



Bridge Hands Gone Wild III

By Jared Johnson
ScoreCard Editor

We continue our incredible journey through a Disneyland of freak hands, with emphasis on notrump monstrosities. There are plenty more where these came from, 13 tricks riding on the opening lead, a hand cold for a grand passed out by one of the top players in the world, and a multi-national champion going down 12, doubled and redoubled.

But let's look at our first exhibit.

No Slam with 40 HCP

All vulnerable, South dealer.

<i>North</i>		<i>East</i>		<i>South</i>	
♠ AK	♠ AK	♠ QJ432	♠ QJ32	♠ QJ32	♠ QJ32
♥ AK	♥ 4	♥ 4	♥ QJ32	♥ QJ32	♥ QJ32
♦ AK	♦ 1098765	♦ 1098765	♦ 1098765	♦ 1098765	♦ 1098765
♣ AKQJ432	♣ 1098765	♣ 1098765	♣ 1098765	♣ 1098765	♣ 1098765

Such a delightful hand. The key is blockage. *North/South* have all 40 high card points but can't make seven notrump. There is no way to the *South* hand. In fact, they can't even make six notrump. *North* can't get out of his hand, and *East* must eventually collect two club tricks.

And note, you can't make six or seven of anything else either, thanks to the bad breaks.

Forty high card points and no slam!

No Game with 39 HCP

What is the maximum number of high card points you can have and still not be able to make a game? Eddie Kantar once suggested he may have set a record when he went down in three notrump with 31 high and all suits doubly stopped.

Nevertheless, it is possible to construct a layout where *North/South* have 39 high card points between them and no game, in any suit or at notrump from either side of the table, assuming optimal defense.

Here is the hand.

All vulnerable, *East* stacked the deck.

<i>North</i>		<i>East</i>		<i>South</i>	
♠ AKQ5432	♠ AKQJ32	♠ AKQJ432	♠ AKQJ32	♠ AKQJ32	♠ AKQJ432
♥ AKQJ32	♥ 4	♥ 4	♥ 4	♥ 4	♥ 4
♦ 4	♦ 1098765	♦ 1098765	♦ 1098765	♦ 1098765	♦ 1098765
♣ 4	♣ 1098765	♣ 1098765	♣ 1098765	♣ 1098765	♣ 1098765

Notrump Monstrosities

What is the lowest number of high card points *North/South* can hold between them and yet be able to make three notrump against any defense? The answer is astonishing. Just six. Work it out as a puzzle and let's move on to bigger game.

How about the fewest number of high card points you can hold between your hand and partner's and still be cold for seven notrump? Again we assume an

optimal lie of the cards but maximum defense. Here it is, a grand slam in notrump on 11 high card points.

None vulnerable, *South* dealer.

<i>North</i>		<i>East</i>		<i>South</i>	
♠ 8765432	♠ AKQJ109	♠ AKQJ1098	♠ AKQJ1098	♠ AKQJ1098765432	♠ AKQJ1098765432
♥ 765432	♥ AKQJ1098	♥ AKQJ1098	♥ AKQJ1098	♥ AKQJ1098765432	♥ AKQJ1098765432
♦ 4	♦ 4	♦ 4	♦ 4	♦ 4	♦ 4
♣ 4	♣ 4	♣ 4	♣ 4	♣ 4	♣ 4

South is declarer in 7NT. *West* is on lead and helpless.

A Hand Cold for Seven Notrump Both Directions

And how about a hand cold for seven notrump both directions, so long as it's played from the right side? Impossible you say? You've just seen it. Check the preceding hand again.

South is cold for seven notrump and so is *West*. If *West* is declarer, *North* must lead into dummy, which is *East*.

Of course, for the purpose of these novelty hands, we are assuming it is irrelevant that there may be a better contract available on one side or the other or that no sane auction could ever lead to the final contract. We are only interested in the fact that you can devise a layout where a particular result is theoretically possible, however wildly improbable. As Spock would say, "Fascinating, captain."

6,380 Points Riding on the Lead

The previous hands are constructions. This one is from real life at the 1988 Summer NABC in Salt Lake City, the biggest raw score swing and the biggest international match-point swing this writer has ever heard or read of.

