



# Test Your Options in the Right Order

**H**ow do you plan the play in 7♣ on the deal below, to test all your options? West leads the queen of clubs.

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

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♥	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♥	Pass	7♣
End			

Let's assume trumps divide 2-1. This gives you twelve tricks – five spades, four top tricks in the side suits and three ruffs. What are your options for a thirteenth? Firstly, if the clubs break 4-3, you can establish your fifth club. There is also either red-suit finesse, or ruffing down the king of diamonds. How are we going to maximise our chance of success? The answer is to combine as many of these chances as possible by testing them in the correct order. Since there is no way you will want four ruffs in either hand, you start by drawing trumps. All follow once. West discards a diamond on the second round. Which option do you go for first?

Don't start with a finesse. If it fails, you are down and it will be too late to try any other options. Try ruffing out the clubs. If that fails, you will still have

other options to which to return. What are you going to discard from dummy on the second top club? Remember all your options. You may wish to ruff three diamonds or ruff the suit good. To retain these options, you must throw a heart from dummy. Now ruff the third club – and you discover that they split 5-2. It's time to try another option.

Let's consider the diamond suit. In isolation, the finesse is the best option for two tricks in the suit but, if it loses, you won't be able to finesse in hearts.

The best combination of chances in the two suits is to try to ruff down the king of diamonds and, if that fails, take the heart finesse. While that diamond play is not best for the suit itself, it increases your overall chance from 50% – if you finesse in one red suit – to 50% for the heart finesse plus half of the chance that the king of diamonds ruffs down.

Of course, you should try to set up the diamonds next, since this leaves you with a final option of the heart finesse. Play the ace of diamonds and ruff a diamond. Ruff a club to dummy and ruff a third diamond. When the king appears you are home. Note that if, at any stage, you decided to take either finesse, you would have failed.

*Testing your options in the right order* can be just as important when defending.

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

West	North	East	South
		Pass	3♣
Pass	4♠	End	

You are West and lead the ace of hearts against South's contract of 4♣. Partner follows with the six and declarer the three. How do you plan the defence?

Let's start with partner's signal. We would like it to be suit a preference signal, telling us whether he has the king of diamonds or the ace of clubs. However, in practice, it is very likely merely to be encouraging since he will not know that you have led a singleton. Against a preempt, it is quite common to lead an unsupported ace to get a look at dummy. What it does do is confirm that he has only five hearts as he would signalled with the eight or seven if he could. So South is likely to be 7-3-2-1 or 7-3-1-2.

We can work out that if partner holds either the diamond king or the club ace and we guess correctly, we can defeat the contract. So let's approach it from the other angle. What's the worst that can happen if you guess wrong?

If you play partner for the ace of clubs, but declarer holds it, he will have several fast tricks in dummy on which to dispose of losers. By contrast, if you play partner for the king of diamonds and declarer has it, you can see that partner will be short enough in the suit to ruff in before declarer can take many discards. You should thus have time to switch tack and play him for the club ace when you are in with your trump.

Finally, if dummy's ace wins and declarer plays a trump to your ace, you will have to find East's entry. Fortunately, by this time, you will have seen the all-important signal on the first diamond. Even if East has K-3, declarer's refusal to finesse may guide you.

Therefore, you should lead the nine of diamonds at trick two because that leaves you both options open. ■



