

2 September

Slam evaluation

Rakesh Kumar

With neither side vulnerable, partner as dealer opens 1♣. You hold:

♠KJ95
♥AK8642
♦8
♣K5

You respond 1♥, of course, and partner raises you to 2♥. What are you thinking about at this point?

In terms of the losing trick count, your shapely hand has only 5 losers (2 in spades, one in each of the other suits). Now that you have found a fit, it should be worth its full value.

An average opening hand is worth 7 losers. If you add your losers to partner's losers and subtract from 24, that's the number of tricks your side might hope to make if nothing goes awry. Given that $24 - (7+5) = 12$, you really ought to have aspirations of making slam.

The critical issue is top controls. In fact you don't much care about partner's loser count, all you need is for her to have the minor suit aces and ♠Q for slam to be almost unbeatable. And there are so many other ways partner's hand might be good enough for you to make 12 tricks ... anyway, what you now need to do is ask for keycards (since you hold ♥K you are in effect asking for aces).

Playing 14/30 Roman Keycard Blackwood, partner responds 5♦, showing 0 or 3 keycards. Surely she can't have zero? Still, just in case, you bid 5♥. Partner corrects this to 6♥ because she did in fact have three – although she had a flat 9-loser hand!

The full deal, from 1 September, is below:

BD: 8	♠QT8	Dlr: W
	♥Q9	Vul: None
	♦KQT72	
	♣QJ7	
♠A62		♠KJ95
♥JT73		♥AK8642
♦AJ5		♦8
♣A84		♣K5
	♠743	
	♥5	
	♦9643	
	♣T9632	

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N		
					T		
N						12	
S					14	14	
E	2	1	7	7	7	0	
W	2	1	7	7	7		

The play was trivial – declarer won the minor suit lead, drew trumps, crossed to ♠A and took the spade finesse. When it worked, 13 tricks rolled in. However, on the day only 3 of 9 East-West pairs bid the slam.

Note that even if West had shown only 2 keycards, slam would have been an excellent prospect. And if West had responded 5♥, showing 2 keycards without the queen, you would still be odds-on to make the slam, because you had a known 10-card fit and the queen would probably drop.



8 September

Unblocking to establish dummy's tricks

Rakesh Kumar

Sometimes, limited communication makes it difficult to establish dummy's long suit. If you have a strong hand with only top honours opposite the smaller cards in dummy, this may create the illusion that dummy's length is inaccessible and therefore of no use as a source of tricks.

That may have been what happened to on the deal below, which featured in the qualifying round of the Pairs Championship. A reasonable auction would be something like 1D-1S-2NT-3NT although a couple of pairs stopped in a part-score in notrumps. South has a problematical lead – a diamond is a bad idea after East's opening, a spade is a bad idea after West's response, while it's probably a good idea to keep ♥A10 to beat one of declarer's honours. So a top-of-nothing ♣8 is perhaps the least of evils.

BD: 15	♠73	Dlr: S
	♥KJ8	Vul: NS
	♦QJT73	
	♣Q94	
♠AQT2		♠K96
♥763		♥Q954
♦9		♦AK42
♣JT763		♣AK
	♠J854	
	♥AT2	
	♦865	
	♣852	
	♣♦♥♠	N
		T
N		9
S		7 19
E	3 1 3 4 3	5
W	3 1 3 4 3	

As East, how should you play to make 9 tricks? There are 3 sure tricks in spades, possibly 4 if spades are 3-3. There are another 4 top tricks in the minors. However, that's not enough. You hold the bare ♣AK opposite the 5-card club suit in dummy. Are you going to be reduced to leading up to the hearts twice, hoping for ♥AK on your right and/or a 3-3 break in that suit?

Of course not – the solution is ridiculously simple once you think of it. You have to first cash the other top club, noting that clubs cannot be worse than 4-2 as everyone

follows to both rounds, then cross to dummy with a spade to play ♣J, conceding a trick to the queen.