All vulnerable, *South* dealer.

<i>North</i>		<i>East</i>		<i>South</i>	
♠ AK1097643	♠ 2	♠ Q5	♠ Q96	♠ AKQ2	♠ AK65
♥ 4	♥ A108743	♥ Q96	♥ A108743	♥ Q96	♥ AK65
♦ 97	♦ 10843	♦ AKQ2	♦ 10843	♦ AKQ2	♦ AK65
♣ 983	♣ J7	♣ AK65	♣ J7	♣ AK65	♣ AK65

Two top Colorado bridge players had an ace-asking accident on the way to seven notrump, doubled and redoubled. *East* doubled. He thought he was on lead with his ace. He wasn't.

A lot was riding on the lead. A heart lead (rather hard from four to the king-jack) would allow the defense to collect the first six tricks for plus 3,400. Anything else would let declarer rake in 13 tricks for minus 2,980 to *East/West*, a raw score swing of 6,380 points riding on the lead.

On the IMP scale being used, a heart lead would fetch 24 IMPs for *East/West*, while a non-heart lead would lose 17 IMPs for a 41 IMP swing.

West finally decided on - a club! Disaster.

Time For One More?

There is the possibly apocryphal story of the tournament director who announced that someone just went for 3,400. Of course, a wisecracker yells out, "Could he have made it on a different line of play?"

That seems a ridiculous notion but what magic you can work with the cards! You can create a hand diagram to fit nearly any hypothetical situation. And keeping in mind that world champions have bid grands off all four aces and that even at high level tournaments people have played slam contracts with no trumps in either hand, anything is possible.

Let *South* come to rest in 4NTx and redoubled on this layout.

All vulnerable, *South* dealer.

<i>North</i>		<i>East</i>		<i>South</i>	
♠ A852	♠ J10743	♠ A852	♠ J10743	♠ A852	♠ J10743
♥ Q965	♥ J1073	♥ Q965	♥ J1073	♥ Q965	♥ J1073
♦ 76	♦ 52	♦ 76	♦ 52	♦ 76	♦ 52
♣ 976	♣ K4	♣ 976	♣ K4	♣ 976	♣ K4

The opening lead is the ♦K. If *South* plays for an even split in clubs he goes for 3,400 and indeed (getting to dummy and taking the club hook) he could have made it on a different line of play.

If our Bridge Hands Gone Wild series has whetted your appetite for more, the two best places to look for more weird hands all in one place are two books by David Bird, *Famous Bridge Records* and *Famous Bridge Disasters*. Great fun!

My Favorite 52 --Book Review

By Jared Johnson
ScoreCard Editor

National bridge expert Larry Cohen has picked his favorite hands from over three decades of high level tournament play for his new book, *My Favorite 52* (Master Point Press).

The 52 hands are both entertaining and instructive. Cohen has a

crisp writing style as he recalls a variety of adventures and misadventures at the bridge table.

Several of the early hands come from the annual Cavendish, a money bridge tournament held in Las Vegas. Among the themes are not getting greedy, anticipating transportation problems as declarer early in the hand (how sad to have your game going trick set up and not be able to get back to the right hand to cash it), and try-

ing to take the guesswork out of a guess.

Many bridge hands are miniature detective stories. Whether as declarer or defender, there can be a wide variety of clues from both the auction and the play, some obvious, others quite subtle, to analyze. Indeed, the ninth hand is entitled "The Bridge Detective."

On each hand, Cohen leads you through the expert thinking process. Sometimes, instead of taking you down the right route of analysis right off the bat, he will take you down some of the wrong routes first, the dead ends. You have to be able to identify the dangerous temptations of the first line of play that comes to mind.

He will take you down one line of play in detail until you get to the point where although things were looking good, you hit a snag, often because the defenders have found the right counter strategy. Oops! It's back to trick two or three to take another path.

Top chess players have to think many moves ahead. So do bridge players. The hand should almost always be thought about in detail at trick one when dummy hits, and probably again when you first get in the lead.