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## OCTOBER 2008

1 – 3 Marsham Court



The Olde Barn, Marston

2 – 13 **Black Sea  
Discovery I**

3 – 5 Theobalds Park

10 – 12 Milton Hill  
House

10 – 12 Staverton Park  
Improvers

13 – 24 **Black Sea  
Discovery II**



Latimer House, Chesham

## OCTOBER cont

17 – 19 Staverton Park  
Gentle Duplicate

17 – 19 The Beach Hotel

17 – 19 Theobalds Park

24 – 26 The Olde Barn

24 – 26 Barony Castle



MV Discovery

24 – 26 Harben House  
Gentle Duplicate

24 – 26 Wychwood Park

24 – 4/11 **Aegean Odyssey**

26 – 28 Marsham Court

31 – 2/11 Milton Hill House  
Improvers

31 – 2/11 Staverton Park

31 – 2/11 Theobalds Park  
Gentle Duplicate

## NOVEMBER 2008

4 – 16 **North African  
Treasures**

7 – 9 Barony Castle



Marsham Court, Bournemouth

7 – 9 Harben House  
Gentle Duplicate

7 – 9 Milton Hill House

7 – 9 The Olde Barn  
Improvers



Wychwood Park, Crewe

9 – 11 Marsham Court

14 – 16 Staverton Park

## NOVEMBER cont

14 – 16 Theobalds Park

16 – 7/12 **Voyage to  
South America**

21 – 23 Latimer House

21 – 23 Staverton Park  
Gentle Duplicate

28 – 30 Milton Hill House

28 – 30 Theobalds Park  
Gentle Duplicate

28 – 30 The Olde Barn



Staverton Park, Daventry

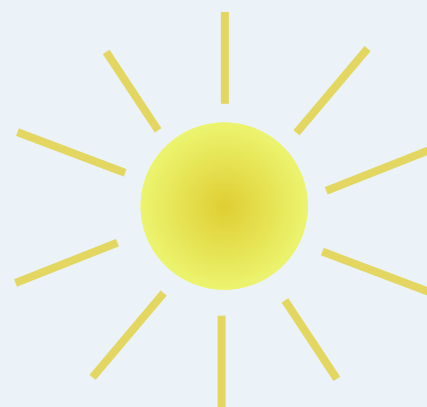
## DECEMBER 2008

3 – 21 **Antarctica & the  
Falkland Islands**

5 – 7 The Beach Hotel

16 – 2/1 **Antarctica,  
Chile and  
Patagonia**

# Holidays, Weekends



Comprehensive list. Cruises are in blue, overseas holidays in green and UK breaks in black.

## DECEMBER cont

26 – 16/1 Falklands,  
South Georgia  
and Antarctica



Port El Kantaoui, Tunisia

## JANUARY 2009

10 – 30 Antarctica & the  
Chilean Fjords 1



Milton Hill House, Oxon

24 – 13/2 Antarctica & the  
Chilean Fjords 2

23 – 25 Staverton Park

30 – 1/2 Staverton Park

30 – 1/2 The Beach Hotel

## FEBRUARY 2009

3 – 5 Marsham Court

6 – 8 The Beach Hotel

7 – 1/3 Cape to Cape

20 – 22 The Olde Barn

27 – 1/3 Staverton Park



Barony Castle, Nr Peebles

27 – 15/3 South Africa &  
the Indian  
Ocean

## MARCH 2009

1 – 3 Marsham Court

3 – 5 Marsham Court

13 – 15 Staverton Park

13 – 15 The Olde Barn

13 – 29 Jewels of  
the Indian  
Ocean

## MARCH cont

27 – 29 Staverton Park

27 – 12/4 India & the  
Persian Gulf



Antarctica

## APRIL 2009

3 – 5 Staverton Park

3 – 5 The Olde Barn

12 – 26 Red Sea & the  
Eastern Med

26 – 10/5 Black Sea, Turkey  
& Greek Isles



The Beach Hotel, Worthing



Theobalds Park, Cheshunt

## Christmas & New Year

Denham Grove,  
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£395

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Signals & Discards  
Chris Barrable  
& Ann Pearson  
£199

29 Dec – 1 Jan 2009  
Chris Barrable  
& Ann Pearson  
£355



# Beware of Blocking Suits

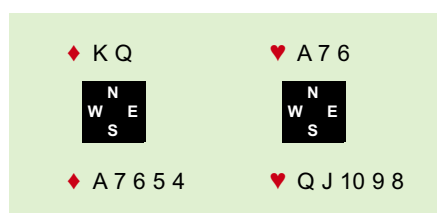
Generally, the correct method of playing a suit is to play the high cards from the shorter holding first so that the suit runs smoothly:



You start with the king and queen from North's shorter holding (three cards) and then play the four to South's ace and jack – four easy tricks. If you play the ace or jack first, you block the suit.

A blockage means that to run the suit you need a side entry. If you began with the ace, you could take the king and queen, but then would have to use another suit to get over to the jack.

Sometimes a suit starts blocked or a finesse or similar play blocks the suit:



You cannot run the diamonds without crossing to hand in another suit.