When North comes in with ♣Q she should switch to hearts to enable the defence to take 3 more tricks. However, after that you can win any return in hand and later get back to dummy with ♠A to cash your established clubs and fulfil your contract.

This line eluded most declarers, because on the day only 1 of 7 succeeded in making 9 tricks.



13 September

Elimination and throw-in

Rakesh Kumar

It's always nice to see a well-executed piece of cardplay. On Wednesday 10 September, Phil Cunich achieved just that on this deal:

BD: 1 ♠KT6 ♥QJ96 ♦85 ♣T874 ♠J7 ♥AT872 ♦AK9 ♣A96 ♠A952 ♥43 ♦JT42 ♣Q52 ♣♦♥♠ N T N S E W	Dlr: N Vul: None ♠Q843 ♥K5 ♦Q763 ♣KJ3 N T 6 16 11 7 3
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After a 1H opening and 1S response, Phil played 3NT from the West seat. North did not wish to trap a club honour in partner's hand so led ♦8. Phil won in hand and took the club finesse, which lost. Back came ♠2 to the king. North returned the spade ten, hoping to trap the queen if South had ♠AJ. However, she didn't, so this trick was ducked to Phil's jack.

Phil cashed ♦A and ♦Q but the suit didn't break. Having taken 4 tricks, this was the position from his perspective:

♠ ♥AT872 ♦ ♣A6	♠Q8 ♥K5 ♦7 ♣K3
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Can you see the way to make the contract?

Phil could. He played off ♣AK, then ♥A and a heart to the king. Now he exited with ♦7 from dummy. South was sitting over dummy's ♠Q8 and ♦7 with ♠A9 and ♦J, but the diamond trick was a most unwelcome gift, because she was now forced to cash ♠A and yield the ninth trick.

This endplay was an elimination and throw-in, the opportunity for which arises quite frequently. Well done to Phil to have spotted it!



23 September

Getting to 3NT – again!

Rakesh Kumar

At matchpoint pairs, the most popular game contract is 3NT. That's as it should be, because if exactly 10 tricks are available, 3NT outscores a major suit contract, while if 11 tricks are available it outscores any suit contract.

The argument is even stronger if the partnership's fit is in a minor suit and only 10 tricks are available. For that matter, 10 tricks in notrumps outscores 11 tricks in a minor suit game. So after learning that partner has a long minor suit, you should always consider playing in 3NT if you have a fit and suitable holdings in the other suits. I've written about this a couple of times in the past.

Despite that, hardly anyone reached 3NT on this board from Monday 22 September:

BD: 8 ♠87 ♥A52 ♦A ♣KJ75432	♠KQ5 ♥Q864 ♦K965 ♣Q8	Dlr: W Vul: None ♠AJ62 ♥J3 ♦J874 ♣AT9	
♠T943 ♥KT97 ♦QT32 ♣6			
♣♦♥♠ N T			
N	1		12
S	1		12 11
E	5	1 4	5
W	5	1 4	

That might be in part because bidding to the contract is not straightforward. West will of course open 1C and if you believe in bidding 4-card suits up the line, East will respond 1D. West will usually rebid 2C, then with a fit and 11 hcp, East raises to 3C. What should West do now?

Clearly clubs will be a source of tricks in a notrump contract and West has both of the red suit aces, so the issue is the spade suit. At this point, what would a bid of 3S by West mean?

The sensible agreement is that as 3S cannot be natural, it should be treated as asking for a stopper. Holding ♠AJxx, East should have no hesitation in bidding 3NT.

What about if East initially responds 1S, showing a major suit in preference to a minor suit with 6-11(12) hcp? Now after a 2C rebid and a raise to 3C, West can either dare to bid 3NT herself or can bid 3D to ask for a stopper – after all it would be nice to have something other than the singleton ace between the two hands. Again, East can happily bid 3NT over the stopper ask.

