

### Bidding Box Feb 2019 #5

♠ A 10 9 7 5	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ J	
N						
W E						
S						
♥ 8 7 6		♥ A 4 3				
♦ J		♦ A K 7				
♣ K J 8 7		♣ A 10 6 4 3 2				

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1 ♣	Pass
1 ♠ <sup>1</sup>	Pass	3 ♣	Pass
4 ♣	Pass	4 ♦ <sup>2</sup>	Pass
5 ♣ <sup>3</sup>	Pass	6 ♣	All pass

1. Not a fit-showing 2 ♠, which would show secondary ♠ honors.
2. RKB ♣ (Crosswood).
3. Two key cards, plus ♣ Q or extra length.

The Bidding Box is a bidding contest in the *Bridge Bulletin*, in which pairs are awarded matchpoint scores on a 12 top for their final contract.

The standard standard auction above gets to a fine club slam, scoring 11 points. However, it is not automatic. Would you, as East, make a jump rebid on that moth-eaten suit? Having done so, would you later downgrade the hand, and bid 5 ♣ instead of asking for keycards? (Once you go past 3 NT, it's usually best at matchpoints to push on to slam, unless you have two quick losers, because 5 ♣ seldom outscores 3 NT. So ask for keycards.) Would you play 4 ♣ as forcing? The first pair in the *Bulletin* reached the slam on a similar auction, using 4 NT instead of 4 ♦ as RKB.

Suppose East rebids only 2 ♣, disliking the bad suit. West's hand is clearly worth a bump to 3 ♣, and East then has an automatic 3 NT bid: if clubs run, there are nine tricks on top. A slam seems unlikely, and it's seldom correct to try for five of a minor on such a hand.

The second pair subsided in 3 NT, for a respectable 7 points, after East manufactured a reverse:

	1 ♣
1 ♠	2 ♦
3 ♣	3 ♥
3 NT	Pass

It's difficult to go past 3 NT on such auctions.

Judgment can be crucial in achieving decent results.

### Standard Modern Precision (SMP) Auction

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N						
W E						
S						
♥ 8 7 6		♥ A 4 3				
♦ J		♦ A K 7				
♣ K J 8 7		♣ A 10 6 4 3 2				

West	North	East	South
	Pass	2 ♣ <sup>1</sup>	Pass
2 ♠ <sup>2</sup>	Pass	2 NT	Pass
3 ♣	Pass	4 ♣	Pass
5 ♣	All pass		

1. 6+ ♣, 11-15 HCP.
2. 5+ ♠, 8-11 HCP, non-forcing.

Andrew and I earned only 4 points on this deal in a practice session. Let's unravel it, looking at options.

West's 2 ♠ shows five spades, or a bad six, and about 8-11 HCP, but is not forcing. The bid seems obvious, but West had other choices. An artificial inquiry of 2 ♦ would give up on a 5-3 spade fit, but still find 5-4. West could next raise clubs (unless East shows a bare minimum), or even bid 3 ♦, an artificial slam try in clubs. Most aggressive, West could splinter to 4 ♦ over 2 ♣ (not Crosswood, having failed to set trump first).

East will never pass 2 ♠ with a singleton there, but the usual bail out is 3 ♣. East's 2 NT shows extra values with both red suits stopped. But are they primes (as here), or better clubs with soft stoppers? The ♣ Q would take strength from the red suits and actually detract from the slam potential.

With no red suit help and a singleton diamond, West's 3 ♣ seems correct, showing West had club support all along. 4 ♣ might be better on values, but rules out 3 NT.

As we have seen, having bypassed 3 NT, it's best to push on to slam. But was 4 ♣ even forcing? West did not think so, shrugged and bid game. Perhaps 4 ♦ (Crosswood) would have been better. East's 4 ♣ bid seems timid. Better would be 3 ♦ or 4 ♦.

Both partners had lots of choices on this auction. Both understood the system, but had difficult judgments to make with relatively new tools. The standard bidders presumably had years of experience on which to base their judgments. This can be a weakness of adopting a fancy system.