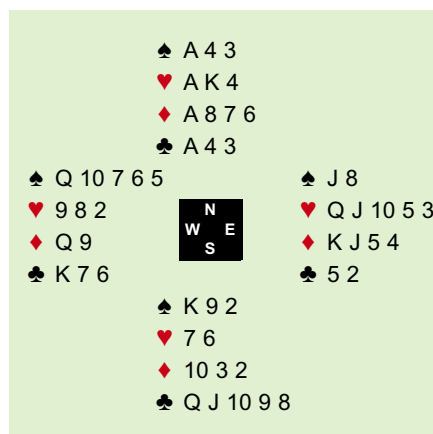
You could play the hearts for one loser: take the ace and knock out the king. To avoid a loser, you want to finesse. You lead the queen and run it: it wins the trick; you lead the jack, which also wins, but now the suit is blocked with the bare ace left in hand. After all follow twice, the other hearts are good as West's king will fall under your ace, but you need a side entry to the South hand to run the rest of the suit.

Another common blockage arises here:



You can make your queen and ace if East holds the king. You lead small from dummy towards the queen. If East has the king, he may well play it; this sets up your queen but blocks the suit with the queen left facing A-7-6-3.

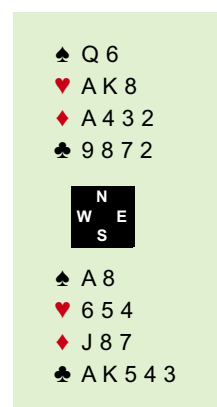
You must be wary if a long suit starts blocked or may become so – your plan must cater for the necessary entries.



South is in 3NT and West leads a low spade. You have six top tricks with extra tricks available in clubs and possibly diamonds. A finesse might bring in the whole club suit, but when the long suit is in the weak hand you need to be careful. If you use up South's spade entry to take two successful club finesses, the suit will be blocked and you will make only three club tricks.

Instead, you should win the initial spade lead with dummy's ace and knock out the king of clubs. Your king of spades will be the entry to reach your long clubs.

Some blockages are not so easy to spot:



South is in 3NT and West leads the spade jack. When you cover the jack with the queen, East covers with his king and the suit is going to be wide open. You duck once, but have to take the second round. You now need to run nine tricks without losing the lead, which means clubs must split 2-2. However, if you mistakenly play the ace-king without considering dummy's holding, you will come unstuck. While the luck is with you (clubs are 2-2), you can make only four club tricks, as there is no way to reach your fifth club. You would have to settle for eight tricks in this case. Of course, the way to solve the problem is to keep the club two in dummy. You play the seven and eight underneath the ace-king. Then, with the clubs falling, you can win the third round with the nine of clubs and finally cross to your two remaining clubs by leading the two to the five.

## Conclusion

When you consider the play of a suit, you should check for any blockages – those there already and those that your play will create. As always, try to do this at trick one as, very often, a crucial entry will go on the very first trick. ■



# A Walk in the Autumn

**T**his little piece of England where the birds are singing, the sun shining and the air seriously intoxicating – it is all too easy to fall under its magic spell and dream on, contentedly...

There can be little doubt that early autumn is scenically one of the most beautiful times of the year. When the mists disperse gradually and the sun fights its way through, there are few more magnificent country scenes than the contrasting colours of the trees. From the deep bronze of the oaks to the scarlet of the sycamores and all the shades of gold and yellow in between, I defy anyone not to feel moved and more likely, totally captivated.

These were my thoughts as Cindy – she is my gorgeous golden retriever – and I made our way through the fields that run alongside a large wooded area to our left.

Our objective, apart from fulfilling the daily walkies routine, was to reach a meadow where horses are frequently seen grazing. As I explained to Cindy, we should be able to find some mushrooms because they usually thrive where horse manure has fallen and this is the ideal time before the hard frosts cause their inevitable demise.

I am not sure how impressed Cindy was with the idea, but for her, walkies are always exciting and today was no exception. She bounded backwards and forwards, covering an enormous amount of ground and never looking in the least bit tired. She seemed thoroughly pleased with herself as she put a cock pheasant to flight, grumbling loudly as it sped on

its way; but she took scant notice of the several magpies that graced the field with their presence.

Magpies are attractive-looking birds, cunning and intelligent with terrific appetites. It seems they will eat almost anything, ranging from seeds and berries to worms, slugs and small rodents. However, they are not everyone’s friend and that includes gamekeepers!

Superstition and the magpie go hand-in-hand in English folklore and there are many exotic tales on record. Even today, plenty of people think it unlucky to see a single magpie and they will search desperately to try to spot a second – two being the symbol of good luck.

Talking of luck, a friend of mine, let us call him Bill, complained vehemently that he had been most unlucky on the following hand from the pairs’ event at the club. See what you think.