Clearly neither of these auctions occurred during our club session, because this was the table of results:

FREQUENCIES FOR BOARD 8

Contract	Result	Score	Frequency
4♣ by EW	=	-130	1
3♣ by EW	+2	-150	2
2♣ by EW	+3	-150	1
3♣ by EW	+4	-190	1
5♣ by EW	=	-400	2
3NT by EW	+1	-430	1

The solitary pair in 3NT got there by a different route altogether – Kirsten Hartley decided to upgrade her 12 hcp hand on the basis of aces and a 7-card suit, so she rebid 3C! Now Simon Elderfield had an easy 3NT rebid. Of course they did it against us, promptly earning themselves a top and giving us a zero on the board ...



1 October

Wild distribution

Rakesh Kumar

Some days one gets the feeling that the gremlins in the dealing computer are having fun at the expense of the humans – that was certainly the case on the first Wednesday evening in October as 7- and 8-card suits abounded!

On this deal, with neither side vulnerable, you hold the hand shown below. LHO is the dealer and opens 1H. Partner overcalls 1S and RHO jumps to 3C, which LHO explains is pre-emptive. What will you bid?

♠842
♥7
♦KQ96542
♣K8

It's an interesting hand because while you have 3-card support for partner's major suit, a well-placed ♣K *and* a singleton heart, diamonds are where you live. It really can't hurt to bid your own suit at this point – you can always raise partner later.

If you do bid 3D, LHO now jumps to 4H. Partner raises you to 5D but when this comes back around, LHO bids 5H! What will you do?

This was the deal:

BD: 14	♠842	Dir: E			
	♥7	Vul: None			
	♦KQ96542				
	♣K8				
♠9		♠AQJ5			
♥J9		♥AT865432			
♦83		♦			
♣AJT96532		♣4			
	♠KT763				
	♥KQ				
	♦AJT7				
	♣Q7				
	♣♦♥♠	N			
		T			
N	2	2	2	8	
S	2	2	2	6	11
E	4	6		15	
W	4	6			

With your double fit and with no defence whatsoever to 5H, you might have decided that a sacrifice in 6D was quite a reasonable idea. As the cards lie, it is and it isn't ...

Double-dummy, East can easily make 12 tricks on a non-heart lead by cashing ♠A and taking a ruffing finesse in spades. It's a bit more difficult if South leads ♥K because clubs then have to be set up for a spade discard, but again 12 tricks are available. So in theory, bidding 6D would push the opponents to a slam they were never going to reach otherwise.

And if the opponents don't take the push then if the defence starts with ♠A and ♠Q, North can be held to 8 tricks in diamonds, which would make 6Dx a very expensive sacrifice.

In real life, none of those things happened, but even with just 5 tables in play, the range of results was fascinating!

Contract	Result	Score	Frequency
4♠ by NS	-2	-100	1
6♦ by NS	-2	-100	1
4♠X by NS	-3	-500	1
5♥X by EW	=	-650	1
5♠X by NS	-4	-800	1



10 October

Surviving inattention

Rakesh Kumar

Do you sometimes get a trick ahead of yourself and play the card you intended to play to the next trick rather than the one you intended to play to this trick? This sort of "mechanical" mistake is not too unusual.

It was my turn to make that error in the evening on Wednesday 8 October. As West, I was declarer in 4S after this auction: P-P-P-1C (by partner)-P-1S-P-4S-All Pass.

♠KQ97	♠AT43
♥JT6	♥AQ94
♦KT986	♦A5
♣2	♣AJ5

North led ♦3 and I hoped this might be from, say, 3 cards to the queen. So I optimistically thought in terms of cashing two top diamonds and ruffing a third before returning to hand to draw the last trump and take the heart finesse.

The first three tricks were ♦A from dummy, all following; ♠A, all following; small spade from dummy to the king – and South showed out. Not helpful. Now with a sure trump loser, I needed to cross-ruff to increase the trick count to 10. So at trick 4 I played the – ♦8!! Oops. That was going to be trick 5 after I had cashed ♦K. However, the card was played so I had to live with it.

