogust' is fairly common, but don't ask me about it now) they should get to game.

Game, of course, is easily made because declarer can draw trumps, give up a trick to the ace of clubs, and then end up with ten tricks before the defence can establish enough tricks in the red suits. I guess this hand is a good example of the need to know your system properly and to bid accordingly.

I also would like to mention that the bidding by those pairs who ended up in No Trumps was somewhat inadequate as well, but at least two of them were in TWO No Trumps because East undervalued their hand when West must have jumped to 2NT on the second round of bidding.

Bidding like 1C-1S-2NT-3S can be ambiguous in Acol but it is ALWAYS a good idea to rebid your SIX card suit whether the bidding is forcing or not, rather than pass 2NT. EAST'S hand is good enough to go on to GAME opposite a jump rebid of 2NT showing 17-18 HCP, and East's REBID of 3S is, the way MOST purists play ACOL, FORCING, simply asking for West to either bid 3NT or 4S. With West's spade holding, there IS no choice other than 4S, even though one 'operator' managed to make ten tricks in No Trumps, I suspect more by good fortune than good play.

BOARD 22 DLR E EW VUL

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

East opened 1C, I passed, West bid 1D, and Wally poked in a 1S bid. East bid 2C and I bid 2S but then all of a sudden somehow the bidding stopped! It was too ridiculous for words, but Wally went four down, undoubled and not vulnerable, when opponents had a Vulnerable Grand Slam on!

Guru: Personally, I am of the opinion that Wally's bid was gross in the extreme, and can't wait for him to reach the top grade, or take up rubber bridge for high stakes, if he is to continue to bid like that. He will have telephone numbers consistently recorded in the opponents' column of the score cards, as well as an unhappy bank manager! But be that as it may, it is pretty sad to see that even the SMALL slam managed to elude most EW pairs.

Leaving aside Wally's ridiculous bidding, the auction should go SOMETHING like:

EAST: 1C. It IS an eight playing trick hand, but the suit is clubs, so there's no option but to open 1C.

WEST: 1D. The hand is not good enough to jump shift to 2D despite the 15 count because the diamond suit is not solid enough.

EAST: 3C. This normally shows 15-17 HCP and a good suit. Being CLUBS, it should be a VERY good suit and practically begging partner to bid 3NT.

WEST: 3H. West does not expect East to have four hearts, or they would have bid them. Nevertheless West does not want to just sign off in 3NT, being much too good.

EAST: 4H. East DOES have only three hearts, but they ARE good and East also has nothing in spades.

WEST: 4NT. Asking for aces (BLACKWOOD). East's heart support has made West interested in slam. West already knows that they have at LEAST 30 HCP between them and that this should be almost certainly ENOUGH for a small slam which NORMALLY requires a minimum of 32 HCP, but EAST has extra strength and length in the club suit to make up for it.

EAST: 5S. The ORIGINAL responses to Blackwood were simple 'step' responses, the FIRST step showing NONE, then one, two, three, four. But since showing four takes the bidding to 5NT which makes it impossible to ask for kings, the standard responses are now first step showing none OR ALL FOUR, then the next steps show 1,2,3. No difference on THIS hand, as East has three.

WEST: 5NT. Asking for KINGS. West does not really think that they have enough points for a GRAND slam, but there is no harm in asking for kings, and you'll see why in a minute.

After this bidding, East bids 7C. West has asked for aces, and by also asking for KINGS, has shown an interest in a GRAND slam. That is a GUARANTEE that EW have all the aces between them.

(hands repeated for convenience)

BOARD 22 DLR E EW VUL

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

Guru: Let's see where we're at. EAST has a BETTER hand than they might have had for the 3C rebid. The club suit can be expected to run for SIX tricks, since all that is required is for West to have the jack OR for the jack to fall in 2 or 3 rounds) so the best way East can help West is to SHOW just that. East does this by bidding 7C instead of answering West's question about kings, this being a very exceptional time when East can decide not to answer the specific question asked by partner.

WEST can now bid 7NT. West doesn't fancy an immediate spade lead THROUGH their hand, nor does West see where there may be any extra tricks available to develop in a club contract. West can see that if East has SEVEN solid clubs there are THIRTEEN tricks 'on top' and if not, the hearts may provide the thirteenth if East has the jack, or if that suit breaks 3-3. There are also additional chances, like the spade finesse if absolutely unavoidable, a spade LEAD from North, or some sort of a squeeze.

While you should not as a rule bid a grand slam unless you can COUNT thirteen tricks, the chances on this hand are that thirteen tricks WILL materialise in one way or another. But the grand slam is ONLY biddable if EW understand each other's bidding and trust each other not to go asking for kings when they have an ace missing.

A WONDERFUL hand to finish a session with! Even bidding ANY SMALL slam would have been a near top for your opponents. ANY small slam other than spades, that is!!

Had it not happened to me, I would never have believed that I could learn so much from just one session of bridge. With a bit of luck, or a LOT of luck and more million to one chance occurrences in the hands thrown up by the computer, when the Guru next comes to stay in a year's time, I'll learn all that I STILL don't know, and need to know, to play with the experts. Here's hoping, anyway!