The lead is the king of hearts. What are your plans? We will come back to this hand later on.

When we reached our destination eventually, the initial prospects did not look too good. Not a mushroom in sight, but I did notice the odd toadstool, which perhaps augured well – and then, sure enough, we came across a few real beauties. Cindy watched, clearly intrigued, as I removed them to my basket and I think she sensed my delight, perhaps taking a modicum of credit for our success!

Time to look at the full bridge deal and we can see whether Bill was justified in claiming that he had been unlucky.

**Dealer West. Love All.**

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

N		E
W		S

♠ A K J 10 5 4  
♥ 3  
♦ K 6 2  
♣ A 5 4

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

♠ 2  
♥ K Q J 10 7 4  
♦ A Q 10  
♣ J 10 6

N		E
W		S

♠ 8 3  
♥ 9 6 5 2  
♦ J 9 5 3  
♣ Q 9 7

♠ A K J 10 5 4  
♥ 3  
♦ K 6 2  
♣ A 5 4

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
1♥ Pass	Pass 4♣	Pass End	2♠

This is what Bill told me.

‘I won the first trick with the ace of hearts, drew trumps, ending in dummy and ruffed the eight of hearts, just like the good book says!

Then I played the ace of clubs intending to throw West on lead on the third round if the suit broke three-three. ▶

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## Autumn continued

But on the second round, West followed with the jack of clubs, leaving me uncertain whether to let him hold the trick or play on and hope he had the queen as well.

West had not had any sort of think before following to the second club, so I continued with my original plan, cashing dummy's king of clubs and then playing a third round. It was at this point that disaster struck! East produced the queen of clubs and switched to the jack of diamonds, so the defenders took the next three tricks for one down.

Now surely that was most unlucky, although I did congratulate East on his switch.

Perhaps you have noticed one slight flaw in Bill's plan. I am not sure which 'good book' Bill reads but I am quite certain it would not have condoned his play at trick one. That is where he made his big mistake as he should have ducked the king of hearts!

Subsequently he can discard a club on the ace of hearts and then establish dummy's fourth club for a diamond discard in complete safety, ruffing the third round, regardless of who holds the queen and jack. Thus, he makes his game losing just one heart and two diamonds.

Back home again with our nice basket of mushrooms and now enjoying a welcome drink, I say to Cindy, who is snuggling up beside me, 'You see; Bill got his ducks mixed up. The first one was the right one.' She looked up at me and wagged her tail as much to say, 'You did mention ducks, didn't you? No, I've never mixed mine up.' What a dog! ■



# DEFENCE QUIZ

by Julian Pottage

(Answers on page 58)

You are East in the defensive positions below. It is your turn to play.

1. ♠ A K Q 9  
♥ A J 4  
♦ 9 8 4  
♣ 9 3 2

	N	E	
W			S

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

West	North	East	South
			1NT
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♥
Pass	3NT	Pass	4♣
End			

Partner leads the ♠K, on which you play the ♣8. You win the next club with the ♣A (South drops the ♣J) and play a third round. Declarer ruffs and draws trumps in three rounds. What do you discard?

2. ♠ A K Q 9  
♥ A K Q 9  
♦ 8 4  
♣ J 9 3

	N	E	
W			S

♠ J 10 7 6  
♥ J 10 7 2  
♦ K 10  
♣ A K 4

West	North	East	South
	1♥	Pass	1NT
Pass	3NT	End	

Partner leads the ♠5. You win with the king, cash the ace and continue with a third round. Partner wins with the queen and cashes the thirteenth club, on which dummy discards a diamond. Your discard?

3. ♠ A K Q 9  
♥ A K Q 9  
♦ 8 4  
♣ J 9 3

	N	E	
W			S

♠ 10 7 6 5  
♥ 10 7 3 2  
♦ K 10  
♣ A K 4

West	North	East	South
	1♥	Pass	1NT
Pass	3NT	End	

Partner leads the ♣5. Again, your side wins the first four tricks in clubs and dummy discards a diamond on the long club. What do you discard?

