

Off Four Aces -- Problem

Board 8
South Deals
None Vul

♠ K 6 3
♥ K 5
♦ K Q
♣ J 9 7 5 3 2



♠ Q 9 7
♥ Q J 10 9 4 3
♦ 5 2
♣ K 8

| West | North | East | South |
|---------------------|-------|------------------|-------|
| | | | Pass |
| Pass | 1 ♣ | 1 NT | 2 ♥ |
| Dbl ¹ | Pass | 3 ♦ ² | 3 ♥ |
| All pass | | | |
| 1. No alert. | | | |
| 2. Long hesitation. | | | |
| 3 ♥ by South | | | |
| Lead: ♦ A | | | |

A recent pairs game on BBO yielded a couple of instructive deals. Too bad we were playing soccer at the time. See if you can do better!

Many people would open the South hand 2 ♥. However, we require two of the top three honors, or A-J-T-x-x, in the long suit.

Second time around, it's tempting to double 1 NT, but they might make it. Just bid hearts. How many? Well the good hands double; this is clearly a maximum bid. My feeling: 2 ♥, followed by competing to 3 ♥ would be stronger than jumping to 3 ♥. I think the jump shows fewer values and more hearts, or some hand with a defect for opening 3 ♥.

The opponents' convention card did not cover the double. When 3 ♦ came to me, I asked, and LHO explained "stolen bid" -- in other words, a transfer to spades that RHO had missed -- yet had taken out the double. UGH. Right or wrong, I pushed on to 3 ♥, encouraged by the ♥ 9, which might help me to survive a small singleton heart with partner.

West leads the ♦ A, thinks a bit, and shifts to a trump. East takes your king, and returns a diamond. Plan the play *in detail* at 3 ♥.

Slam in the Offing -- Problem

Board 11
West Deals
None Vul



♠ A 9 7 3
♥ K Q J 10 6 5
♦ 7
♣ K 7

| West | North | East | South |
|------|------------------|------|------------------|
| Pass | 1 ♣ | Pass | 1 ♥ |
| Pass | 1 N | Pass | 2 ♦ ¹ |
| Pass | 3 ♥ ² | Pass | ? |

1. New Minor Forcing (inv+, implies 5 ♥).
2. Accepts game invitation, with 3 ♥.

Should you try for slam? If so, how?

Off Four Aces -- Solution

Board 8
South Deals
None Vul

♠ K 6 3
♥ K 5
♦ K Q
♣ J 9 7 5 3 2

♠ 10 8 5 4 2
♥ 8 2
♦ A 8 7 6
♣ 10 4



♠ A J
♥ A 7 6
♦ J 10 9 4 3
♣ A Q 6

♠ Q 9 7
♥ Q J 10 9 4 3
♦ 5 2
♣ K 8

| West | North | East | South |
|------------------|-------|------------------|-------|
| | | | Pass |
| Pass | 1 ♣ | 1 NT | 2 ♥ |
| Dbl ¹ | Pass | 3 ♦ ² | 3 ♥ |

All pass

1. No alert.

2. Long hesitation.

3 ♥ by South

Lead: ♦ A

If you double and pard leaves it in, they should make it: declarer ducks two hearts and wins the third. Declarer plays ace and another diamond to establish four total diamond winners, to go with three side aces. Since North should have at least one diamond honor, this is a strong line. (Even if *South* has a diamond trick, five hearts and one diamond won't set 1 NT.)

If pard removes your double, clubs will make at most eight tricks -- and opener will probably play you for a better hand if you then bid hearts.

After the opening lead of the ♦ A, we know where the other three aces lie -- and the spade distribution.

After winning the ♦ K, lead a small spade to the queen. Draw trump and play a small spade from each hand -- the ♠ A falls on air. Ruff East's diamond exit. Now use the ♠ K to get to dummy and score the ♣ K. Making three, losing only the four aces.

Slam in the Offing -- Solution

Board 11
West Deals
None Vul

♠ Q 10 8
♥ A 4 2
♦ Q 8 5
♣ A Q 6 5

♠ K J 5
♥ 9 8 3
♦ A 10 9 6
♣ 9 8 3



♠ 6 4 2
♥ 7
♦ K J 4 3 2
♣ J 10 4 2

♠ A 9 7 3
♥ K Q J 10 6 5
♦ 7
♣ K 7

| West | North | East | South |
|------|------------------|------|------------------|
| Pass | 1 ♣ | Pass | 1 ♥ |
| Pass | 1 N | Pass | 2 ♦ ¹ |
| Pass | 3 ♥ ² | Pass | ? |

1. New Minor Forcing (inv+, implies 5 ♥).

2. Accepts game invitation, with 3 ♥.

In a 6 ♥ contract, the problem will be to avoid losing a diamond and a spade, or two spades. A slam could be laydown if pard has perfect cards:

- (1) ♠ K x ♥ A x x ♦ x x x x ♣ A Q x x
- (2) ♠ K x x ♥ A x x ♦ x x x ♣ A Q J x
- (3) ♠ K Q J ♥ A x x ♦ x x x x ♣ A x x x
- (4) ♠ K x x ♥ A x x ♦ x x ♣ A Q x x x

(Pard would have opened 1 NT with three aces and the ♠ K; and pard would have raised hearts with a small doubleton spade.)

Our partnership employs Italian-style cue bidding: bid your cheapest first *or second* round control; cue bidding continues up the line until either partner knows what to do. Unfortunately, that won't suffice -- in fact, South already has a control in each suit. Rather than the technically correct cue bid of 3 ♠, South could bid 4 ♣, *denying* a spade control, and showing the ♣ K (never short in pard's suit). Lacking the ♠ K, as on the actual deal, North will sign off in 4 ♥, and South plays there.

With some of the four hands listed above, North will bid 4 ♦, a convention called *Last Train*, which says "I have a spade control, and good slam values, but there is a problem" (clearly lack of a diamond control here). South asks for keycards.

Finally, if North holds both spade and diamond controls and bids 4 NT, North can show *one* keycard, angling for a 5 ♥ contract. Too much for you? Then simply bid 4 ♥ over 3 ♥.