A funny thing happened at this point, because North showed out, discarding ♣3. My ♦K would have been ruffed. Still, I now had to concede a diamond trick to South, who won with the jack. Back came a club to dummy's ace. Oh well, ruff a club in hand and lead ♥J for the finesse. But this failed and I had now lost 2 tricks, with at least one spade loser still to come. South returned another club, I ruffed in hand and this was the position:

♠	♠T4
♥T6	♥AQ9
♦KT9	♦
♣	♣

It now appeared likely that North had started with either 4=3=1=5 or 4=4=1=4 shape and a truly fascinating position had developed. I could cash ♥A, cross to hand with ♥10 and play the accidentally-preserved ♦K. Whether North ruffed with ♠J or threw ♣K, dummy's useless ♥Q could be discarded. In the former case, dummy would be left with winning trumps; in the latter, the lead of another diamond ensured one trick for dummy's ♠104 sitting over North's ♠J8.

The full deal is overleaf:

BD: 23	♠J862	Dlr: S
	♥875	Vul: ALL
	♦3	
	♣KQ983	
♠KQ97		♠AT43
♥JT6		♥AQ94
♦KT986		♦A5
♣2		♣AJ5
	♠5	
	♥K32	
	♦QJ742	
	♣T764	
	♣♦♥♠	N
		T
N		6
S		9 19
E	1 4 5 5 4	6
W	4 5 5 4	

Having fallen asleep earlier in the play, I was very relieved to squeak home with 10 tricks! Bridge Solver says that I should have made 11 tricks anyway, but Bridge Solver knows that North started with a singleton diamond and four spades to the jack, which I didn't find out until a few tricks later ... once I had played ♠A at trick 2, no more than 10 tricks were ever possible.



16 October

SHBC Teams Championship 2025

Rakesh Kumar

Unlike last year, in 2025 the club's Teams Championship was held on schedule and ran like clockwork, thanks to excellent organisation by Steve Brabyn, who successfully tamed CompScore3 to generate round-by-round results. Of course the real reason most of those attending were there was undoubtedly that they wanted their share of the excellent lunch provided by Jo Goodacre ...

A distinguishing feature of the sets of boards dealt for 11 October was the number of potential slams, most of which were missed by most of the field. This was often a reflection of what sort of hand a partnership might deem suitable for a strong 2C opening. With which of the following hands would you open 2C?

Hand A

♠A
♥KQJ1065
♦AK9
♣843

Hand B

♠A
♥KQJ1065
♦AKQ3
♣84

Hand C

♠A
♥KQJ1065
♦AK93
♣84

Hand D

♠A
♥KQ1065
♦AKQ93
♣84

Hand A is certainly not worth a 2C opening – although it has a very good suit and worthwhile distribution, it still has 5 losers. Hand B is an easy 2C opening, with all the virtues of Hand A but only 3 losers. What about Hand C? Many would not open this 2C, but I think one should – it needs very little to make 4H.

That then raises the question of how should responder rebid after 2C-2D (waiting)-2H or 2S? Of course I am assuming responder does not immediately try to show her/his hand after a 2C opening – that rarely makes sense. What might be the best way to respond with these hands after the auction commences 2C-2D (waiting)-2H?

Hand E

♠964
♥987
♦Q62
♣AJ106

Hand F

♠964
♥9874
♦Q2
♣AKJ6

Hand E has a fit with hearts but is only worth one sure trick. Moreover, it has unhelpful 4333 shape. The best way to announce an hand entirely unsuitable for slam is to jump directly to 4H as a sign-off. In contrast, Hand F has two sure tricks and chances for a third via a diamond ruff if the doubleton queen is opposite the ace or king and a couple of small cards. So with this hand, responder should bid 3H, which agrees suit and shows a better hand, with slam interest. Now opener can cue bid or roll out 4NT RKCB as appropriate.