One of Larry Cohen's most successful partnerships was with Marty Bergen, who had a penchant for pressing the boundaries of weak two's. On one hand Bergen opened an artificial 2♦, showing a weak two bid in spades on five small, and vulnerable against not, no less. Sitting to his left was Bob Hamman.

Hamman ended up playing three notrump, down two, when the hand was cold for a slam - in spades!

Then there's Deal 53, the deal that never was. You will have to read the book for that one.

Bridge Trivia

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Here are some interesting and unusual bridge facts.

1. Dwight Eisenhower, George Burns, Groucho Marx and Deng Xiaoping were all avid bridge players.
2. After a celebrity event, Chico remarked, "Well, it was a close match ... until the first hand."
3. In the Peanuts comic strip, Charlie Brown once compared himself to the deuce of clubs. But even the deuce of clubs can take a trick if it's trumps.
4. Bridge playing television characters include Lucy and Ricky Ricardo, Rob and Laura Petrie, Col. Hogan and Col. Klink and the parents of both Dharma and Greg.
5. Close to half a century ago, two world champions playing in yet another world championship, bid a grand slam in a suit missing all four aces. Three of them cashed.
6. Bridge has been played at Everest Base Camp.
7. Getting a hand with all thirteen spades and getting a hand with precisely the J1082 of spades, the K1053 of hearts, the A64 of diamonds and the Q9 of clubs are equally likely.
8. Chicago has hosted more national tournaments than any other city.
9. At a national bridge tournament in Cincinnati in 1979, Ron Anderson, the third ranked player in the country at the time, passed out a hand cold for a grand.
10. Tennis star Martina Navratilova and members of the rock band Radiohead play bridge.
11. Omar Sharif once said, "Acting is my business, bridge is my passion."
12. The late syndicated bridge columnist Alfred Sheinwold was a top cryptographer during World War Two.
13. General Dwight Eisenhower played bridge on board ship awaiting the D-Day invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944.
14. The biggest national tournament of all time was 1991 in Las Vegas at more than 24,000 tables. Vegas has four of the top five NABCs and five of the top 10, with three of the top 10 going to Toronto.

Colorado Springs Unit 360

Fall Sectional

September 2-5, 2010

The Norris-Penrose Event Center

1045 Lower Gold Camp Road, Colorado Springs CO 80905
www.norrispenrose.com

THURSDAY, September 2
Stratified Swiss Teams | 7:00 pm

FRIDAY, September 3
Stratified Open Pairs | Single Session | 9:00 am
Knockouts | 1st Rnd 9:00 am | 2nd Rnd 1:00 pm | 3rd Rnd 7:00 pm
Stratified Open Pairs | Single Sessions | 1:00 pm & 7:00 pm
Stratified 199er Pairs | Single Sessions | 1:00 pm & 7:00 pm

SATURDAY, September 4
Stratified Open Pairs | Double Session* | 10:00 am & 3:00 pm
Stratified 199er Pairs | Single Sessions | 10:00 am & 3:00 pm
*Single sessions permitted.

SUNDAY, September 5
2-Session Strati-flighted Swiss Teams | 10:00 am
2-Session 199er Swiss Teams | 10:00 am
Seven rounds of eight boards each with catered lunch.

Great Free Snacks & Coffee!

PAIRS & SRATIFIED TEAMS: A = 2000+ | B = 750-2000 | C = 0-750
199ERS: D = 100-200 | E = 50-100 | F = 0-50
SUNDAY SWISS: A = 5000+ | AX = 0-5000 | B = 1250-2000
C = 500-1250 | D = 0-500

Director-In-Charge | BILL MICHAEL
Tournament Chairman | MARGIE SCHRADER
(719) 392-7135

Partnerships | MARGIE TAYLOR | (719) 328-0328 |
detaylorco@comcast.net

\$9 per person for Pairs & Knockouts
Sunday Swiss Teams are \$96 per team
0-5 Masterpoint players play free!
\$1 fee per person per session for non-members and
non-dues-paying life members.

Host Hotel: Clarion Hotel
314 w. Bijou St. | 719-471-8680
Ask for bridge rate - \$72.00 per night
www.ColoradoSpringsBridge.com