4. ♠ Q J  
♥ A Q  
♦ A 8 7 6 5 2  
♣ 9 6 2

	N	E	
W			S

♠ 10 9 6 4  
♥ J 10 5 4  
♦ Q 4  
♣ K 8 5

West	North	East	South
	1♦	Pass	1♥
Pass	2♦	Pass	3NT
End			

Partner leads the ♣Q, which wins as you encourage with the ♣8. Your ♣K wins the second trick and you play a third round. Declarer wins with the ♣A and leads a spade. Partner takes the ♠A and cashes the thirteenth club, on which dummy discards a diamond. Your discard?



# Don't Overuff with a Natural trump Trick

**O**ften in the heat of battle, one gets carried away. We all do things we shouldn't. Take this deal:

The chance of a second trump trick is only one reason not to overuff. The reason may be more subtle.

in an attempt to attain trump control. This type of opportunity happens quite often when you have more trumps than a defender usually has.

♠ 10 8 3 2		♠ 9 6	
♥ K 10 3	N W E	♥ 9	
♦ 7 3	S	♦ AKJ 10 4 2	
♣ 10 8 7 3	E	♣ QJ 5 4	
		♠ A Q 4	
		♥ A Q J 7 5	
		♦ 8 6	
		♣ A 9 2	

♠ K 7 3		♠ 9 5	
♥ 10 7 6 4 2	N W E	♥ 8 3	
♦ 8 2	S	♦ AKJ 10 7 5	
♣ 8 5 2	E	♣ Q 10 4	
		♠ A Q J 10 8	
		♥ K J 9	
		♦ 9 4	
		♣ A K J	

♠ A 6 4 2		♠ 3	
♥ 8 3	N W E	♥ AKJ 10 7	
♦ 10 6 4	S	♦ A 8 3 2	
♣ J 9 8 2	E	♣ 10 7 6	
		♠ K Q J 8 7	
		♥ 9 6	
		♦ K Q J	
		♣ A 5 4	

West	North	East	South
			1♥
Pass	2♥	3♦	Dbl'
Pass	4♥	End	

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	1NT	2♦	Dbl'
Pass	2♠	Pass	4♠

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	1NT	2♥	Dbl'
Pass	2♠	Pass	3♠

'try for game in hearts

'take-out

'take-out

You lead the seven of diamonds, which partner wins with the ten. He then plays the ace followed by the king of diamonds and declarer ruffs with the queen of hearts. What do you do?

It looks jolly tempting to overuff with the king of hearts. However, if you do, this will be the last trick your side makes. Whatever you do next, declarer wins and draws trumps, making four spade tricks, four hearts and two clubs.

Now try not overuffing. You will find, miraculously, that you come to two trump tricks. It is as though the queen of hearts never existed and, as a result, your ten has been promoted. Maybe this is not so difficult to see because the ten is in your hand. Now give yourself the nine of hearts instead of the ten and it would be correct still to refuse to overuff. Why is this? Your partner might have the ten, in which case your nine would be promoted into the setting trick.

You lead the diamond eight, which East wins with the ten. Then he cashes the ace and leads the king, which South ruffs with the queen. I hope you are ready.

What happens if you overuff and say return a heart? Declarer wins, draws trumps, enters dummy with a heart and finesses the jack of clubs. He makes four spade tricks, three hearts and three clubs.

Now, suppose you don't overuff even though you have no real hope of a second trump trick. Declarer may start to think that East has the spade king. He may enter dummy with a heart and play a spade to the jack, which you again refuse to win. Declarer may well then use his last entry to dummy – another heart – to repeat the finesse. This time, you win and play back your last trump. Stuck in hand, declarer has to concede a club trick to your partner in the end-game.

On some deals, you refuse to overuff

The bidding might not be to your liking, but that is not your concern. Naturally, you lead the eight of hearts. Partner wins with the ten, cashes the ace and continues with the jack. Declarer ruffs this with the jack of spades. You must think what to do.

What happens if you overuff and lead a diamond? Partner wins and plays the king of hearts. Declarer ruffs, draws trumps and makes the contract with four spades, two diamonds and three clubs.

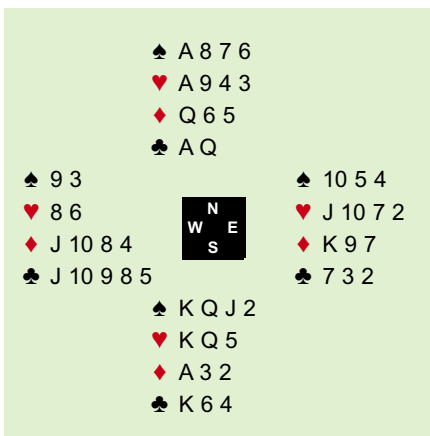
Now, instead of overuffing, discard a diamond. Declarer will try to draw trumps but you can win and play a diamond to partner's ace. When he plays the king of hearts, you will find that if declarer ruffs you will have one more trump than he has. In all, you will make two trump tricks and three red-suit tricks for a one-trick set of the contract. ■



# Grand Slams are for the Birds

Some hands become ingrained on the memory in indelible ink. Let me tell you a painful story from a few years ago.