On 11 October, Hand C was opposite Hand F on this deal from the morning session:

4 W/All	♠ 964	NT	N	S
	♥ 9874		2	2
	♦ Q2	♠	6	6
	♣ AKJ6	♥	1	1
♠ J873	♠ KQT52	♦	2	2
♥ 3	♥ A2	Opt res:		
♦ T7	♦ J8654	EW 6SX; 1400		
♣ QT9752	♣ 3	E	W	
10	♠ A	NT	1	1
3 10	♥ KQJT65	♠		
17	♦ AK93	♥		
	♣ 84	♦		
		♣		

Only 2 pairs reached the slam, Svensson-Kumar and Pitt-Ritchie. They were also the only pairs to bid slam on board 17 in the afternoon session, which featured a 25 hcp balanced 2C opening!

17 N/-	♠ Q2	NT	N	S
	♥ QJT74		7	7
	♦ AT2	♠	7	7
	♣ T65	♥	7	7
♠ T876	♠ 954	♦	7	7
♥ 8532	♥ 9	♣	4	4
♦ K7	♦ 8643	Opt res:		
♣ 872	♣ QJ943	NS 7NT; 1520		
9	♠ AKJ3	NT		
3 3	♥ AK6	♠		
25	♦ QJ95	♥		
	♣ AK	♦		
		♣		

What about Hand D from the first table on the previous page? That's a whole other kettle of fish. It's possible to show strong 5/5 hands after a 2C opening if you have suitable partnership agreements, but distinguishing 5/4 from 5/5 and showing opener's loser count is not a trivial exercise. Perhaps that's why no one reached 6D on this deal from the afternoon session:

2 E/NS	♠ K7632	NT	E	W
	♥ J97		5	5
	♦ T976	♠	3	3
	♣ T	♥	4	4
♠ AJT54	♠ -	♦	6	6
♥ -	♥ KQT83	♣	6	6
♦ K32	♦ AQJ85	Opt res:		
♣ A7543	♣ KQ9	EW 6C, EW 6D; -920		
4	♠ Q98	E	W	
12 17	♥ A6542	NT	5	5
7	♦ 4	♠	3	3
	♣ J862	♥	4	4
		♦	6	6
		♣	6	6

Bidding to a slam can be challenging, but successful slam bidding is always winning bridge!



22 October

3NT or 4-of-a-major?

Rakesh Kumar

Partner passes as dealer, your RHO opens 1C and you are looking at:

♠QJ3
♥QJ
♦AK84
♣QJ87

The only bid that makes sense is 1NT, so you bid it. The opponents now remain silent as partner responds 2H – a transfer to spades – and then rebids 3NT. What are you going to do at this point?

Conventional wisdom would suggest that with 3-card support for partner's major suit and an outside doubleton, you should convert to 4S. However, this might be a time when conventional wisdom doesn't apply. Other than ♦AK, your values are "slow" i.e. you lack top controls and will have to establish tricks. Even if partner has ♠AK, she should have 10-11 hcp to have bid 3NT as a passed hand so will have some other values outside. Your "tight" ♥QJ looks pretty ordinary, but will be useful in 3NT if partner holds e.g. ♥A or K, whereas they might not be much use otherwise. And it's easier to make 9 tricks than 10 ...

This was the full deal, from Monday 20 October:

BD: 3	♠QJ3	Dlr: S
	♥QJ	Vul: EW
	♦AK84	
	♣QJ87	
♠7		♠9652
♥AK7		♥85432
♦T632		♦75
♣AK642		♣93
	♠AKT84	
	♥T96	
	♦QJ9	
	♣T5	
	♣♦♥♠	N
		T
N	2 3 3 3	16
S	2 3 3 3	14 0
E	1	10
W	1	

If you decided to pass 3NT, you would have been delighted to discover that while the opponents could cash two ace-kings in the round suits, after that you had 9 easy tricks, even though partner's values weren't quite where you thought they were! Fortunately, she had the crucial ♥10.

Of course 4S had no hope, but on the day, only 2 North-South pairs played in 3NT.



3 November

Southern Highlands Congress 2025

Rakesh Kumar

Our popular annual Congress, held over the weekend of 1-2 November, was once again a great success. Special thanks to Steve Brabyn, the organiser-in-chief, as well as to the many SHBC committee members and volunteers who helped make it happen; and once again, to Jo Goodacre for the marvellous catering!

The usual format applied for both the Swiss Pairs on Saturday and the Teams on Sunday: 6 × 9-board matches with IMPs scoring. We were fortunate to again have the events very capably directed by Jeff Carberry.

In the Swiss Pairs, the winners in the Open section were Judy Murray and Anne-Marie Hazell, who also won the trophy for best regional pair. In second place were Karen and Andrew Creet. The Restricted section was won by Audrey Belt and Margaret Hagar.

This year, there was a modest increase in table numbers for the Teams, with bridge royalty visiting in the form of Sophie Ashton and Sartaj Hans. However, in a reprise of 2024, the event was won by the Lisle team, with Ian and Vicky Lisle joined this year by Liz and Steve Hurley. The best regional team was that of Steve Brabyn and Tony Lye playing with Mardi Svensson and Rakesh Kumar.

The Teams featured lots of highly distributional hands, repeatedly disproving the notion that "the 5-level belongs to the opponents". There were also quite a few hands on which slam was possible but actually getting there was a challenge. Here are a few bidding questions for you. Firstly, as dealer with neither side vulnerable, what will you open on this?

♠K6
♥A6
♦AKQT
♣AJ876

Secondly, both vulnerable, partner passes and RHO opens 1♣ promising 3+ cards. You overcall 1♥ with this hand:

♠Q94
♥JT9654
♦AK76
♣-

LHO bids 2♥, promising a good raise in clubs. Partner jumps to 4♥, a weak raise, and RHO goes on to 5♣. Do you think the opponents' game is making? Will you bid on? Even vulnerable?

Thirdly, with neither side vulnerable, you open 1♦ with this strong hand:

♠K64
♥K5
♦AKQJT43
♣4

LHO passes, partner bids 1♠ and RHO doubles. What will you do?

Here is the board associated with the first problem, from the first match of the day:

BD: 8	♠K6	Dlr: W
	♥A6	Vul: None
	♦AKQT	
	♣AJ876	
♠975		♠A82
♥QT752		♥943
♦J63		♦97542
♣Q2		♣53
	♠QJT43	
	♥KJ8	
	♦8	
	♣KT94	
	♣♦♥♠	N
		T
N	6 4 3 6 6	21
S	6 5 4 6 6	5 4
E		10
W		

It's awkward for North-South. The modern tendency is to open 2=2=(54) hands of appropriate strength with 2NT, after which finding the club or notrump slam is unlikely. Opposite a 20-22 hcp opening with no super-accept after 2NT-3♥, South is not going to move with an aceless 10 hcp. Even after 1♣-1♠-2♦, South is very likely to just bid 3NT with her heart holding. North might then bid a quantitative 4NT but will South accept the invitation? Across the field, only 3 out of 20 bid 6♣, while 4 played in 6NT.

The next deal is the first of two from the last match that generated swings at several tables. In fact East-West have no chance of making 5♣, but as it turns out North-South will always make 5♥, despite having only 17 hcp between them!

BD: 23	♠Q94	Dir: S
	♥JT9654	Vul: ALL
	♦AK76	
	♣-	
♠T863		♠AK2
♥7		♥K
♦JT4		♦Q952
♣AKQJ9		♣T8654
	♠J75	
	♥AQ832	
	♦83	
	♣732	
	♣♦♥♠	N
		T
N	5	10
S	5	11 12
E	2 1	7
W	2 1	

Across the field, 7 North-South pairs played in 5♥ – one doubled – while 5 were allowed to play in 4♥. Two played in 5♣, but it was in the same match so there was almost no swing.