My county, Gloucestershire, is a small rural county but we have our hopes and ambitions. Five years ago, we qualified for the final of the Tollemache Cup: the inter-counties teams-of-eight championship. We had never won the Tolly, third being our best position. This deal came up when we were doing quite well.



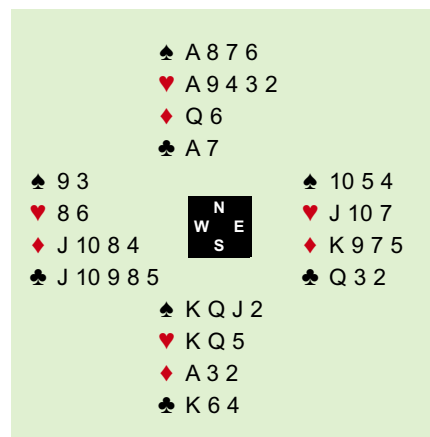
West	North	East	South
	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	3♣	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♣	Pass	7♠
End			

4NT was a modern version of Blackwood, called Roman Key-Card Blackwood. 5♣ showed 0 or 3 aces (the king of trumps counting as an ace). 7♠ was hopeless: barring a singleton king of diamonds, there is simply no way of avoiding a diamond loser.

It would be unfair to say that this hand cost us the silver medal. There were too many other hands where we could have done better. All the same, if our South player had stopped in 6♠, we would have achieved the silver medal – our best ever result. There is one other fact

to mention. One of the two Warwickshire pairs (our opponents) failed to bid any sort of slam! They gained match points for staying in game. Now here is a thought – if strong county players can miss a laydown 6♠, isn't it inevitable that many lesser lights can do the same?

Was our South player just unlucky? He knew that if North had five hearts then he could virtually count thirteen tricks (provided hearts broke 3-2, as they will about two thirds of the time). Look at the layout in the next diagram.



On normal breaks, declarer can easily draw trumps, ruff a club in dummy, and discard diamonds on dummy's fourth and fifth hearts.

There is, of course, one flaw in that argument. Why must North hold five hearts? With the hand North had – four cards in each major and a hand too strong to open 1NT – it is natural to open 1♥, giving partner space to introduce spades cheaply. North bid his hand quite normally, South just indulged in a little wishful thinking.

Now here comes the rub! Before the event, we had discussed tactics. We had previously experienced the frustration of bidding a good grand slam and failing on an unlucky layout, only to find our opponents had stopped in game. We had

agreed to bid grand slams only if we could count thirteen tricks. Let us be honest, you can rarely count thirteen tricks before the bidding has finished. Our unfortunate South thought he could, but wishful thinking doesn't create tricks.

This sort of hand gives rise to today's maxim: *Grand Slams are for the Birds*.

Suppose you pick up this:



You are vulnerable. Your partner opens 1♣. You are surely thinking, 'Slam!' Suppose you respond 1♠. Partner rebids 1NT, showing an old-fashioned 15-16 points. Are you thinking: 'Grand Slam?' Although you have 36-37 points, do you really believe that you can find out enough to count thirteen tricks? A grand slam is likely to be on a finesse (partner can't have the K-Q in two black suits, the king of hearts and the diamond ace because that is 17 points). Do you want to be in a grand slam that figures to depend on a finesse or should you settle for 6NT?

Suppose you are using total points scoring. Do you want to risk turning your score of +1440 into -100 just for an extra 750? You need to succeed two times in three to make the risk worth it.

Suppose you are playing *teams-of-four*. Assume your opponents are in 6NT. Are you going to chase the extra 13 IMPs for bidding a grand slam while risking losing 17 IMPs if it fails? You need odds of better than evens!

Suppose you are playing *duplicate pairs*. Do you want a score of -100, only to open up the traveller and find you have lost out to any pairs in silly contracts? Again, you need odds of better than 50% to bid a grand slam. ■