The final problem was associated with the very next board. After 1♦-P-1♠-X, a redouble showing 3-card support should set you on a path to slam. The auction might then continue -2♥ (by North)-3♠-P-4NT-P-5♠-P-6♠ or perhaps 6NT to protect ♥K and avoid any possibility of a diamond ruff.

BD: 24	♠J53	Dir: W
	♥T8643	Vul: None
	♦5	
	♣J876	
♠K64		♠AQ972
♥K5		♥92
♦AKQJT43		♦86
♣4		♣A932
	♠T8	
	♥AQJ7	
	♦972	
	♣KQT5	

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N	T
N		1				2
S		1			16	10
E	1	6	6	6		12
W	1	6	6	6		

Slam just required spades to divide evenly and the onside ♥A, the latter more or less guaranteed by the takeout double. However only 2 East-West pairs bid a slam, even though 12 tricks are available in three different denominations.



8 November

Never smile at a crocodile ...

Rakesh Kumar

There's little doubt that defence is the most difficult part of the game. Here is a challenging defence problem that arose on Saturday 8 November. I got it wrong. See if you can do better.

Vulnerable against opponents who are not vulnerable, as dealer you open a weak 2S. This is passed around to RHO, who doubles. LHO responds 3H and RHO now bids 3S, asking for a stopper, but LHO rebids 4H. Surprisingly, RHO jumps to 6D!

You lead ♠J and this is what you see (rotated for convenience):

	(dummy)
	♠983
	♥A97654
	♦6
(you)	♣532
♠KJT742	
♥KJT	
♦J	
♣T76	

The first trick goes ♠J, 3, 5, A. Declarer plays ♦A, drawing your jack, then ♦K, Q and 10, partner following with ♦4, 5, 8 and 9. Now she leads ♠6 from her hand. What will you play?

To decide, you need to answer two questions: how are the spades distributed and what do you think is going on?

Clearly declarer does not have ♠Q or she would have won the first trick with that card. Therefore partner has it and spades are 6-3-2-2 around the table.

Equally clearly, declarer started with 7 diamonds, so there are 4 cards remaining in her hand that you don't yet know about. To justify her bidding, they must surely include at least ♣AK.

Declarer's spade exit seems to imply that she wants the defence to open up either the hearts or the clubs.

However, if declarer needs a finesse in clubs, why isn't she crossing to dummy's ace to take it?

Is it possible she is void in hearts?

If you get to that point, you should know what to do – rise with ♠K, dropping partner's queen, then play ♠10, forcing declarer to ruff.

In fact any other defence surrenders the contract, because this was the complete deal, now in its correct orientation:

BD: 5	♠KJT742	Dlr: N	
	♥KJT	Vul: NS	
	♦J		
	♣T76		
♠A6		♠983	
♥		♥A97654	
♦AKQT732		♦6	
♣AKJ8		♣532	
	♠Q5		
	♥Q832		
	♦9854		
	♣Q94		
		N	
	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠	T	
N			9
S		21	4
E	5 5 2	5	6
W	5 5 2	5	

If partner is allowed to win trick 6 with ♠Q, she must either give access to dummy with a heart, allowing declarer to discard a low club and take the club finesse; or else lead a club, in which case declarer finesses ♣J and succeeds anyway because clubs break 3-3.

The play of ♠K to prevent partner from being endplayed is an example of what is known as a Crocodile Coup. As explained on the [BridgeBum website](#):

"The crocodile coup is so named because second hand must 'swallow' or 'snap up' his partner's winner like a hungry crocodile. "

Unfortunately for declarer at our table, the play wasn't exactly as I have described, so although I failed to swallow partner's ♠Q, the contract eventually went down.

